

Today is:
Friday, December 04, 2009

Rick, Betsy, and Beamer BoatLog Americas Great Loop Trip

<u>Days</u>		<u>Miles</u>						
285	Projected	6000	Average Time Per Day:	1.91	Total Number of locks:	112		
201	Completed	4363	Average Miles per Day:	22	Total Maintenance Cost:	\$6,038.75		
70%	Percent Complete	73%						
Gallons Gas Projected:		4000	Gas Cost Projected Per Gallon:		\$3.00	Dockage Projected per Day:		\$50
Gallons Gas Used:		2900	Gas Cost Projected:		\$12,000.00	Dockage Projected:		\$14,250
Percent Gas Used:		73%	Gas Cost Paid:		\$9,235.11	Dockage Paid:		\$6,399
			Percentage Paid		77%	Percent Dockage Paid:		45%
			Average Cost per Gallon:		\$3.18	Average Docking Cost per Day:		\$32.00
			Average Miles per Gallon:		1.5	Number of Docked Locations:		88

<u>--Date--</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Miles Today</u>	<u>Time Today</u>	<u>MA WP</u>	<u>Lat(N)</u>	<u>Lon(W)</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>COST DOCKAGE</u>	<u>NUMB LOCKS</u>
12/3/2009	200	55	3.50	W	30°24.101'	86°36.398'	Ft Walton Beach, FL		
							12-03-09 Fort Walton Beach, FL		

[Rick] After two very nice days visiting Tom and Patsy Conrad, we decided it was time to move on and make some way. We packed all our stuff, released the boat and left the Conrad Dock `N Dine about 1100. Our destination was the FREE dock at Fort Walton Beach. We passed through Pensacola Bay and passed several inlets from the Gulf of Mexico. Looking out at the Gulf, we could still see huge waves and we were glad we were not out there today. Again, we passed several dolphins and we never grow tired of seeing and watching them. There is just some attraction to them that makes one watch. Along the way, we entered Florida from Alabama.

After 54 miles, we arrived at Fort Walton Beach and called City Hall to get directions as to the location of the FREE dock. The young lady had no idea how to tell us where it was from the water. She knew it was beside the park with the Christmas tree and the trees that have snowflakes in them. Unfortunately, the snowflakes are not visible in the daytime from any distance. But, we saw the dock and pulled in. The dock has about 10 spots for various sized boats. There is no electricity or services but there is a FREE pump out station.

Another boat tied up about the same time as we did. It is an old steel hulled vessel with 4 New Zealanders aboard. There are two parents and two teenagers. It is about 27 feet long and they are looping. They started in Ft Myers last March, have been to Canada, but we have never seen them before. They bought the boat to do the loop and will sell it when they return to Ft Myers. They fly out to New Zealand on Jan 17. The boat has no generator, refrigerator, hot water, air conditioner, or microwave. It has a cooler to keep stuff cold and a propane stove for cooking. It is basic. The owner told me that go about 9 mph and that they have really enjoyed the loop trip.

We walked around town and visited the park with the Christmas tree. We went to Publix, the grocery store, for the first time. What a nice store

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and the employees were very helpful. On two occasions, as we stood trying to figure out what aisle to go to, employees actually volunteered to ask us if they could be of assistance. I was stunned, having shopped in many other stores along the way, and getting very little assistance. For supper, we visited our favorite restaurant, Waffle House, and enjoyed a very good meal.

We cannot stay at this FREE city dock more than one night, so tomorrow we leave for Panama City, and the Bay Point Marina. There is not a weather window to cross the Gulf until at least Monday, so we are in no rush.

12/1/2009	198	10	0.75	W	30°18.759'	87°29.120'	Tom Conrad Dock		
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12-01-09 Tom Conrad Dock - Pensacola, FL

[Rick]We left the Marina at the Wharf and headed for the Tom Conrad Dock. The trip was less than 10 miles. Tom and his wife Patsy live in a lovely home on the GICW and offered to let us tie to their dock to wait out the impending rain and wind storm. We arrived and were tied up by 1000.

We all went to West Marine in the afternoon, followed by Wal-Mart. Quite an exciting afternoon.

Tom is the weather guru for the loopers as they prepare to cross the Florida Big Bend to the Florida West Coast. He prepares a daily "weather musings" report and posts it on the AGLCA looper log each day. The musings tell other loopers what he would do on his 28 ft sailboat regarding when to cross the Gulf of Mexico. Between the musings, NOAA, Windfinder, and the other weather sites, a looper makes the decision as to go or not.

We will be here for a couple of days. The weather is to be very bad for tomorrow and we have plans for a dinner with some other loopers and the Conrads for Wednesday night.

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11/30/2009	197	34	3.00	M	30° 17.623'	87° 37.898'	The Marina at the Wharf - Orange Beach	\$57.72	
<p>11-30-09 Marina on the Wharf - Orange Beach Al</p> <p>[Rick] With the threat of rainy weather the next few days and the lack of a phone signal and wifi, we abandoned our plans to stay in Eastern Shore Harbor for a couple of days of R&R. Rain and being held captive on the boat, with no communication conveniences is an unbearable event. So, we left and headed for our next destination, Orange Beach, AL. Orange Beach is on the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway. We felt back at home seeing the familiar waterway markers on the Aids to Navigation. Then, we knew all was right with the world as we saw our first dolphins since leaving the east coast. They were spectacular, even jumping completely out of the water and surfing in our wake. Too bad they are so fast that we were unable to take any pictures.</p> <p>Along the way, we stopped at Homeport Marina to eat at the famous LuLu's Restaurant. LuLu's is a Key West style eatery with a sandy beach, volleyball court, tiki bar, outdoor concert dance floor. But, the main reason the LuLu is famous is that Lulu is the sister of Jimmy Buffet of Margaritaville fame. Jimmy is said to `show up' on occasion and sing a few tunes at the restaurant. Too bad for us, LuLu's was closed today through Thursday while some renovations and maintenance was being done, but the gift shop was open. we'd hate to miss a gift shop. Betsy took some pictures of the houses on both sides of the waterway. These houses are directly opposite each other with the waterway between them.</p> <p>We proceeded 5 more miles to Marina on the Wharf. This is a very nice modern marina with floating docks and an Oyster Bar/restaurant on site. They have great Wifi and cable TV. On the down side, there is no courtesy car and no SHOWERS. Yet, they still charge \$2.00 per foot plus 11% transient tax for a total of \$57.72 per night for our little 26 ft boat. This is just a little steep, and by far the most we've paid since leaving the east coast. The marina is within walking distance of mall full of specialty shops and a convention center. They even have a Ferris wheel in the parking lot. The total distance covered today was 34 miles.</p> <p>We had just gotten tied up when the rain began to fall. Later.</p>									

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11/28/2009	195	135	8.00	M	30°32.555'	87°54.183'	Eastern Shore Marina - Fairhope AL	\$48.78	1
11-28-09 Eastern Shore Marina, Fairhope, AL									

[Rick] We began the day at Bobby's Fish Camp in the fog. We had determined that we needed to leave around 0700, get through the last lock on the trip, our 112th, and make time to Fairhope. The trip is to be 135 miles. Tied up near us is the "Big Brother" of the Rick `N Roll. She is 40 feet long and 20 feet wide. She has twin 90 hp diesels and at 9 mph uses one gallon of fuel per hour. Quite efficient.

So, we took off in the fog, cleared the lock, and ran as fast as possible. The Tombigbee joined with the Black Warrior River back at Demopolis, so we are technically on the Black Warrior. Since this section is not manmade, it was never canalized to shorten the distances. Here are a couple of screen shots of the GPS screen on this section. All along the way we have seen many blue herons. Along this section we saw hundreds of snowy egrets. Once in Mobile Bay, we started seeing pelicans. The river is much like a ditch with a lot of vegetation and marsh land on each side. Along the way, we passed mile 4,000 for the trip and mile 10,000 on the boat.

We arrived in the harbor at Mobile Bay to find that it is much like Wilmington's harbor, but larger. There are a lot of cranes, barges, etc working on the waterfront. We thought our friend Jerry Edwards might need this lift if he keeps getting bigger boats!

A couple of months ago, someone sent me pictures and a write-up about a new anti-terror, anti-piracy catamaran vessel being tested for the Navy. It is fast, up to 80 kts, and is loaded with firepower. Well, there in Mobile Bay, one is sitting, being worked on. It is an awesome sight to see.

We checked into Eastern Shore Marina in Fairhope. Having travelled 300 miles in 3 days, we need to rest up, do laundry, and reprovision so we may be here several days.

Within a couple of hours, it was dark but Betsy managed to get a couple of sunset shots. Enjoy...

11-29-09 Fairhope, AL

[Betsy] What a difference a day makes! Yesterday morning when we left Bobby's Fish Camp it was cold, and we stayed cold all day. We have no heat on the boat unless we are in port hooked up to power, and we just never thawed out. We both had on our "hot socks" and I even put on my long johns. Today, it was a beautiful, sunny day and we were in shorts and short sleeves.

I've commented before that it is really the special people we meet along the way that make this trip so wonderful. There was Sid in Ludington who let us use his truck, and Glenn in Illinois who trailered us around the carp crap, and many others along the way that we will remember fondly as such an integral part of our trip. Today we were blessed to meet Bruce and Janice.

When we arrived in Fairhope yesterday, we had an e-mail from Bruce saying he had been reading our blog, saw that we were headed for Fairhope, and to call him if there was anything we needed while we were in this area. It being Saturday when we arrived we tried to make arrangements to take the courtesy car to church today, but someone had already spoken for it. We spoke to that person to see about going to church with them, and they said they would be glad for us to go with them, but they were going to the Unitarian Church. After chatting for a few minutes about just what a Unitarian was, we decided maybe that wasn't quite where we wanted to go. So when we got back to our boat and read Bruce's e-mail, I said let's call him and see if he would mind taking us to church. We aren't real picky about where we go, we just want to worship at a Christian church where people share our basic beliefs.

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Bruce said he and his wife go to the Lutheran Church and would be glad for us to join them. So they picked us up this morning, gave us a brief overview of their beautiful town, and took us to their lovely church. It was a very traditional Lutheran service with lots of music and chanting. They have two regular pastors, but today was mission Sunday so they had a visiting pastor who is active with feeding the hungry.

After church, we went to dinner at a Chinese Buffet. Bruce and Janice had planned to do the loop themselves several years ago. They purchased a 44 foot houseboat in Iowa and motored it down the Missouri River to the Mississippi, then down to Fairhope. They liked this area so much that they decided to stay here and live on the boat while they refurbished it to prepare it to do the rest of the loop. Unfortunately, they were on vacation when Hurricane Ivan hit this area and sank the boat. They lost everything including their clothes. They have not purchased another boat, but did remain in Fairhope for good.

I can certainly see why someone would want to stay here! The town is beautiful and has much to offer. Most impressive are the beautiful flowers everywhere. There are plenty of shops, and brand new super Wal-Mart and a brand new Publix grocery. The town seems to be really growing. The location on Mobile Bay is ideal. We've seen beautiful sunsets both evenings we've been here, and today the bay was full of sailboats.

Rick spent part of the afternoon deflating our exercise balls. You will recall that we blew these up just before entering the Erie Canal (with the help of my friend Louise, who visited us all the way from New Hampshire). The balls were covered with mesh laundry bags, and served us well as fenders to keep the sides of the boat off of lock walls. Each ball cost less than \$20 at Wal-Mart, as opposed to the real large round boat fenders that cost upwards of \$100 at West Marine. A friend that had done the loop last year told us about doing this, and I must say I had my doubts that these balls would make it through over 100 locks without bursting or losing their air, but I was wrong. We started with four balls (2 for each side of the boat) and ended up with three. The only one we lost was one that got caught on a large staple on a dock and was punctured.

Tomorrow we plan to leave here and head for Orange Beach, AL, on the Gulf Coast. We may be late getting this blog out because we have very limited and intermittent internet here, as well as terrible phone connections!

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11/27/2009	194	96	6.00	M	31° 45.862'	88° 9.483'	Bobby's Fish Camp - Silas Al	\$26.00	1
11-27-09 Bobby's Fish Camp Silas, AL									

[Rick] We left Demopolis and locked through the Demopolis Lock at 1000. Our journey today is to be 96 miles to a Looper Legend - Bobby's Fish Camp. The trip was smooth, the weather was great, and we were able to average 17.7 mph for the day. We passed and overtook several tows today, the largest number of any day so far.

On the way, at mile marker 204, we passed the now demolished Rooster Bridge. In 1979, this bridge was the site of one of the most unusual happenings ever in river travel. The river was very high, and at the last minute, the towboat Cahaba realized that it could not clear the bridge. It tried to stop, but the current took it into the bridge. It turned sideways, went underwater, under the bridge, and emerged, right side up, on the other side. The engines were still running and the captain was still on the bridge. If you would like to see a video, consisting of photographs of the event, go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQ3Rp55bYnI>. It is quite extraordinary, in the fact that it happened, and secondly, that someone was there to take the pictures.

Now, on to Bobby's. This is a fish camp outside the town of Silas, AL. It rents boats, cabins, bait, etc to the local fishermen and tourists. For loopers, it is the only place to tie up and get fuel from Demopolis to Mobile Bay, a distance of 230 miles. So, like Hoppie's on the Mississippi, Bobby's is a favorite and mandatory stop for loopers. It is made up of a fuel dock, a restaurant, open on Thursday, Friday and Saturday only. There is no power, showers, or other amenities. Yet, the charge is still \$1.00 per foot. The price of gas is \$3.38 per gallon, plus 5% if you pay by credit card (we had to dig out a checkbook!). Yes, you are captives! Did I mention that the dock is only 100 feet long, and if other boats arrive, you are expected to raft to each other? There is a photo in the restaurant of 14 boats, many in the 35-40 foot range, tied to this pier. The food at the restaurant is very good and the specialty is locally caught fresh catfish. The inside of the restaurant is much cluttered, and features trophies and the genealogy of Bobby. There are stuffed animals all over the place.

We are tied up tonight and will get out early in the morning in order to make Mobile Bay and the Town of Fairhope, AL tomorrow. We have one more lock to navigate and we will be back in tidal and salt water. It will be a 9 hour day at full speed. We need to get to Mobile Bay and tie down as there is predicted bad weather for Monday and Tuesday.
Later.

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11/26/2009	193	90	6.25	M	32 31.603	87 50.392	Demopolis Marina AL	\$32.50	2
11-26-09 Thanksgiving in Demopolis, AL									

Betsy speaks: We had another rather blah day on the Tenn-Tom Waterway, leaving Pirate's Marina Cove shortly after 8AM and travelling 90 miles to Demopolis, AL, through two locks. It was a beautiful sunny day, though a little windy. We cheerfully wished each lockmaster happy Thanksgiving, and joked with a couple of barges we passed about whether they had any turkey for us. For lunch Rick had a peanut butter sandwich, and I had a small can of tuna and some cheese crackers.

About mid-way we passed the white cliffs of Epes, which were surely the most striking scenery on the entire Tenn-Tom. The only description I can find of them is simply that they are white chalk cliffs. They seem to just come up out of nowhere. I'm sure there's some geological explanation but I can't find it. Anyway, they were interesting.

We arrived at Demopolis Yacht Harbor at about 3PM. When we radioed in we were told to just tie up at the gas dock, and the proprietor would be in at about 4PM to tell us where to tie up for the night and to take our money. So we did as we were told and walked ashore to check the place out. We shortly found a lounge/clubhouse for use by live aboards and transients such as ourselves. We were cheerily invited in to share their Thanksgiving feast! This was a pleasant and welcome surprise. There was quite a spread of turkey and ALL the trimmings, including many desserts. Needless to say, we dug right in. Afterall, what is Thanksgiving without turkey!?

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11/25/2009	192	52	4.25	M	33° 13.311'	88° 16.833'	Pirates Marina Cove, Pickensville, AL	\$23.00	2
11-25-09 Pirate's Marina Cove, Pickensville, AL									

Betsy speaks: We departed Aberdeen Marina this morning still heading south on the Tenn-Tom Waterway. After slowly navigating our way back out of the marina's spooky channel, we immediately went through the Aberdeen Lock, then 23 miles later through the Stennis Lock. There was no other traffic on the waterway today, so we didn't have to wait for the locks at all. It was a beautiful sunny day, bordering on being almost hot. What a delight after several dreary days.

Early afternoon we pulled into Pirate's Marina Cove, for a total distance of 52 miles. We would liked to have gone farther, but the next marina is through 2 more locks and 90 miles away, so we would not have arrived until well after dark.

The waters we've travelled the last several days are getting pretty boring. If you like being in the middle of nowhere and communing with nature, this would suit you. We did see a raccoon swimming along one day, and we've seen many blue herons and a few hawks, but nothing real exciting. You go for miles before seeing a house, and then what you see can range from beautiful to depressing. A couple of unexpected things we saw today were an old telephone booth out in the middle of nowhere, right on the waterway's edge, and a house with a totem pole in front of it.

We arrived at the marina in time to visit the nearby Tom Bevill Visitor Center, so let's talk about government waste for a minute. Tom Bevill was a Congressman representing Alabama from 1966 to 1995. He was head of the Appropriations Committee from 1977 until 1995. During that time he was generally well liked by the people of Alabama, and he was instrumental in the development of the Tenn-Tom Waterway. But this visitor's center, which is basically a monument to him, is really over the top. It has the appearance of being a beautiful antebellum home in the Greek revival style. And if it were truly an antebellum home perhaps it wouldn't have struck me as being such a waste of money. But it was actually completed in 1985. Nowhere did I see how much it cost to construct this building, but it must have been ridiculously expensive, and it makes me mad that it was paid for with federal dollars. There are some nice exhibits inside, but those same exhibits could have been put in a much less expensive structure. There are plenty of true antebellum homes in the south, so I just don't see the point in spending so much money to build a replica.

Off that soap box, I must say that the US Snagboat Montgomery, which is on display right next to the mansion, was well worth the visit. It is an old steam powered sternwheeler that was built in 1926 and retired from service in 1982. With its huge boom on the front, it was used to clear debris from the waterway. Visitors are now allowed to walk all through the boat, seeing the crew's and officer's quarters, the galley, the pilot house, etc. It was fascinating, and reminded me of the Delta Queen on which we have travelled many times.

One thing we laughed at on the boat was the placement of the Navigation Rules. I'm sure they were required to be prominently displayed on the boat, just as they are on commercial vessels today. But on this boat, the "Rules of the Road" were the "Rules on the Roof" as you can see in the picture where Rick is pointing at them mounted on the ceiling!

Pirate's Marina Cove is much like yesterday's Aberdeen Marina. like a step back in time. The office is an old trailer. The courtesy car is an old van with well over 200,000 miles on the odometer and no shock absorbers! We took the car into nearby Pickensville for dinner at the only restaurant, named "Down Yonder." They specialize in pork ribs, and the motto on the waitperson's shirt read "Get your butt Down Yonder." At least 90% of the patrons were in camouflage, including the little boy who was telling everyone about the lizard tails he had broken off in the last few days, and the mice that ate the toilet paper in his house. Someone asked him if he had shot a deer today, and he said no but he had kilt two rats. Oh how we fought to keep from laughing out loud!

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We have no plans for Thanksgiving. We'll probably just eat a peanut butter sandwich as we head downstream toward Demopolis tomorrow.

This is when we're sorry to be so far behind our friends that got ahead of us when we went home. I'm sure other loopers are having Thanksgiving together, although many have gone home to be with family. To those reading this we hope you have a Happy Thanksgiving, and eat an extra serving of turkey for us with lots of gravy and stuffing. I don't remember ever not having Turkey and Pumpkin Pie on Thanksgiving Day before. But we are truly thankful this year to be taking this wonderful trip which has gone so well so far!

11/23/2009	190	38	5.00	M	33°50.383'	88°30.502'	Aberdeen Marina	\$27.82	4
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[Rick] Today was a typical day on the Tombigbee Waterway. We left Midway Marina and quickly passed through the first lock. The lockmaster told us that he had not locked anyone through going in our direction and we should have clear running. By the third lock, we encountered a small problem. The lock had a barge and tow in it and one waiting to go in, both going our way. They had probably pulled off yesterday and started again today. This meant a wait of about 1.5 hours. We pulled into the Smithville Marina to wait. This is a very old marina, kinda dumpy, but with cable TV and a laundry.

The problem is that the next lock is only 5 miles, so once we clear this lock, we will be behind the two tows for the next lock. And this is exactly what happened. The next lock was just dumping the first tow and we had to wait about 1.5 hours for the second one to pass through. All of these locks are 30 ft drops, so they take about 25-30 minutes to refill and reload. Along the way, we saw a raccoon swimming across the Tombigbee. We proceeded to the Aberdeen Marina, a total distance of about 39 miles. This unique marina is a Quickmart on the highway, selling gas to cars, and selling gas to boats at the back docks. We know of no other place like it. Also, most loopers visit this marina since they sell the gas for less than most marinas. Today, Gas is \$2.85 and it was \$3.29 at Grand Harbor just 3 days ago. The courtesy car is a Lincoln Continental, with 115000 on the odometer, but then, they do have a courtesy car. Aberdeen Marina is about 2000 feet off the main channel. It is well marked with red and green poles, and it really needs to be marked. The channel looks like a trip back into time. Fog rising up, old trees, stumps, birds mark the entrance. It is much like the Dismal Swamp.

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11/22/2009	189	20	3.00	M	34° 17.863'	88° 25.224'	Midway Marina - Fulton, MS	\$27.82	3
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Betsy speaks. We woke up to a cold and rainy Sunday morning. Knowing we had three locks one right after the other to go through, we waited a couple of hours for the rain to let up. Obviously, when locking at least one person has to be outside getting wet if it is raining. Usually that person is the female, since usually the male is the one at the helm. Fortunately for me, we do things backwards from the way most people do it! From very early on I have been at the helm for all locking and most docking, which means Rick is the one getting wet! I really don't understand why more women don't pick up on this. Handling the lines is a messy and often difficult job. You have to have quite a reach to put the line over the floating pin or bollard, or you have to be good at lassoing the thing. It is the major complaint you hear from women at our round-table discussions at AGLCA gatherings.

Anyway, by about 10:30 the rain seemed to have stopped for the time being, so we called the lock to see if we could get on through. After heavy barge traffic yesterday, today was very quiet, and we had no wait at all at any of the locks. So we made our 100th lock-through for this trip on the 84 foot Jamie Whitten Lock. If we had not taken the side trip up the Tennessee River and gone through the 95 foot Wilson Lock, this would have been the highest lock on the Great Loop route. The lock masters on the Tenn-Tom are very friendly, and we thanked this one for a smooth 100th ride. Seems like all these guys took their training at from the same person, because at all three locks today any affirmative they gave was a cheery "Roger, Roger!"

Since the weather was so lousy (even though the rain had mostly stopped it was still wet, dreary and a very cold 59 degrees) we decided to pull in at Midway Marina in Fulton, MS, for the night, arriving about lunchtime after a total distance of 19 miles. At least here we have internet and cable TV, which we didn't have last night.

Tucked back in a swampy cove amongst many trees, Midway is like a step back in time. Most of the permanently moored boats here are old and run down. Many seem to have people living aboard. Most are old houseboats. The docks are stationary instead of the floating docks to which we've become accustomed. But the people are very friendly and the facilities are exceptionally nice, including a lounge area with sofas and TV, a table set up for jigsaw puzzles of which they have a huge collection, many games, tons of books in the book exchange, and a large selection of VHS movies for you to borrow for the evening. They also have a hot tub available for use, and a nice lake. The restaurant was only open for lunch today, so we didn't get to give it a try.

We took the courtesy car for dinner and made a quick stop at Wal-mart. Then came back and enjoyed walking the docks and admiring the Christmas decorations. Yes, it seems early in the season, but most of the boats are already decked out with Christmas lights. They have a contest amongst local children's groups for the best decorations. This seems to be a very active marina. Last night we missed a huge "hobo feed" complete with band. On Thanksgiving they will have a marina wide Thanksgiving dinner with everyone signing up for a dish to bring.

Tomorrow, more locks and more southbound travel.

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11/21/2009	188	39	3.00	M	34° 32.426'	88° 20.421'	Bay Springs Marina	\$27.82	
11-21-09 Bay Springs Marina, Belmont, MS									

[Rick] Today was one of those days that reaffirm our decision to not make plans or schedules.

Our Goal for the day: We were to leave Grand Harbor, travel about 54 miles to Midway Marina. We would pass through three locks. All in all, a very easy day.

What actually happened: Before we could leave Grand Harbor, we had to place a call to the technician that had installed the new bilge pump yesterday. During the night the float switch came on, trying to get the new pump to pump, but there was no water to pump. The float switch stayed on and actually woke us both up around 0200 (that is 2am for the non-nautical types). I had to remove the fuse from the fuse box to cut off the switch and the pump. Naturally, I did not get much sleep as I was worried about the noise, and more importantly, would the Pickwick Marine Service be open on Saturday morning. Well, when I called at 0800 they were open and the nice lady said she would get someone over to look at the pump. About 0900, the same person that installed the new pump came over and discovered that he had placed the new pump at such an angle that made it contact the float switch, causing it to go on. He realigned the new pump, we tested it out and all was good.

We left Grand harbor at 1000 and proceeded per plan down the Tombigbee Waterway. The Tombigbee is a combination of lakes, rivers, and manmade canals that connect Mobile Bay with the Tennessee River. It was opened in 1985 as the most expensive civil project in history. In reality, it was an "earmark" for Senator John Stennis, the main backer in Congress. It was supposed to be a commercial waterway paralleling the Mississippi and take some of the barge traffic off the Mississippi. History has shown that while there is some commercial traffic, it is nowhere near the amount projected and supporters now talk in glowing terms about the recreational advantages of the waterway. For loopers, it is wonderful, as it provides a peaceful, well marked, and safe waterway without having to go on the Lower Mississippi River which is totally unsuitable for pleasure boats. The Tombigbee is 449 miles long, beginning at the convention center in Mobile, AL and ending at the junction of the Tennessee River just past Grand Harbor marina. There are 12 locks on the waterway and there is a steady current, but not overwhelming, flowing from north to south.

After about 35 miles, we overtook a tow and in about a mile came upon the first of the three locks we wanted to navigate, the Whitten Lock. At the lock, one tow was just entering the lock, one was waiting, and the one we had just passed was right behind. The average tow takes about 50 to 60 minutes to pass through the lock. We inquired with the lockmaster as to the chances of passage and he said it would be "awhile". We went to a nearby marina, Bay Springs Marina. After sitting for about 3 hours, it was now 1500, we decide to just spend the night at Bay Springs and make a good start tomorrow. After all, the next lock is only 5 miles and we would have been following those three barges for the next 3 locks, waiting at each one. Our decision to stay gives us hope that the three barges will get past the bunched up locks and our travel tomorrow will be uneventful. Overall we've been very lucky with locks. This is lock 100 of our trip, and it is the first time we've had to change our plans due to having to wait an extraordinary amount of time.

Bay Springs Marina, at mile marker 412 RDB, is a small but nice marina. It has no cable or WI-FI, but it does have a very nice courtesy car and washing machines and dryers. The restrooms and showers are certainly adequate. So, it is not a total waste of the day.

One highlight of the day involved some visitors to our boat. One of Betsy's harmonica-playing friends (Mike Bruce), his wife (Faye) and daughter (Abbie) came to visit us. They live about 15 miles away. Betsy met Mike at her first SPAH convention several years ago, and they have become good friends over the past few years, partly due to the fact that Mike usually has a car at SPAH and chauffeurs Betsy and several others to dinner, etc. Betsy was pleased to finally meet Mike's wife and one of his four daughters. They seemed like wonderful, down-to-earth people and we visiting with them.

Tomorrow, we strike out again, with a plan that is subject to change.

<u>--Date--</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Miles Today</u>	<u>Time Today</u>	<u>MA WP</u>	<u>Lat(N)</u>	<u>Lon(W)</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>COST DOCKAGE</u>	<u>NUMB LOCKS</u>
11/18/2009	185	62	4.50	M	34° 59.462'	88° 12.951'	Grand Harbor Marina	\$93.90	2
	11-18-09	Grand Harbor Marina							

[Rick] Welcome back. Today the blog will be in two parts. The first will reference our trip back to North Carolina and the second will talk about our voyage today as we left Joe Wheeler State park.

You will recall that we rented a van, filled it with some things we no longer needed, and went to Sneads Ferry for some R&R. Here are some of the things we did while home:

- A. We attended a party for the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the New River Sail and Power Squadron.
- B. We got to hear one of the two interim pastors at SFPC, Jim Holderness. He was a very good preacher and we enjoyed his sermons.
- C. We made an offer on a used boat on the Tennessee River. We were to sea trial the boat today, but the broker called yesterday and told us that they had discovered a leak in the gas tank. Glad it was discovered then and not after we had agreed to purchase the boat.
- D. We had our annual get-together with some of our St Andrews friends for a weekend. We have held this gathering for the past 6 years at our beach cottage in the fall of the year. This is the group that provided the large sign on our beach cottage.
- E. Betsy, Beamer, and I all three got buzz cuts the day before returning to Alabama.
- F. When we returned to Joe Wheeler State Park Marina, the difference in number of boats was startling. When we left, the marina was full, a result of the AGLCA rendezvous. Today, there are few boats(2) in the transient section.

Part 2. Leaving Joe Wheeler State Park.

We returned the rental van and decided to leave Joe Wheeler and make a run to Grand Harbor Marina. We had to pass through 2 locks, including the 95 ft lift Wilson Lock. The total trip is 62 miles. We have been to Grand Harbor before and find it to be one of our favorite places. The weather was cold and dreary. The temperature was in the low 50's. The main reason we are here is that we are due for the 700 hour service on our Honda motors. We have arranged for a local Honda Technician to do the service. The main problem is that we have to be lifted out of the water for the service and we have no trailer here. So, we are usually lifted out by travel lifts with the straps. But, it is a concern and a cost, usually about \$200.

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11/3/2009	170			W			Sneads Ferry		
	11-03-09	Sneads Ferry, NC							

[Rick] Yes, the title is correct. We left the boat in Rogersville AL, rented a panel truck, loaded about 700 lbs of "stuff" into the truck and off the boat, and made our way to Sneads Ferry on Thursday and Friday, October 29-30. We had planned this break from the beginning. We attended the rendezvous at Wheeler State Park, left the boat there, and headed home.

Our purpose for coming home was multifold. It is election day, the 50th anniversary of the New River Sail and Power Squadron, our friends from St Andrews coming to the beach cottage, and a myriad of other things. Plus, it is a nice break and a chance to recharge our land batteries. We knew it was time to come home when we began to say "over" at the end of every sentence while talking on the cell phone.

We do have some news. On Saturday October 24, at the informal get together, Betsy won the conch blowing contest, and was awarded the flag of the conch Republic, a nickname for the Florida Keys. One other fun game was "Buttdarts". This picture will tell you all you need to know about dropping a quarter from between your butt cheeks into a cup, scoring points.

We did attend the 50th Anniversary party for the NRSPS. It was held in Susan Kleinfelt's home. About 55 people were present and we elected new officers. As the Squadron Chaplain, I got to give the invocation.

We plan to be home for about two weeks, returning to Alabama around November 18. There will be no further postings until that time. Join us as we take a break from the trip and recharge your batteries. Over...

10/22/2009	158	21	1.75	M	34° 48.706'	87° 19.900'	Joe Wheeler Park - Rogersville, AL	\$300.00	2
	10-22-09	Joe Wheeler State Park, AL							

[Rick] We went from Florence AL Marina to Joe Wheeler State Park and Marina near Rogersville AL. The distance is only about 23 miles, but we had to pass through Wilson and Wheeler locks. You will recall that Wilson Lock has a lift of 95 feet and Wheeler is 45 feet. Many of our friends are in this area since we are to attend the AGLCA Rendezvous that begins on Sunday and goes through Wednesday. We have about 50 boats and 225 people registered for the event. We drove to this event in 2007.

The rendezvous is a series of sessions about parts of the upcoming loop areas that we will be visiting. Of particular interest are the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway (aka Tenn-Tom), crossing the Gulf of Mexico, the west coast of Florida, the Florida Keys, and back up the east coast. This is all done by volunteers and sponsored by marinas and boating firms. Our \$250 per person entry fee also helps. The fee includes the sessions, lunch and dinner each day and a grand party on Wednesday night. There is, of course, a ship's store where you can find all sorts of charts, books, clothes, etc.

The Joe Wheeler Park is a state park, one of 5 state parks that happens to be built on some very expensive real estate. It includes a lodge with very large rooms, rental cabins; a campground, golf course, tennis courts, and a 500 slip marina, 300 of the slips are covered. It is a beautiful place to vacation and visit. It is named for a famous Confederate General, Joe Wheeler. After the "War of Northern Aggression", he became a Major General in the US Army and later served in the Spanish-American War. He is a true hero in Alabama.

Since our days will be filled with sessions and meetings, there will be no blog until at least November 2, 2009. We will just be too busy and it is hard to communicate the information in the sessions. You have to be there...

<u>--Date--</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Miles Today</u>	<u>Time Today</u>	<u>MA WP</u>	<u>Lat(N)</u>	<u>Lon(W)</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>COST DOCKAGE</u>	<u>NUMB LOCKS</u>
10/18/2009	154	34	5.00	M	34° 47.212'	87° 40.433'	Florence Marina - Florence AL	\$104.00	2
	10-18-09	Florence AL. again							

[Rick] After a hearty breakfast, including a \$5.00 off coupon, with our friends from Falcor, Al and Gayle, and the harbor hosts, Jim and Sue Starke, we departed Bay Hill Marina for Florence AL. The sun had decided to appear and the temperature was warming up nicely. It was still brisk, however, since the overnight temp was in the low forties. When we left, Al climbed up on one of the barges that serves as a breakwater and waved goodbye to us. They are not going to the rendezvous, and leave next Friday to head for the Bahamas for the winter. So, there is a good chance that we will not see them again, especially since they reside in Canada, eh.

We had two locks to negotiate, both locking down. The first, Joe Wheeler Lock, was very quick and easy. We waited only about 5 minutes. The drop was 45 feet. So, the time to lock through was about 30 total minutes. We called the second lock, Wilson Lock, and were told that a tow was to arrive in 20 minutes, and it would take a total of 3 hours to get him through. We were 15 miles from the lock. We slowed down and just cruised very slowly to kill some time. We noted a small town with a marina on the RDB, Killen, and decided to go to the marina. It was up a creek about a mile. We docked, walked Beamer, ate some lunch, and walked around the marina. The marina closes from Labor Day until Memorial Day, so we had the place to ourselves. After a while, we restarted, rejoined the main channel and arrived at Wilson Lock. Just as we had been told, we got to lock through after a wait of 20 minutes, but at the exact time the lockmaster had told us earlier. Wilson Lock is a lift or drop of 93 feet. It took about 45 minutes to lock through, for a total of about an hour. Beamer helped with the locking chores.

We continued to Florence Harbor Marina in Florence AL. We had stayed here several weeks ago. We will stay here for 3-4 days before going to Wheeler for the rendezvous. Unfortunately, the onsite restaurant, where we ate just a few weeks ago, is now closed permanently. So, we and another looper couple used the courtesy car to go to an Italian Restaurant. It turns out the couple, Barbara and Marty Christ, looped last year with our friends Lorenzo and Delois Johnson of Shallotte. Lorenzo is the person that sold us his charts of the loop that we found so valuable. It is truly a small world. There are several loopers here, so it will be more challenging to use the courtesy car, but we will survive. The free wifi here is very strong, so, we will catch up on Survivor and other shows while here.

10-19-09 Tuscumbia, AL

[Rick] Today was a very easy day. We took the courtesy car to Tuscumbia, AL. You will recall that we have been to the area before, once about a year ago aboard the RiverBarge and then about two weeks ago as we went up the Tennessee River. Tuscumbia is the home of Helen Keller, WC Handy (the Father of the Blues) and contains the only Frank Lloyd Wright designed house in Alabama. This was also the first place to receive power from the TVA back in the mid-thirties.

But, today, let's focus on the history of the area, a dark history indeed. This was one of the holding areas for the Indian tribes as they were forced to walk to Oklahoma on the now infamous "Trail of Tears". Tuscumbia was kind to the Indians and helped them in any way possible. Spring Park contains several statues, plaques, etc to commemorate the event. Of particular interest is the statue of an Indian woman, stopping to grieve over the grave of a loved one. She carries a small baby, the symbol of hope and the future. Around her shoulders is a blanket given to her by a Tuscumbia resident. Her face reveals the tremendous stress on her and her people, yet also indicates the determination of her proud people. The Trail of Tears was a dark chapter in American history and Tuscumbia wants all Americans to never forget it.

The central theme of Spring Park is a manmade waterfall, 80 ft tall, 40 feet wide, and constructed from local stone. 3.3 million gallons of water pass over the fall each day. The city of Tuscumbia gets its drinking water from this fall.

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Tomorrow, The National Coon Dog Cemetery. I cannot wait..

10-20-09 Coon Dog Cemetery

Many a time, solemn men in black coats and hip boots, carbide lamps on their heads, stood beside fresh dug holes in this thick wilderness to bury their faithful coon dogs. Almost 200 head-stones - or sheet metal with scratched inscriptions - memorialize best friends like Bean Blossom, Night Ranger, Patches, Preacher, and Straight Talk'n Tex. Whether it's a cold nose, hot nose, loose mouth, squallin', grand nite champion, or pressure tree dog, the epitaphs say it all: "He was a joy to hunt with.He wasn't the best, but he was the best I ever had."

Only blue-blood coon dogs lie in rest here. "We have stipulations on this thing," says the caretaker of the Coon Dog Cemetery. "A dog can't run no deer, possum - nothing like that. He's got to be a straight coon dog, and he's got to be a full hound. Couldn't be a mixed up breed dog, a house dog." And, according to Key Underwood who started the whole thing in 1937 when he buried his buddy, Troop, you must not know much about coon hunters and their dogs if you think we could contaminate this burial place with poodles and lap dogs.

The description above of the Coon Dog Cemetery comes from a brochure about the sights and entertainment in Florence, AL and the surrounding area.

Betsy and I just had to visit the cemetery. It is located about 25 miles from the marina. Access is by highway, then an old backwood road, barely wide enough for two cars to pass. We are just going to let the pictures tell the story.

You will note the statue on the property showing two coon dogs treeing a coon. It is enclosed entirely in fencing, and razor wire on the top. This is due to vandalism on the original statue.

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10/16/2009	152	71	4.00	M	34° 46.619'	87° 13.209'	Bay Hill Marina Athens AL	\$52.00	1
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[Rick] We finally decided to leave Scottsboro, AL and the Goose Pond Colony Marina. We really enjoyed our 10 nights there but we thought it time to move on. The AGLCA rendezvous begins on Oct 25 at a state park about 100 miles from Scottsboro. Also, we wanted to return to Florence, AL and do some more things at that town. While there, we will go to the National Coon Dog Cemetery and take the guided tour.

We left Goose Pond at 0930 heading down river. We planned to go to Bay Hill Marina in Athens AL and spend two nights before going down to Florence Marina. Most of our travels on the Tennessee River have been on beautiful days, but today was less than ideal. It was cold and windy. We started out in a river so although the wind was in our face, it was not too bad. Shortly after locking down at the Guntersville Lock and Dam another looper that was a couple of hours ahead of us called and told us that in Decatur, where the river widens to the lake, the waves were 3-4 feet. We couldn't imagine this area having waves that high, but we did consider our options as to where we could pull over if we had to. We pressed forward, knowing our boat probably handled this choppy water better than theirs. When we got to Decatur, the wind was up, but we never saw waves more than 1-2 feet...choppy, but not bad for our boat. We pulled over, had lunch, and made sure that all was secured in the boat just in case things got rougher, and proceeded the twenty miles to Bay Hill Marina.

The entrance to Bay Hill is between some barges, painted blue. The old barges made excellent breakwaters. Upon docking, we are in a covered slip, free Wi-Fi and the price for loopers is \$.50 per foot. The showers are a hike, but at least they have showers. We visited with our friends on Falcor, Gayle and Al, for docktails. Docked just down from us is a 105 foot mega yacht named Bullish that we've hopscotched with all along the river. So big, it blocks what sun there was this afternoon.

We will stay here until Sunday and go to Florence AL. It is expected to be 36 degrees tomorrow night. All is going very well, and we are dry and warm. Later...

10-17-09 Bay Hill Marina and dinner w/friends

Betsy speaks - We spent the day at Bay Hill Marina near Athens, Alabama. Waking up this morning it was very cold outside, but nothing seems to stop the fishermen here. I looked out to see a bass boat right in the marina basin, with two guys bundled up on board fishing. Seeing these boats on the open water they seem like they are flying. Taking a closer look at this one right next to us I could see why they go so fast. This small boat has a 250 horse motor on the back! I asked the guy how fast it went and he said 81 MPH!

It was cold all day, so we just stayed on the boat and read and relaxed. This afternoon the marina was setting up for a wedding reception on one of the several barges that make up the perimeter of this marina. Since it is so cold, they had to put up plastic all the way around, as well as several huge heaters. Tonight as I write this the party is still going strong at 11:30 and we are docked right next to it. Here's a picture of the barge, as they were putting up the decorations on the inside which you really can't see very well.

Tonight we had a real treat. Many towns have "marina hosts" that are members of the AGLCA (America's Great Loop Cruiser's Assoc). These hosts may be past or future loopers or just people that dream of doing it. They offer their cars, local knowledge, just anything you might need as you pass through their town. Rick and I may be "hosts" for loopers that come through our area once we arrive home. As soon as we arrived here yesterday we were introduced to Jim and Sue Starke who completed the loop several years ago. Originally from Ohio, they fell in love with this area as they looped through and eventually purchased a small patio home here. While looping they met our friends Gayle and Al on "Falcor" who are presently on their 3rd time around. So when we pulled in yesterday they were visiting with "Falcor" and immediately came over and introduced themselves to us and offered to help us in any way possible while we are here. We all got together on "Falcor" last night for docktails

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and Sue and Jim invited us along with Gayle and Al to come to their house for dinner tonight. It was the first time Rick and I have been in a real home since we left ours on May 18th. Sue and Jim fixed a wonderful dinner of fried fish.

Next week Sue and Jim plan to get on their boat and travel with Gayle and Al on down to Florida. They live on their boat about 8 months out of the year and spend about 4 months in the home they bought here. It was a fun evening and wonderful to have a home cooked meal after all these months!

Tomorrow morning we're all getting together for breakfast here at the marina, and then Rick and I will head back to Florence for a few days.

10/15/2009	151	23	2.50	W	34°21.731'	86°17.406'	Guntersville Town Dock		
10-15-09 Goose Pond to back to Guntersville, AL									

Betsy speaks.OK, we know we haven't written in a few days, but there was not much to tell. We did make a few trips to Wal-Mart using the marina's courtesy car. Then the car seemed to be on its last leg when it had a pancake flat tire one morning, and as soon as the marina got that fixed there developed an antifreeze leak so the engine was overheating.

We did stay at Goose Pond longer than any place so far.10 nights total. We were just laid back and relaxing at one of our favorite locations on this entire trip. Goose Pond Colony Marina near Scottsboro, Alabama was so relaxing, beautiful, friendly.there just aren't enough superlatives to describe it. If I were ever going to leave North Carolina, this general area would be my new home!

We did finally get a flu shot yesterday at the local health department. We've put up with rain for several days, sometimes downpours, other times just drizzle. There was a break in the clouds today, so since there was no longer a courtesy car available we decided it was time to move on! So we drove the 22 miles back to Guntersville and are tied up at the free town dock. On the way, we passed what looked like a restaurant being pushed by a barge.

We also took the time to pull into the docks at Lake Guntersville State Park. You will recall that we went to the lodge there a couple of weeks ago when we were here, but we had not yet stopped in at the marina there. We worked our way through the beginnings of a sailboat regatta (oops, we forgot to take pictures) and tied up at what appeared to be a day dock. We went to the nearby store to ask about availability of transient slips, as this place is not mentioned in any of the cruising guides. They do have transient slips with power and water, with bathrooms/showers nearby, for the rate of 75 cents per foot.very reasonable. But we were obligated to meet someone in town, so we didn't stay there. We will surely stay there next time we are in this area.

We met looper friends Ann and Ralph on "Harmonie" at the town docks and went out to celebrate their anniversary with them. Now we're back on the boat running the generator, as there is no power at this free dock. Tonight it is supposed to get into the high 30s, but our boat is tight and cozy so we'll be warm enough. We can run the heat pump using the generator, or we have a small space heater that will take the chill off in the morning. Tomorrow we will head downstream again.

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10/5/2009	141	86	5.00	M	34°34.813'	86° 4.760'	Scottsboro AL Goose Pond Marina	\$200.00	1
<p>[Rick] Today was a very dreary and miserable day. It rained early. Then, when the rain stopped, it misted the rest of the day. The entire day was overcast. So, there are no pictures today.</p> <p>You will recall that we made the decision to go back downstream from Chattanooga rather than fight the current and mess with the lock that is under repair and go upstream toward Knoxville. So, we left Chattanooga to 0930 and headed for Scottsboro. We made great time going with the current.</p> <p>We arrived in Scottsboro at 1430, after 5 hours of very easy travel. We passed through the Nickajack lock after waiting only 15 minutes for the opening.</p> <p>The marina at Scottsboro, Goose Pond Colony Resort Marina, turned out to be a pleasant surprise. The marina has free wifi, free cable, courtesy car and all of the other required amenities, including a nearby Wal-Mart. The cost is only \$20 per night. We checked the gas price and found it to be \$2.699. On the way, we passed a marina where the gas was \$3.299. Glad we passed this one up.</p> <p>Scottsboro is not a huge town, but it does have a unique distinction in the United States. It is the home of Unclaimed Baggage. That's right. When luggage is lost at most of the airlines and cannot be returned to the owner, the luggage is sent to Scottsboro. We plan to visit the facility tomorrow, so come back tomorrow for a full report.</p>									

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10/2/2009	138	34	2.25	M	35° 3.373'	85° 18.993'	Chattanooga, TN	\$78.00	

[Rick] Having to go only 30 miles to Chattanooga, we made no attempt to get up at the crack of dawn to get started and we finally left the dock at 1000. ON the way out, I got this picture of the "cottages" that are for rent at the marina. They are just houseboats without a motor. They are moored in slips, with power, cable, etc and are rented just like a land based unit. Wonder how CAMA would react to a proposal to put in about 100 of these at Wrightsville Beach or Sneads Ferry. They would go nuts.

The day was overcast and the clouds were very low. Easy to see why they call these mountains the Great Smokies.

Remember the huge houseboat we passed yesterday and that stayed at our marina last night. We passed them again today and here is the proof. This baby is huge.

Upon arrival in Chattanooga, we immediately took a spin around the harbor to see the Delta Queen. She is tied to the RDB just up from the marina. She looks no worse for wear, but we still wish she was plying the rivers with the calliope playing. It is such a shame that she is now a glorified B&B.

In Chattanooga, Marine Max is the agent for the city for all the dockage in the downtown area. In reality, they are a yacht brokerage that rents out slips. We are paying \$1.00 per foot and were very disappointed to find that they have NO shower facilities and the restrooms close at 1800. They do have wifi. We are on a face dock, in the river current of 3+ mph. The shower revelation was most annoying.

We got the bikes and biked to downtown for lunch and to look around. While eating pizza at a nice pizza place, our looper friends, Jack and Pia, came in to say hello. They were across the street and saw us come in.

We decided to go ahead and see the aquarium today and use tomorrow for the Blue Grass festival that is going on here this weekend. We purchased our tickets to include an IMAX show at 1700. About 1645, we were leaving the aquarium to go to the theatre across the street, and the guard said we had missed the show. Turns out that we are back in Eastern Daylight Time, having crossed the line sometime today without know it. Luckily, we exchanged or tickets for tomorrow. We are not going to change our watches, as we will be back on Central Time soon.

We took some great pictures in the aquarium, but it really is a place you need to see for yourself. It is a very good aquarium, rivaling Baltimore and Chicago. The aquarium also features a butterfly house. It was very good.

We ate supper at the Bluegrass festival in the mobile vendor area. Betsy went back to listen to the headline band as I write this blog.

10-03-09 Chattanooga, TN II and Delta Queen

[Rick] We awoke this morning to the sounds of Ducks. No, not those ducks, these ducks.

The first thing we did was to go watch the IMAX presentation of "Under the Sea". This was a part of our combo ticket to the aquarium, which we visited yesterday. This was a great underwater story. It featured the coral reefs and the fish and animals that inhabit the reef. It also stressed the ecological balance that must be observed and the consequences if that balance is not kept.

Chattanooga has a FREE shuttle service throughout most of the main part of town. It is provided on electric, no emission, busses that hold about 15 people. They run round trip to the Choo-Choo section, a destination in itself. They also run across the river to the North Shore. That is where we went to see The Legendary Delta Queen. She is one of the main reasons we wanted to come to Chattanooga. She is tied to the RDB 463.6

<u>--Date--</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Miles Today</u>	<u>Time Today</u>	<u>MA WP</u>	<u>Lat(N)</u>	<u>Lon(W)</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>COST DOCKAGE</u>	<u>NUMB LOCKS</u>
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and is now a restaurant the hotel. She sits on a dock in McClellan Park, a very nice park with a carousel and a lot of specialty shops nearby. We walked on like we owned the place. No one stopped us. (On the way out, the guard was stopping Looky-loos). We walked all around the boat and she is in great shape. She is clean, freshly painted and varnished. All of the furniture and pictures are in place. The large comfortable chairs are there and still comfortable. Banjo Bob Stevens still plays in the Texas Lounge. The dining room was still as we remembered it. We thought about staying for supper, but the menu did not appeal to us. We later found that "Reservations are required" and they are full for the evening, both hotel and restaurant. This is a good thing, as the only way for her to survive is to keep pulling in the people. We returned to the boat in late afternoon and after supper, went to listen to the headliners at the Bluegrass festival. It is unfortunate that they are having a Barbershop Quartet competition this same weekend about 5 blocks away. We were told that the top 250 quartets in the southeast will be competing. Tomorrow, we leave Chattanooga and continue upstream toward Knoxville.

10/1/2009	137	75	5.00	M	35° 2.696'	85° 32.252'	Guild TN Hales Bar Marina	\$26.00	1
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[Rick] What a pretty Day. We went to the fuel dock of Alred Marina to fill up. Alred has a special for loopers. If you get at least 100 gallons of gas, you get two nights dockage FREE. We had already planned to take them up on this. When we got to the dock, we found out why they do this. The price per gallon is \$3.899, at least \$.50 more than we have seen in weeks. Remember, we saw \$2.499 at Pebble Isle. We went ahead and filled up and figured the stay was a discount of about \$36.00. Oh Well.

We proceeded upbound toward Chattanooga. The weather was perfect. The scenery was beautiful. As we neared the town of Guild, we saw one of these famous signs.

We called the Nickajack lock and told the lockmaster we were ready to go through. We waited about 10 minutes for him to empty the chamber, and the doors opened for us to enter. We proceeded in and tied to the starboard side in our usual manner. After we were secured, the lockmaster, via the loudspeaker, told us to tie to the port wall. We figured he had just forgotten to tell us when we entered. So, we untied, moved over, and retied. The rest was very normal and we were on our way in about 20 minutes. On the way out Betsy very calmly said on the radio "Thanks for the test of our boat handling and line preparation skills." You don't want to know what she said while not on the radio!

We are docked at the Hales Bar Marina. We are in a covered slip. The marina has free Cable TV, free very strong wifi, and in general a nice marina. Unfortunately, it is in the middle of nowhere. So, we had my birthday dinner on the boat and watched Survivor on TV.

A large houseboat came in after us. The boat is 80 feet long, 19 feet wide, and two stories tall, with a full deck for lounging on the top. It is gigantic. They have huge banners on the side pulling for the Alabama Crimson Tide this Saturday.

BTW. Happy Birthday to ME....

<u>--Date--</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Miles Today</u>	<u>Time Today</u>	<u>MA WP</u>	<u>Lat(N)</u>	<u>Lon(W)</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>COST DOCKAGE</u>	<u>NUMB LOCKS</u>
9/30/2009	136	56	4.00	M	34° 23.737'	86° 16.770'	Guntersville, AL Alred Marina		1

As we pulled away from Riverwalk Landing in Decatur, AL, this morning we went by the home of Meow Mix Catfood, so I took this picture for my cat loving friends (Margaret and Ada come immediately to mind). I just hope they don't make this catfood with the cute smiling catfish we showed you a couple of days ago!

We had a perfectly delightful run from Decatur to Guntersville, AL. A perfect, sunny day. There were very few boats on the water, so we were surprised and pleased to see a flotilla of old wooden ChrisCrafts zoom by. There were at least 12 by Rick's count, and all were beautifully maintained. Sorry I didn't get a picture of all of them as they came toward us, but we didn't realize soon enough what we were seeing, so I got just a few pictures toward the end.

Shortly thereafter we arrived at Guntersville Lock and Dam, and only had to wait about 10 minutes to enter along with a sailboat that was already there. For those of you that don't know it, I was a Gunter before my marriage, so this town has a special significance for me. Therefore, there are many pictures at the end of this blog with the word Guntersville in the picture! We had just been here last year on the RiverBarge, and I remember how surprised I was at what a beautiful place this is.

We arrived early enough in the day to pull up to the town dock for a few hours and walk into town. Our first stop was the Chamber of Commerce, which had been closed when we were here last year because all the employees were down at the riverfront welcoming the RiverBarge on her first landing here (and as it turns out sadly, her last). Then we walked up Gunter Avenue where we stopped at Guntersville Pizza Parlor for lunch.

Guntersville was named for John Gunter who migrated here from the Carolinas in 1785. He was the first white settler in this county, where he became a "squatter" at a salt deposit on the south bank of the Tennessee River. This site became known as Gunter's Landing. He married a Cherokee princess and they raised a large family. Partly because of the geographic location of the land he claimed on the Tennessee River, and partly because of his good relationship with the Indians, he amassed a fortune in land, money and slaves. Among his descendants was the noted humorist, Will Rogers. John Gunter died in 1836.

I hate to disclose that in spite of extensive genealogical research, I cannot claim to be a descendant of this John Gunter. My family is descended from a John Gunter who lived from 1770 to 1840 and died in what is now Lee County, NC. Possibly they were cousins, but my research has not proved this to be true. Still, it is neat to be in a town named for a Gunter. When we were here last year I hoped to go to the local historical cemetery and find some Gunter graves. My first stop was at the local historical society, which had a roster of graves in the cemetery. Imagine my surprise that not a single Gunter is buried in the "Historic Guntersville Cemetery!"

After visiting the town we went on to nearby Alred Marina where we will spend the night. From there we borrowed their courtesy car and drove to Lake Guntersville State Park. This is another place that we had visited last year, and it has some of the most breathtaking views we've ever seen. The beautiful lodge was rebuilt just a couple of years ago and is truly magnificent. It is full of beautiful artwork and carvings of wildlife. As we approached the lodge we had to stop for three deer that were just getting ready to cross the road.

The lodge overlooks the incredibly beautiful Lake Guntersville, and we arrived just in time to enjoy the sunset. We then ate dinner in their restaurant.

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Just wanted to share this picture of the boat right across from us.sometimes I wonder about people's choices for boat names!

Tomorrow we will move closer to Chattanooga, and will probably make another stop at Guntersville on our way back downriver. In the meantime, here are a few more Guntersville pictures. (note to my family.the Guntersville souvenir shop was closed, so don't be looking for Christmas presents from here this year!!!)

9/29/2009	135	47	4.75	N	34°37.003'	86°58.267'	Decatur AL Riverwalk Marina	\$13.00	2
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Rick] Today is another highlight of the trip. We left Florence, AL and immediately locked through the Wilson Lock and Dam. Wilson Dam, named for Woodrow Wilson, was constructed between 1919 and 1927. Upon its completion, it had the highest lift in the US at 95 feet. It has since been surpassed by 4 other dams and is now the 5th highest lift. It is actually comprised of two chambers, but the smaller 292 X 60 ft chamber is only used for emergencies and when the main chamber, 600 X 110 feet, is under repair. We got right in, and tied to the floating bollard. It still took about 40 minutes to fill the chamber and raise us 94 feet. The floating bollards float up as the water rises. All you do is hold on and the water does all the work.

The upper gate for the Wilson dam is different. Instead of large doors that are hinged and come together in the center, the gate goes completely across the dam and is lowered, including the walkway on the top, under the water. The exiting boats merely go out of the lock over the gate. The dam at Wilson is also special. It is over 4500 feet long and is built on principles the Romans used over 3000 years ago. It is composed of arches. Over 4000 brickmasons and stone workers worked on the project.

We had been through the Wilson Lock last year while on the RiverBarge trip from Nashville to Guntersville, and return.

After Wilson Lock, we also were lifted 45 feet by the Wheeler Lock. But, after Wilson, this seemed very wimpy. We did have to wait for 30 minutes, but a late arriving boat after us had to wait 3 hours due to a double tow that was southbound and had to be broken into two parts to traverse the lock.

We proceeded on to Riverwalk Marina at Decatur, AL, arriving about 1530. A nice quiet marina but not full of amenities. There are no showers. The men's restroom, quite a distance away, was described as "I hope it is clean. I think he cleaned it last week." The ladies room was locked and they cannot find the key, and have been looking for weeks. Dauna would not like it here. They have a restaurant/bar on the property and that is where we ate supper. It was not bad at all. But, we are only spending one night, and tomorrow, off we go to Guntersville, AL for at least 2 nights.

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9/27/2009	133	42	3.00	M	34° 47.214'	87° 40.432'	Florence, Al Marina	\$52.00	
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Betsy Speaks: OK, we know we missed doing a blog yesterday, but there really wasn't much to tell. Being a weekend, we stayed at Grand Harbor Marina in Counce, TN, an extra day so as not to fight with the weekend crazies. We woke up Saturday morning to pouring rain, which continued throughout the morning. The sun finally came out early afternoon for the first time in several days and it was hot and muggy. Saturday night we joined a couple of other boats and took the courtesy car to Pickwick State Park for their very good buffet dinner. So that would have been the extend of a blog yesterday.

We left Grand Harbor this morning, but before going on I want to share an interesting discussion I had with the marina manager. There are several "Slow/No Wake" signs both on the marina as well as in the waters surrounding the marina. This is a full service marina with lots of gas tanks. Still, the bass boats, which are very popular around here, would go flying by without slowing down. We asked the marina manager exactly what constituted "no wake" around here, and he said he had discussed this at length with the local commandant of the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard's response was that they would not enforce "Slow/No Wake" zones in a navigable channel because every boater is responsible for their wake, so they would only respond if actual damage occurred. This seemed very strange to us, and I don't recall ever being at a place where no wake zone signs in front of a marina were totally ignored.

Anyway, as I mentioned, this is bass boat heaven and they are everywhere and they slow down for nothing. They fly by us, totally air born as they cross our wake. I asked someone about their speed and was told that they can easily top 70 miles per hour. Seems strange to me that we usually slow down for them if we see them anchored with a fisherman standing up in them.maybe we should rethink our safety standards!

Today was an absolutely gorgeous day, sunny and hot. We had a very leisurely run up the Tennessee River to Florence, Alabama, about 42 miles. No locks. Rick drove most of the way while I played the part of hood ornament. The scenery along this route was just beautiful. We arrived at Florence Harbor Marina early afternoon. We were just here last year on the River Barge, so it is familiar to us. Just across the river is Tuscumbia, AL, childhood home of Helen Keller which we visited last year. Yes, there really is a well where she learned the word "water", as seen in the movie "The Miracle Worker.

Florence is the birthplace of W.C. Handy, "Father of the Blues" and composer of such hits as St. Louis Blues, Beale Street Blues and Memphis Blues.

Tonight we ate dinner right here at the marina, where they proudly advertise all you can eat catfish. (We both had hamburger steak). The restaurant is a floating structure, as are many of the marina structures here on the river. Just inside the front door, there is a hole through the floor with a light shining into the water below. Here catfish come right up to the surface, attracted by the light, and also by the food that is thrown to them through the hole. These fish are huge! The restaurant says they don't get their catfish through this hole, but it sure would be easy to do that! Just throw in a cracker and they come to the surface with mouths wide open.quite a sight! Some even seem to be smiling at you! This is simply beautiful country. It makes me wonder why we want to go home to salt water and hurricanes! We plan to stay here in Florence two nights and do some sightseeing tomorrow.

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9/25/2009	131	61	5.25	M	34°59.458'	88°12.949'	Grand Harbor, Counce, TN	\$58.80	1

We left Clifton Marina this morning with the goal of getting through the Pickwick Lock. As we left, we took a picture of the gas tank on the hill. Last year, during the flood, the water was ABOVE the tank.

We fought the current all the way to the lock. We were only getting about 1.15 mpg. We, and others, estimated the current to be 4-5 mph against us. As soon as we got through the lock, we immediately jumped up to 1.70 mpg. Quite a difference. In addition to the current, it continued to rain all day and into the night.

As we made our way up the river, we saw some wonderful houses built up on the bluffs of the river. In some cases, they were trailers and in other places, they were wonderful homes. Look at those steps.

We first went to Aqua Harbor Marina. They did not return our phone call, answer our VHF call or meet us at the dock. So, we determined they did not seem interested in our business and we backtracked one mile to Grand Harbor. So glad we did. Grand Harbor is an AGLCA sponsor and will host a cocktail party for us at the rendezvous in October. The marina is clean, the restrooms clean, and the staff seems to want to be of assistance. This is a condo development and marina. We have free wifi and cable TV. We plan to stay at least 2 nights, maybe 3.

9/24/2009	130	65	5.00	M	35°23.149'	88°0.366'	Clifton Marina	\$25.68	
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[Rick] Well, the rainy season is here. We have been hearing about the rain in the Southeast US, and now it has reached the Tennessee Valley. It rained all night.

I told you yesterday about the complimentary fried mushrooms, fried pickles, and the excellent free dessert at supper. This morning, we were told to report to the restaurant at 0830 for cinnamon rolls. They were excellent, hot and fresh made. I asked for a glass of milk. When we got ready to pay, they said that the rolls were "something we do every morning" and there was no charge. I like this place.

We left the marina at 1000, but immediately the rain came and the fog set in. We returned to the marina. We got a call from our friend Jack saying that 5 miles up the river it was clear. So we waited until the rain stopped, and out we went again. This time, all went well and we had a great day. The Tennessee is a very pretty river. This is a picture from the Clifton Town Park.

We arrived at Clifton Marina in Clifton, TN about 1530, having covered 65 miles. The marina is full but they managed to fit us in on the back side of the fuel dock. We took the courtesy car to town, and let me tell you, Clifton is NOT a happening town. The local bar is only open on Friday and Saturday nights. We were there at 1630 and the sidewalks were rolled up, except for this one. Guess it must be left out since it is historic.

Back at the marina, we saw a cute fisherman's ruler.

Tomorrow, we begin a series of dams and locks. Most of the lifts will be over 50 feet. However, weather reports are grim, so we may be rained in for the day.

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9/23/2009	129	76	5.25	M	36° 3.706'	87° 57.303'	Johnsonville, TN Pebble Isle Marina	\$26.98	
09-23-09 Johnsonville, TN Pebble Isle Marina									

[Rick] We travelled about 73 miles today from Green Turtle Marina to Pebble Isle Marina. It was a very easy ride. The day was very overcast and it did rain for a very few minutes while we were underway, but seas were smooth and there was no thunder or lightning. AND we did not leak (although there was not enough rain to really tell). The current is against us, but it will not stop the Rick `N Roll now that we're back up with both engines. We dropped off a couple of gallons of gas to Meander for their dinghy. They had spent the night anchored in a quiet cove off the river.

The best thing about the trip is that the throttle is fixed. It moves so easily. We had no idea it was so hard to move until we got it fixed. I guess it is like eyesight. You do not realize your vision is diminishing until you get glasses or contacts.

At Pebble Isle, a very small marina, they have a floating restaurant/ships store building. We and 12 of our friends from other looper boats had supper there. It was great. Very inexpensive. They served fried mushrooms and fried pickles, complimentary. Then, after the meal, they brought around a huge sundae and spoons for everyone to have 2-3 bites for dessert. We were told to be back in the morning at 0830 for hot, homemade cinnamon rolls ..We cannot wait and will probably not sleep a wink.

We continue our trip UP the Tennessee River, even though we are traveling South. We are heading to Chattanooga and a visit to the Legendary Delta Queen.

<u>--Date--</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Miles Today</u>	<u>Time Today</u>	<u>MA WP</u>	<u>Lat(N)</u>	<u>Lon(W)</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>COST DOCKAGE</u>	<u>NUMB LOCKS</u>
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9/19/2009	125	52	9.35	M	37° 0.431'	88° 13.553'	Green Turtle Bay Marina	\$152.60	2
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[Rick] You would think that after a long 110 mile day on Wednesday and a 92 mile day on Thursday, that the 50 mile run on the beautiful Cumberland would be a breeze. NOT. Let me explain.

We left the anchorage on the downstream side of Ohio Lock 52 at 0630 to lock through upon the locking of a tow. We waited about 45 minutes to get into the lock. The lock is old, poorly maintained, and very slow. We had to have 50 foot lines as we had to pass a line up to the lock person, loop around a bollard and then be raised about 13 feet. Did I mention that the lock is slow. So, for the 9 boats in our flotilla, we finally got out of the lock about 0900. We proceed up the Ohio River about 4 miles to Paducah, Ky. Paducah has a huge welcoming sign on the levee wall. However, there is only one 50 ft dock to tie, and it has a 15 minute time limit. It is a great old river town, but now does not cater to boaters at all.

We proceeded up the Ohio to the mouth of the Cumberland River, about 15 miles. Upon entering the Cumberland, we encountered some strong current and turbulence. The current was 4-6 MPH against us. It stayed this way for the entire 32 miles up to Barkley Dam. Keep in mind that we are on one engine, since the throttle on one motor is not working. We could not use the autopilot to steer. We were trying to conserve gas, as we knew it would be close for us to make the marina. All in all, one of the hardest days we have traveled and one of the most tiring from fighting the current. We were not expecting the current to be so strong, and have been told that it is not normally this way.

We arrived at the Barkley Lock and Dam, were raised 60 feet and exited onto Lake Barkley and motored the mile distance to Green Turtle Bay Marina. This is a nice marina, charges only .75 per foot, yet we get all the amenities. They have free wifi, pool, cable TV, and decent restrooms and showers. They are a big sponsor of the AGLCA and we always try to patronize the looper sponsors. There are about 15 looper boats here, and for one couple, the end of the Great Loop. They are back home. We made arrangements for a technician to look at the throttle on Monday morning. We were glad to be tied up to a dock for the first time in 3 days, glad for a hot shower, and glad to be off the lower Cumberland River.

09-19-09 Green Turtle Bay II

[Rick] After the hard day yesterday, we slept in this morning. Did not do much during the morning. At 1100, we, and two other couples got the marina courtesy car and drove to Paducah, about 30 miles away. Our stated purpose was to see the National Quilting Museum. In reality, we just wanted to get off the boat for a few minutes.

We visited the River Museum in Paducah and found that they have a camera on their building recording the river, 24-7, and the tape goes back a week. We rewound to yesterday morning and sure enough, there are the 9 boats in our flotilla going by the Paducah waterfront. Quite unexpected and very interesting.

We visited the National Quilting Museum. Betsy and I have been there before on one of our river trips. It is a fascinating place. I cannot adequately describe the quilts here. Many were voted as the top 100 quilts in the 20th century. A special exhibit shows WOODEN quilts. Sounds crazy. But artisans carve and shape a piece of wood into the shape of a quilt, with folds, creases, etc. Then they carve designs on the wood. They finish by coloring the designs. It is amazing. One of the exhibits is WWII Bomber jacket and hat, made completely from wood. They did not allow photographs, so I have no pictures. However, if you are ever in the area, go to this museum.

We returned to the marina in time for docktails at 1700. We joined about 30 people there, all talking about the loop and where they had seen each other. One of the couples, on board "Biddi and the Beast" (her name is Biddi, his is Dan but he does have a beastly look), crossed their wake and completed their loop today at this marina, so it was a celebration for them, as well as a birthday celebration for another looper. As the saying goes, "A good time was had by all".

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09-20-19 Green Turtle Bay Marina III

[Rick] Since we did very little today except clean the boat, I will give you a little educational blog. Prepare to learn.

The Western Rivers. This term applies to the Mississippi, the Missouri, the Ohio, the Arkansas, and all the other rivers that basically flow into or parallel to the Mississippi. This term began in the early 1800's when Lewis and Clark were exploring the west. At that time, these were, in fact, the Western Rivers. Nothing about California and the real west was known. So, these were charted, named, and rules were written for navigation. The term differentiates them from the eastern waters like the Hudson. Quick example of differences. On the western rivers, the buoys are red and green, but they are NOT numbered. On the East, they are red and green, but always numbered.

Dams, Wingdams, and Weirdams

These are the three types of dams used on the western rivers. Dams are not used to control flooding. They exist for the sole purpose of making sure that the boating channel is deep enough for the commercial boating industry that uses the river to transport the nation's grain, coal, and other materials. The traditional dam and lock systems make sure that the pool of water between the dams is at regulation depth. The Corps of Engineers also uses dredging on the lower Mississippi to make sure the channel is deep enough. On the lower Mississippi, the channel is guaranteed to be 45 feet. Since no large tanker can get past Baton Rouge, due to a low bridge, the guaranteed depth from Baton Rouge to the Ohio is 15 feet. On the Illinois River, the guaranteed depth is only 9 feet, and it takes 8 locks to do this over 300 miles of river.

Wing Dams are various length stonewalls along both banks, more or less perpendicular to the channel, similar to a rock jetty. The purpose of the Wing dams is to make sure the current is forced to the center of the channel. This also prevents erosion of the river bank and a self flushing action that helps prevent shoaling.

Weir Dams are rock sills located in the channel under the water, usually on a bend in the river. They are usually angled 20-30 degrees into the flow of the river. They are usually spaced 400-1400 feet apart and are 400-1600 feet in length. They are placed at an elevation that allows normal river traffic to pass easily over them. Their purpose is to assist in controlling the flow of water in the bend. They usually produce turbulence, and in some cases, a lot of it. Since they are under water, I have no picture of a Weir Dam.

The Corps of Engineers is building these dams and structures to reduce dredging. Their goal is to eliminate dredging on the Mississippi, The Illinois, The Ohio, and the Missouri. A lofty goal to be sure...

There you have it. Do you feel smarter???????

<u>--Date--</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Miles Today</u>	<u>Time Today</u>	<u>MA WP</u>	<u>Lat(N)</u>	<u>Lon(W)</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>COST DOCKAGE</u>	<u>NUMB LOCKS</u>
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9/17/2009	123	92	11.50	W	37° 7.447'	88° 40.429'	Lock 52 Ohio River	\$0.00	1
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09-17-09 Lock 52 Ohio River

Betsy speaks (seems like I always get the bad days!) What a long and miserable day this was! It started out OK, as we unrafted at the appointed hour 0700 and headed down the Mississippi. We enjoyed a gorgeous sunrise as we left our quiet anchorage in the diversion canal and entered the swift flowing river. Still staying closely to trawler Meander and sedan Still Busy, and not very far from the rest of the pack of nine boats total, we were cruising downstream at the breakneck speed of over 12 MPH, a record for Meander. We had approximately 5MPH current pushing us along, and we were easily getting well over 3 miles to the gallon of gas.

We met or overtook several barges along the way, the biggest of which was 6x6, for a total of 36 barges being pushed by one tow boat. After a slight altercation between one of the pleasure boaters and a tow captain yesterday, today's tow pilots were super friendly and in fact complimented us on our professionalism as we headed down. As the caboose of the pack, we generally would call the barge to let them know we were the last pleasure craft in this bunch and they were all very appreciative.

We hit the junction of the Ohio River and the Mississippi at about lunch time, and our speed was cut in half immediately. We have to travel upstream on the Ohio for about 70 miles altogether, and did about 45 miles of that today. Now we are heading into a current of about 2 MPH, and also into a strong headwind. We've had a little trouble with the starboard throttle ever since the beginning of the trip, and in fact had it adjusted while we were in Virginia. Over the past several days it has really started acting up again, and at times I had to use both hands full strength to pull it back. We planned to have it looked at again this coming Friday once we arrived at a full service marina, but in the meantime it had gotten so bad that I tried to make an adjustment on it today. The last guy that worked on it showed us how to simply adjust a screw to loosen it up, so I tried that today.

At first I couldn't tell adjusting the screw made any difference, and all seemed well. Then we entered a lock and things went bad. This locking experience would have been bad even with a good throttle, though. The lockmaster had all nine boats come into the lock, but he told us to just drift in the lock rather than secure ourselves with lines. He assured us there was plenty of room to maneuver, wrong!!! I don't think anyone ran into anyone else, but it was extremely nerve-wracking trying to hold position in a very confined area with the wind blowing and a boat in front and one in back of us also trying to maintain position. It seemed like it took forever for us to rise the 6 feet, we didn't time it but surely it was 30 minutes. About midway through I realized that the starboard throttle was doing basically nothing, so I was maneuvering with only one engine.

As we finally pulled out of the lock and tried giving it gas, nothing happened. We turned it on and off several times, made sure nothing was fouling the prop, made sure water was pumping through it, tried readjusting the screw in the throttle, all to no avail. Finally we turned it off and went the rest of the way to today's anchorage, about 20 miles, on one motor.

Up until then, we were confident that we did have enough gas to make it this 250 mile run we've been concerned about. Staying with our two companion boats at trawler speed, we would have had a range of at least 400 miles. Now on one motor it looks like we will just barely make it to our next fuel stop, 40 miles away tomorrow. We have two gas tanks, and with only one motor working, we are only drawing out of one tank, with no way to siphon gas out of the other tank. Fortunately there is a Towboat US operator at our next fuel stop, so if we don't make it we will be towed at no charge, since we are members of Towboat US as well as SeaTow.

So much for that bad news. Now let's talk about Beamer! It was such a pain to get her to shore yesterday that we decided not to try that again. She would just have to go on the boat. We've learned that dogs can go for up to 72 hours without relieving themselves, and that they will never hold it in so long that they cause any damage. So Beamer went all day long today with no bathroom stop, and the amazing thing is she never

<u>--Date--</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Miles Today</u>	<u>Time Today</u>	<u>MA WP</u>	<u>Lat(N)</u>	<u>Lon(W)</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>COST DOCKAGE</u>	<u>NUMB LOCKS</u>
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showed any distress.no whining, nothing. Finally about 5 o'clock this afternoon we came upon a tiny floating dock at a state park, so we pulled over to it and let her off the boat. Needless to say she was relieved (as were we). We knew about this possible stop thanks to one of our cruising guides, and it was just a couple of miles from our final anchorage for tonight so it worked out well. The cruising guides aren't always right, so we were glad to see this was a good stop.

Tonight we are rafted up again, though not as tightly as last night. There are still nine of us, but we have a lot more room than we did last night. Several boats are individually anchored, and several are rafted up just two or three boats. We are rafted to Meander, and were pleased to have a home cooked meal on their boat tonight.Chinese, delicious. Thanks Marji!

Our anchorage is right before our 2nd lock on the Ohio, and we will plan to go through that lock hopefully about 7:15 tomorrow morning. The lockmaster is expecting us and unless there is a pile up of barges during the night we should be able to go right in. Unfortunately it's going to be another float around the middle type again. This time we're going to insist on being in the back so we'll have more room to maneuver with our one engine. I think all the other boats that have only one engine have bow thrusters, so we're definitely at a disadvantage.

So as you read this Friday morning, say a little prayer that we make it to the marina safely tomorrow afternoon. We have about 50 miles to go.

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9/16/2009	122	110	10.00	W	37° 14.995'	89° 31.106'	Diversion Canal-Cape Girardeau	\$0.00	

[Rick] The great migration from Hoppie's Marina in Kimmswick, MO to the Green Turtle Bay Marina in Tennessee began this morning at 0700. Nine boats, of all sizes and types left in convoy for the 110 mile trip to the Diversion Canal in Cape Girardeau, MO. The Diversion canal funnels the rainwater runoff from the city back to the Mississippi. Once again it was kind of slow, by our standards, since we have agreed to stay with the trawler, Meander, and the sedan, Still Busy. With the current we averaged about 11 mph for the day. For Meander, this was the fastest she has ever been through the water. Here is the view Betsy and I had all day as we made the trip.

Along the way, we passed Cape Girardeau, MO. We had visited this town before when travelling on the legendary Delta Queen (on her final cruise, in fact), and unfortunately, there is no place to stop and tie here. They do have some beautiful murals on the levee walls. I remember this as the hometown of its most famous citizen, Rush Limbaugh (this is for you, bro Steve). There is a huge picture of Rush on the levee wall, along with many historic scenes of the town on a long mural.

Arriving at the Diversion Canal, we had to raft up for everyone to get in. This process involves the boats being tied to each other, with several anchors deployed. The canal has no current, so that is a big help. We managed some pictures of the raft up. Being the next-to-smallest boat, we always get to raft up on the outside of the bigger boats, and we do not put out an anchor.

Once we got tied up and settled, Jimmy on Riff Raff deployed his dingy to take the dogs from Pookie II to the shore for the daily business meeting. Jimmy, then, took Betsy and Beamer to the shore to attend the same meeting. The meeting adjourned with no tangible output and Jimmy brought everyone back to the boats.

Tomorrow, we leave at first light for Paducah, KY. 90 miles and 2 locks away.

Betsy adds: Regarding the dogs: Jimmy's dinghy is tiny and he has a 2.5 horsepower motor. He carried Evan from Pookie II along with his two medium sized dogs all the way across the Mississippi to the opposite shore where there was a sandy beach to step off onto. But the current was fierce and it was quite a chore for him. So when he came back to get Beamer and me, I said let's just go to the bank where the canal meets the river. there was a large rocky area there at the confluence of the waters, and it looked like if I could get off the dinghy onto the rocks I'd be able to make it up a hill with Beamer to an area with greenery. We carried Beamer in her softsider carrying case. remember she is a psycho dog that doesn't get along too well with other people and I felt this was the best way to handle her in the dinghy. At first I put one foot off the dinghy and sank ankle deep into the mud (I had on my shower Crocs). So Jimmy took me a little closer to the rocks and I stepped out again and then lifted Beamer, in her case, off the dinghy. Once I got my footing Jimmy left to go all the way across the mighty and swift Mississippi to pick up Evan and his dogs. I let Beamer out of her case and we worked our way up the rocks until the ground was a little more firm. Problem was my Crocs were full of mud so even on rock or firm ground I was very unsure of my footing as I was slipping inside the shoes.

Beamer pee'd plenty, but would not do the serious business. Finally Jimmy got Evan and his dogs back across the river and back to their boat, then came to get us. I had put Beamer back into the case and handed her into the dinghy, then carefully climbed back in myself. Once back to the raft-up, Evan was there with hose ready to wash the mud off my feet before I stepped onto the boats. As I write this, poor Beamer is banned to the back of our boat because Mississippi Mud is still caked to the bottom of her feet. Tomorrow we will work on training Beamer to "go" on the boat like some of the other dogs do. We made a feeble attempt at this last year, but now it is going to be a necessity, because I'm not dinghying her to shore again!!

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9/15/2009	121	43	5.50	M	38°21.474'	90°21.650'	Hoppies Marina Kemmswick, MO	\$26.00	2
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[Rick] Today was a make or break kind of day. We left Alton Marina, the nicest marina we have encountered on the trip, for Hoppie's Marina. We will be travelling with the trawler Meander, and the Carver Still Busy. Our task is to verify that we can make it 250 miles to the next gas stop. Meander, the trawler, only goes about 8 mph, but the Mississippi has a good following current, so at times, today, we were doing 11.2 mph. We ran with only one motor, following Meander and managed to average 3.28 miles per gallon (at times we were up to 6 MPG!). This convinced me that we can do the next part of the trip, the 250 miles, with very little worry. But, to be on the safe side, we will travel with these two boats until we reach Kentucky Lake and refuel.

When we left the marina, we added 4 more boats to the flotilla that were coming from Grafton Marina. We were strung out like a convoy. We all went through the two locks together. We passed the confluence of the Mighty Missouri River, aka the Big Muddy, and passed St Louis with its famous Gateway Arch. It was wonderful to have the current behind us pushing us along. When the Missouri intercepted the Mississippi, the increase was over 2 mph immediately.

We all arrived at Hoppie's Marina in Kimmswick, MO and topped off our tanks. This is a marina in the loosest sense of the word. It is really 3 floating barges, tied together, and secured to the shore. Then, other floating "docks" were added and strung along. They do have Gas and Diesel. The owner, Fern Hopkins, gave an information talk at a captain's meeting regarding places to anchor out and places to avoid for the next 250 miles. As crude as it is, it is a must stop for every looper and its reputation preceded it. This is one of the places we've heard about ever since we started thinking about doing the loop. Not only is it the last gas stop but owners Fern and Hoppie Hopkins are colorful characters. Here is a picture of Fern and her husband, Hoppie.

We walked into town, and it turned out to be a treat. This is apple country, and everywhere, they had apple related products to sell. The stores are old, and small. Jimmy Tant on Riff Raff, paid \$35 for a 9 pound apple pie, called the "levee high pie" because of its odd shape. He later shared it with us after supper. Here are some random pictures of the town and the day.

Since we are anchoring out the next two nights, we may or may not have access to cell phone and/or internet signals. So, check back. We will post as soon as possible.

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9/13/2009	119	16	1.30	M	38° 53.091'	90° 10.360'	Alton, Il Marina	\$78.00	

[Rick] We decided to attend church while in Grafton, and had already located the nearest Protestant church, Grafton United Methodist Church. It was a very old church, with the building dating to 1859. It was also very small in attendance. I counted 27, with 4 visitors. We took a picture of the attendance and contribution sign in the church. The lady minister was very good, and we were welcomed warmly.

Along the way, we saw the high water mark from the famous 1993 flood. The river crested 40 feet above flood stage. At some points, the Mississippi was 50 miles wide, normally less than 2 miles. This flood was the last straw for some and they sold out and moved away. Unfortunately for them, the land they sold is worth much more today because it is on the river. And they are not making any more riverfront property.

We left the Grafton Marina and entered the Mississippi at 1302. After a short 13 mile ride, we arrived in Alton, IL. Near the town of Portage De Sioux, on the Right Descending Bank, one will find the Shrine of Our Lady of the Rivers. This shrine was erected after the 1951 flood as a thanks for the water stopping just feet from the destroying the town. There is a blessing of the fleet each July on this site.

The Alton Marina is much like Grafton, it floats and everything associated with it floats. Several months ago, we wrote about the need for clean, usable bathrooms and showers. These shower suites are the best we have seen. They furnish soap, shampoo, conditioner, an individual bath mat, and the suite has a chair and hooks. This may well be the nicest marina we have stayed in. In addition, there is a casino just down the street.

We plan to be here through Monday night and depart for Hoppies on Tuesday. More on that later. We now begin the most stressful part of the Great Loop. Getting from Hoppies to the Green Turtle Marina, a distance of 250 miles, with no fuel stops along the way. You will hear more on this later also. There is a chance we will run out of gas, but we do not think so.

09-14-09 Alton, Illinois
 Betsy speaks: We spent another day in Alton, Illinois. As Rick said yesterday this is absolutely the nicest marina we've been in. Our slip is covered, so we're not in the hot sun. And we're right next to Meander and Still Busy. It is our plan to stay close to those two boats as we head down the Mississippi for a straight stretch of 250 miles with no opportunity for gas. We think we have enough range to make it, especially if we go at trawler speed following Meander. But just in case we have a problem we wanted to be with friends. Meander is a diesel powered trawler that has plenty of fuel capacity and is not concerned about the range. Still Busy is a gas powered motor yacht that has the same concerns we have about range.

We are right next door to a casino again, and my luck has not held out. That's about all I'll say about that.

Today we rode our bikes part way into town, then left them at the visitor's center and walked around a bit. This is a typical riverside town in that you have to make your way over a levee to get anywhere. Also, the town is very hilly, and the hills are very steep. This picture shows a typical downtown street, brick paved. There is no touristy section, just a normal town. Alton was the sight of the 7th and final Lincoln-Douglas debate, so naturally there is a statue commemorating that in the city park. You will recall that just a few days ago we were in Ottawa, IL, the sight of the first Lincoln-Douglas debate.

This afternoon we rode our bikes along the bike path on the top of the levee about two miles to the Melvin Price lock and dam which we will go through tomorrow as we head downriver. This lock has a very nice museum that explains the lock system on the Mississippi River. We took a

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guided tour of the lock and dam which included going to the structure over the dam that gives a wonderful view of the locks. There are actually two locks here, once much bigger than the other. The large lock will accommodate a "full tow" which is 3 barges wide, 5 barges deep plus the pusher boat. The smaller lock, which is the same size as all those we've already been through on the Illinois River, will only accommodate a length of 3 barges or 2 barges and the pusher boat, which means the tow has to be broken apart to go through, a very time consuming process which we witnessed and waited for as we headed down to this point.

We will go through one more lock on the Mississippi River, and beyond that there are no more locks on the Mississippi as you head south. Therefore, there may be many more barges in a tow than those that we've seen because they are not constrained by the size of the locks. On previous travels on the River Explorer and the Delta Queen we've seen tows with as many as 30 barges, and the largest tow ever had 84 barges pushed by one boat. Also, the barge traffic is much heavier in the Lower Mississippi River. That's one reason loopers get off the Mississippi as soon as possible and head down the Tennessee River and Tombigbee Waterway. The other reason is lack of fueling stations.

Tomorrow we head to "Hoppie's." Hoppies is famous among loopers as a must stop because it is the last place to fuel up before that 250 miles stretch. We'll explain more about Hoppies when we arrive tomorrow.

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9/11/2009	117	88	6.25	M	38°58.106'	90°26.310'	Grafton, IL Grafton Harbor Marina	\$78.00	1

09-11-09 Grafton, IL

[Rick] We departed the tug boat around 0800, determined to make good time to Grafton, IL at mile 0 on the Illinois River, a distance of 88 miles. About 10 miles into the trip, we arrived at the last lock on the Illinois, and there was a barge in the lock. There was a barge tied to the bank, and we passed a barge just a mile back. This meant, since these barges must be broken into smaller units to go into the lock, a long wait. Three more pleasure boats, all loopers, arrived. The lockmaster made the decision, a wise one in our opinion, to get us pleasure craft out of the way and so he put us through next. Still not fast, as we spent a total of 2 hours at the lock. However, it could have been 6 hours easily.

The trip on to Grafton was uneventful. We passed several tows on the way, and we saw a few more of the Asian Carp. The weather was perfect, with the temperature in the mid 70's and the water smooth. Grafton is the last town on the Illinois, and joins the Mighty Mississippi here. Along the way, we did pass the westernmost point on the Great Loop. It occurs just before two highway bridges at N 39 41.480 W 90 38.766 at mile 60.8 on the Illinois River.

We arrived at the Grafton Marina around 1430. This is a new marina with excellent floating docks and a floating concrete breakwater. They have fuel and pump out. They have 8 private shower suites, a good thing in any looper's opinion. After paying for two nights, they told us of a celebration at 1800 for remembrance of 9-11.

At 1800, there was a flag raising ceremony, the singing of the National Anthem, all followed by a boat parade. Boats in the parade were all decorated in red, white and blue with American flags and streamers aplenty. Someone said that Tim, our new friend, has plenty of room on his boat, so we boarded his nice 60 foot houseboat for the parade. We sat up top with Tim and chatted with him for the whole trip of about 10 miles, very slowly going out of the Illinois River and into the Mississippi River and back. He lives in this area and gave us a lot of good information. We had the most gorgeous sunset as we came back to the dock.

We learned that Grafton is just one main street, about 10 blocks long. Apparently they drink a lot of wine here as there are several wine shops and wine tasting establishments. We will explore Grafton more tomorrow.

Betsy adds: Tied up to the tug last night I slept like a log, and am more thankful every day for being able to experience this part of our beautiful country. How lucky we were tonight to just hop on Tim's houseboat and go for a beautiful ride to the confluence of the rivers, and enjoy the breathtaking sunset as we returned. Thank you Tim. sorry we didn't get a picture of Tim, but just when I was going to take one of him the battery went dead! (He said that wasn't the first time that had happened)!

09-12-09 Grafton, IL II

[Rick] As promised, we toured Grafton today. Some of you will recall that after the floods of 1993, most of Grafton was "bought out" by the US Government and the people moved to higher ground. The main street remains and the Grafton boaters see is a block wide and 15 blocks long. Today, the big draw is tourists. There are multiple restaurants, bars, and entertainment places. Live music was evident in at least 4 places as we walked along the street. The Grafton Marina is new, only 2 years old. It is very nice. All of it is floating; the pool, the office, the store, the gas pumps, the docks, all of it is floating. We learned that there is a company that specializes in building floating marinas.

Since 90% of the buildings on Main Street are shops and stores, the few private residences have a problem with people just walking in, thinking

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they are some specialty shop. We saw this sign on one of them.

On the day we were there, there was a motorcycle convention, and a local fundraiser of decorated bikes. Pictures of some of the bikes are at the end of the blog. There is pretty park, dedicated to all those that lost property and lives in the 1993 flood, that crested over 40 feet above flood stage. There is something going on in Grafton every weekend.

We needed some supplies and the local grocery store is also the hardware store. The co-owner of the marina let us use her car to go to the store. An interesting note: the car, a convertible with its top down, was locked when we walked out to it, so I locked it when we were through.

As is the case with all river towns, a lighthouse is present.

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9/10/2009	116	80	6.00	W	40° 1.041'	90° 26.332'	Beardstown, IL Tied to a Tow	\$26.00	1
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[Rick] The weather was wonderful, a little fog in the morning, as we made our way from Peoria, IL to Beardstown, IL, a distance of 80 miles. We passed several tows and saw about one egret per 200 yards. The lock, our seventh on the Illinois, was closed when we arrived at 1030. But, by 1145, we were through and on the way. For the others, some waited 2-3 hours, as they had left the marina over an hour before we did. Here is a picture of the boats waiting for the lock. There were 8 of them in total, with us being the last to arrive.

Since we are faster than the other boats we headed for Beardstown, whereas the other boats only went about 40 miles to Tall Timbers Marina. We arrived in Beardstown, a delightful river town, to find the town dock is GONE. Loopers rely on cruising guides to tell them where to stay, and all guides indicate there is a free town dock here. Betsy sent an e-mail to those following us. Rather than recreate the message, I am copying the email verbatim with attribution to Betsy. Here it is.

[Betsy] This is for anyone planning to tie up to the BEARDSTOWN, IL town dock at mile 88.5. Due to extremely low water, the town dock IS NOT THERE!!! The only choice is to ask permission to tie up to one of Logsdon Tug Service's tow boats, or perhaps to a barge at their location if there is one that will be staying overnight. Try calling Logsdon at 217-323-1290. As expected, there are no facilities, and Logsdon will probably charge \$1 per foot. As the only pleasure craft here and being small, we were able to pull around on the landward side of the Tugboat Clyde so we are protected from the river traffic. I would recommend this for Pookie or Quotidian...there was a barge behind (not attached to) the tug that they said would be leaving in the middle of the night so it was a tight fit and larger boats probably would not be able to maneuver this if they put another barge there tomorrow.

Too bad, because I love Beardstown! It is truly an old river town with no touristy frills. Wonderful architecture both in its buildings and old homes. There is a charming "town square" complete with bandstand, a river walk where the towdock should be, and another small park with "Mile 88" spelled out in pruned shrubs. There is a small museum but it was already closed by the time we walked into town and doesn't open until 10AM (open 10-4), and we'll probably be gone by then. There are several of the "Looking for Lincoln" plaques explaining his time here as a lawyer and the famous Almanac Trial that took place here. We had a wonderful dinner at the "Cafe from Yesterday"...which was sort of like an old saloon complete with honky tonk player piano music in the background...directions: Go over the levee wall at Logsdon, head north on Main Street to State Street, then go right to 2nd street. Across 2nd street and just slightly north is the cafe.

So if you can make this stop and want to see a "real" town, do it! Rick and I are loving it being here with the working guys on the tug. This is one of those true Western Rivers experiences that we live for! Since I'm not going to lug Beamer up the very steep steps over the wall, she'll have to "go on the tow" that we cross over to get to the steps!

[Rick] After our walking tour of town, we returned to the boat for the evening. Betsy sat out on the tow and read her book.

Tomorrow we go 88 more miles and one more lock to Grafton, and mile 0 of the Illinois River. From there, the Mighty Mississippi awaits.

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9/8/2009	114	73	7.00	M	40°44.854'	89°33.363'	IVY Marina - Peoria, IL	\$52.00	1

[Rick] We began about 0800 travelling with two other loopers to the first lock from Heritage Harbor. HH is a first class marina, and we really liked it, but it was time to move on. We made it to the lock just as the lock was opening, so we had no wait. This is really good, as some people wait 5-6 hours if there is much commercial traffic. The trip to Peoria was 73 miles.

Along the way, we passed several tows, and the had the highlight of the day: we saw Asian Carp jumping. Betsy took some photos and video. They were jumping in our wake. It was incredible. Our friend Jack, aboard Still Busy, saw a teenage boy hit in the face by a carp as they passed the boy and his father fishing in a small boat.

We arrived at the IVY (Illinois Valley Yacht) Marina at about 1430. This is a private club that accepts transients. We get to use all of the facilities, marina, pool, laundry, bar, etc for only \$1.00 per foot per night. Quite a deal. We were supposed to be by ourselves, with the other three boats stopping behind us. But, the marina where they were to stop was a dump. So, they called us and we found space for them here at IVY. They came in about 1600.

After everyone, now 4 boats, were tied up and after docktails, we went across the street to a bar and grill for supper. They had a very wide menu and we had a great meal. By 2100, we were all back at our boats, doing whatever.

We plan to stay here for two days. Then, move on down the river. The Illinois River is not particularly pretty. It is very heavy with barge traffic, and while it is better than Lake Michigan, it is a blue highway to get us to the Mississippi and the Tennessee Rivers, and on down to Mobile Bay.

Betsy adds: I think the Illinois River is quite beautiful, and peaceful. Yes, we passed a few barges, but in between them was pure American heartland. We saw many blue heron, a few snowy egrets, and tons of white pelicans. I thought the white pelicans were interesting because we don't see them in North Carolina. The only time we've seen them before was on the Atchafalaya River in Louisiana several years ago. So they must migrate from here to there without stopping on the east coast.

Seeing the jumping Asian Carp was too cool! Our videos may not rival the ones on Youtube, but they do prove we saw them. The other 3 loopers missed seeing them somehow, except the one that hit the boy fishing.

Overall I thought it was a great day. As I rode on the bow (playing my part as hood ornament) I was thinking "this is what the loop is all about.this is what I was expecting and hoping for."

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9/4/2009	110	10	1.25	M	41°20.487'	88°47.204'	Heritage Harbor Ottawa IL	\$130.00	1

We made no attempt to get up early and get underway from Spring Brook Marina as the next stop is to be Heritage Harbor, a mere 10 miles away. Spring Brook is the 33rd largest marina in the US and is the dealer for Marquis, Carver, Sea Ray, and other models. The yard is huge. The river was pretty as we left.

We passed through the Marseilles Lock. This one was interesting in that the fall was 23 feet and the lock supplied lines to hold on while you went down. Luckily, we arrived just in time to go through, as some boats wait hours to go through. Keep in mind that recreational vessels have the lowest priority to go through the lock, with commercial the highest priority. Sometime, it takes a tow boat 2 hours to go through the lock. This was lock 78 on the trip, with about 40 more to go.

We locked through with a large catamaran. We found that we had met the people on it in Little Current. It is a 44 ft Endeavour and would be a dream boat to do the loop or to live aboard.

We arrived at Heritage Harbor about 1130. This will one day be a great development with houses, condos, etc., but for now, just the marina is complete. The marina is great, nice floating docks; pump out at each slip, very high speed wifi, and restaurant on site. It is managed by a man, Capt Moe, who did the loop in 2004-2005. The charge for loopers is only \$1.25 per foot. The marina supplies a courtesy car since the town is about 4 miles away. We went to Wal-Mart and stocked up.

Several of our friends arrived later in the day, having been through the carpal tunnel and paying the \$600. More will arrive tomorrow, as most of us wait out the Labor Day weekend. The marina is to have a huge picnic with live music on Sunday Night. We can't wait.

We heard a strange clicking sound on the dock. It turned out to be a fish eating the algae and scum off the floating dock. He was sideways, working his way down the dock, eating away and making the noise.

Since this is a new month, some of you will be interested in statistics. These can be found on the www.betsyrick.com webpage under the Log Book Tab on the left side of the page. Just look at the top of page 1.

09-05-09 Ottawa, Illinois

Betsy speaks: Sorry we're late with the blog! Some days we just have nothing to write about. Other days we've stayed so busy we are just too exhausted at the end of the day to write about it. Saturday fell into that latter category.

We joined fellow loopers Evan and Pookie Davis for lunch at Cracker Barrel - our first time there since leaving home! It was so good to be eating good old southern cooking that we not only ate lunch, but we got supper in take-out bags for later. Then we ventured to downtown Ottawa, Illinois for a little sightseeing.

Ottawa was the site of the first Lincoln-Douglas debate, and was also where good ole Abe practiced law for a short period of time. So naturally there is a very impressive statue in the downtown park commemorating the debate. This was a beautiful park with a nice war memorial for combined World Wars, Korean War, and Vietnam War.

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More impressive, however, was the memorial to the Civil War dead from this area. It was a very tall obelisk on which hundreds of names had been carved. But over the past 150 years those names had been so worn down by the elements that they were no longer legible, similar to a very old grave stone. The monument was "rededicated" in 2006. Each of the 810 names that were on the original monument are now clearly legible on the six or eight flat granite markers that now surround the monument.

A few blocks away is another very small park that has a wonderful artsy display of metallic "stove pipe hats" all colorfully painted. The images are patriotic, and many of them have Abe Lincoln quotes. Wow, what a wonderful speaker he was! I read every word of every quote.

Scattered throughout the downtown are marvelous murals on the sides of buildings. We've been to several towns on this trip that have downtown murals, but I think these were the most impressive we've seen.

We were expecting at least two more looper boats to join us at Heritage Harbor Marina before the day was over. When they were not yet at the marina when we returned we thought maybe they had been held up somewhere along the way. They finally showed up as we were eating our Crackel Barrel takeout, after 6PM. Sure enough, they had to wait through a couple of lock cycles. With this being a holiday weekend, combined with the bottleneck at the "safety zone" just a few miles upstream, the river is very congested. Anyway, we were glad to be joined by friends Jack and Pia on "Still Busy" and Ron and Marji on "Meander."

Let's back up a day. Those two boats had been towed through the safety zone on Friday morning. Prior to Friday, boats that were towed through were towed one at a time, cost \$600 each. On Friday, the powers that be decided it was OK to tow boats through two at a time, one on each side of the barge. I wish we had been there to see Pia try to talk the barge captain into charging them only \$300 each since they were coming through together. Pia is Finnish, and she is a pistol! Petite, very pretty and very self assured, I can just see her using her charm to save \$300. But it didn't work, so the towing company is now making \$1,200 for about 15 minutes of work!

The marina we are in now is very nice, and they have bands and activities every weekend for the folks that are here. The band that was supposed to play tonight didn't show up, so they had to come up with some other activity. They have a children's activity building here, so they "borrowed" the two Wiis from the children's center and set up a Wii Bowling Tournament last night. It was a blast. Rick and I along with Pia (a Finnish Gold Medalist in Bowling in her younger days) all joined up to play. After watching the fun, Ron also filled in to complete a team later in the evening. There were 9 teams of 4 bowlers each. What fun we had!! The team Pia was on ended up winning the overall team competition so she won \$45.

None of us had done much Wii before (I've done just a little, the others none at all). We were all so surprised at how realistic it is! Just like being in a bowling alley.great fun!

By the way, this is the marina that became "famous" to last season's loopers, collectively known as the "River Rats." When the Illinois River was closed last year due to flooding, many loopers were stranded here for several weeks. There is a mark on one of the pilings supporting the floating docks showing how high the water was. It is amazing to see how high it was, and boy were those people lucky these are floating docks! Pictures below show Rick on dock pointing to red mark, then a close up showing how near the red mark is to the top of the post.about a foot from the top.

It was well past our bedtime when we returned to the boat, and we planned to get up early the next morning for church at 9:30, so that's why this blog is a day late!

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09-06-09 Heritage Harbor Ottawa, IL

[Rick] We got up bright and early to attend church services at the First Presbyterian Church of Ottawa. It is an older church, and like Sneads Ferry Presbyterian, is very casual. Even the preacher was casual, wearing casual slacks, a shirt and tie. There were about 125 in attendance. From the announcements and commentary, it is pretty obvious that this is a busy church, supporting a missionary effort and many community projects. The message was "Let every creature with a voice, praise the Lord". Being the first Sunday, communion was served. The normal method was intinction, but due to swine flu concerns, the alternate method of individual small cups and wafers was present and acceptable. They had a fellowship time after the service and today was sundae Sunday, with each person making an ice cream sundae to their liking.

Supper was a cookout with hot dogs and hamburgers. There were several drawings with the proceeds going to charity. There was a 50-50 drawing, but the main fund raiser was a rubber duck race. Five dollars for a duck or twenty-five for a six quack. The ducks were released and the winner received \$500, \$250 for second, \$100 for third and \$50 for last place. A cute young girl won the \$500. She was very happy.

A note about this very nice marina. Many people keep their boats here in the summer. Since the summer has had such bad weather, and this is the last real weekend of the summer, it is packed. People cooking at the grills, chatting with their neighbors, taking the boat out for a spin. There are probably 500-600 people here including children. There is a separate building with games, TV, etc for the youngsters. Many have pets. So, the marina tries to have some entertainment for the boaters each weekend. Usually it is a band, as it is tonight. All in all, this is a first class, fun marina. The personnel are excellent and seem genuinely interested in pleasing the boaters. The only thing missing from this marina is a laundry facility. I feel sure they will they are held up by the permitting process.

09-07-09 Heritage Harbor Ottawa, IL

[Rick] It is Labor Day, 2009. A day to sit back and think about all the years we have labored to get to this day. Well, not exactly. I finished washing and waxing the boat along with polishing the rails and cleaning the windows. All was done by lunch, so I could sit back and enjoy the rest of the day. As the day progressed, all of the locals left to go back home and by 1600, the loopers had the marina to ourselves. There are 12 looper boats here today, including the 4 coming in today.

Several of us will be leaving tomorrow, bound for Peoria, IL. Some will stop along the way and spend the night. We have agreed to leave together and go to the first lock together so we have a better chance of getting through. The lock, our sixth on the Illinois River, is the about 10 miles downriver, so it will not take long to get there. Then we will speed up and make Peoria, a trip of 74 miles, by afternoon. We plan to stay in Peoria for at least two nights.

The other highlight of the day was the looper community supper. Everyone brought their supper, along with docktails, to the picnic area at 1800. We sat around, chatted, ate, and ate some more. A good time was had by all. We did a lot of catching up with the 4 boats that came in today.

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9/3/2009	109	74	6.00	M	41°17.933'	88°37.724'	Seneca IL, Spring Brook Marina	\$26.00	
<p>[Rick] What do you call a day that gets you past the Carpel Tunnel, bypass 2 locks, pass the port of Joliet, IL and the commercial traffic, does not involve the US Coast Guard, and does not cost \$600 for the tow boat to take you 0.7 miles, with a risk of blowing up. I call that September 3, 2009, a great day!</p> <p>We said goodbye to the Marine Service Corp Marina, where we took over the working dock. After 6 nights, we looked more like the Clampetts than ever!</p> <p>We also said adios to all our looper friends who are captives of the carpel tunnel. Most are making plans to leave tomorrow or Saturday. The Coast Guard is to issue some type of statement on Friday, but it has little chance to just open the river. More likely is to continue to have boats towed through. There is a chance they will CLOSE the river permanently, but this seems unlikely. There is also the slight possibility that they will not let gas powered boats through even if towed, so two other looper boats that are gas powered are especially anxious to get through before that possibility becomes reality.</p> <p>You will recall that Glenn, a resident of this area, has a Glacier Bay boat and more importantly, a trailer. He called several days ago and volunteered his trailer and tow vehicle, a Lincoln truck, to portage us around the carpel tunnel. Today was the day. Glenn met us about 10 miles down the Cal-Sag Canal, loaded the boat, and took us to Morris, IL, approximately 50 miles via interstate much of the way, for launching. At this point, I tried to pay Glenn for his efforts, but he would not take a penny. We asked for his favorite charity, so we could make a donation. We finally settled on a sweatshirt from North Carolina when we get back home.</p> <p>Glenn went back home, and we continued down the river 10 miles to Seneca, IL and the Spring Brook Marina. Very pretty marina. No Wi-Fi, but they have cable TV, so not too bad. Later we received an e-mail (we used our air card to access the internet) from Glenn, telling us that he was home, no problems, and wishing us safe travels down the river. Tomorrow, we go through a lock on our way to Heritage Harbor Marina in Ottawa, IL, where we will stay over Labor Day to avoid the holiday crazies.</p> <p>Betsy adds: How can we ever thank Glenn? What a Good Samaritan! He just happened to read the Glacier Bay user's forum on the right day, after not having read it for months! In spite of his protestations, we do intend to make a donation in his honor to charity if any of Glenn's friends are reading this, please let us know of a cause that would be appropriate!</p> <p>But here's the MOST incredible thing that happened today: Beamer the psycho dog hopped in the back seat of Glenn's truck, settled down on the floor, and never made a sound for the 50 miles he took us!!! This is incredible for Beamer! She was the perfect passenger. She will be 10 years old in about a week, so maybe she is starting to show her age! As soon as she got out of the truck, she did give him a little growl, but by then he was so impressed by her behavior it didn't matter.</p> <p>I look forward now to weeks and weeks of stress free boating!</p>									

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8/28/2009	103	20	2.00	M	41°38.509'	87°35.286'	Marine Services Corp-Dolton, IL	\$140.40	1

[Rick] We got up and made our way to Dolton, IL and the Marine Services Corp marina. This marina is on the Calumet River and about 20 miles closer to the problem area. We also figured that there would be other loopers there, and we were correct. There are at least 6 looper boats here, although the personnel from two of them have gone home. One of the great things about this marina is the price. Only .90 per foot, so we are here for about \$24 per night. Several of the other loopers here have been in contact with the Coast Guard and indicate that testing is still underway and NO DECISION will be rendered until at least next Friday. So, we and the rest of the group are trying to negotiate a better rate with a tow company. Most of think \$600 is profiteering and out of line. But, the tow company says it is the minimum charge. Any approved tow company can now do the job. So, we may be here for several days. That being the case, we have scheduled some maintenance for Monday.

08-29-09 Marine Services Corp Marina

[Rick] Once again, it is cold. Four of the loopers here have made arrangements to be towed through the carpel tunnel tomorrow. At first, we were going to go with them. But, as we thought about it, we decided to stay here for several days and see what happens. This means that we will be here for at least a week, as no decision will be made before Friday. We decided to stay for several reasons. First and foremost, our friends behind us will be arriving here the first of the week and we want to cruise and socialize with them. There is the matter of the \$600 that the tow will cost. If we wait, they may just reopen the river after Labor Day. By staying, we can get a couple of nagging maintenance problems looked at and maybe even fixed. So, we are in Dolton, IL, next to Calumet, next to Chicago waiting for the Coast Guard to do testing on fiberglass boats and making a decision.

After deciding to stay, we moved the boat to a different slip to be closer to the land (for Beamer), to the bathrooms (for both of us), and to get a better wi-fi signal. It all worked out and now we have a good enough signal to watch our favorite TV programs on our computer. You just have to find something to fill the hours if you are to be here a week. The marina was good enough to hand me the keys to a loaner vehicle, a big stinkin' truck, and we can go to town and church, etc. So, we are here for a while. There will be little to report.

(Betsy adds): Not a casino in sight! That's probably a good thing! I'm soooo happy to be on the river and not the big water any more!!! The next big water is the Gulf of Mexico, and that's months down the road.

08-30-09 Marine Services Corp., Dolton, IL

By the time we got up today, the 4 other loopers that were here had already left to be towed through the "carpel tunnel" which is about 30 miles from here. We've decided to wait about a week to see what transpires, hoping we can go through on our own without being towed to the tune of \$600.00. The 4 boats that left had time constraints that we do not have.

We took the truck that had been left by the marina for our use over the weekend and went to the Faith United Methodist Church. The town of Dolton is by our estimation about 90% black, and that was true for this church as well. We got there early and were warmly greeted at the door. Then something really spooky happened! Rick's mother's name (prior to her second marriage) was Verna Johnson. She died in 1999. We were the only people in the sanctuary at first, so we had our choice of where to sit. We walked about mid-way down the center aisle, and Rick sort of pointed at a pew so I went in and sat down. Before sitting beside me, Rick glanced at the bronze plate on the side of the pew. Believe it or not, and this is too wierd for me to make up, the plaque said "In memory of Verna Johnson"!!!

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At first we thought we might be the only whites there, but by the 11:00 starting time, there were a total of about 7 whites (including us) and 30 blacks. The sanctuary was quite nice, and would accommodate over 200, so it seemed empty with less than 40 people there. The chancel choir consisted of 4 women (1 white) and 1 man.

The pastor (black) was Rev. Charles Straight. We knew as soon as he entered that we were in for a rousing service and a lot of "amens!" The first hymn was one of my old favorites (and made me remember Buzz Vorpagel), "Onward Christian Soldiers." Following a unison prayer, the chancel choir sang, and sang, and sang. After one stanza I was singing silently along with them...the words were the same over and over: "I feel Jesus in this place; Oh my soul doth burn within me." We clapped for them both before and after their number.

After another unison reading, the pastor requested that all the visitors please remain standing. That was Rick and me. We were joyfully welcomed, and welcomed, and welcomed. Then they had the "passing of the peace" and we were welcomed some more. That was followed by about 15 minutes of announcements....although small in numbers, this seems to be a church that is very active in the community. If no one volunteers when the preacher asks, he calls people by name and says "you'll be glad to do that won't you?" Next there was an altar call, which brought about half the congregation to the altar.

We were then entertained by a soloist (not a member of the choir) who really had a beautiful voice, and sang what I can only describe as a free form song. It was lovely, but had no real tune and the words, though meaningful, sort of rambled on, and on, and on. The theme was "just ordinary people." She got a rousing standing ovation.

It was just after 12:00 when the sermon began. The title was "What shall we do with this great faith of ours." It started and ended with a recording from a TV show, but in the middle the preacher gave a moving sermon. The scripture lesson was James 2:14-28, about faith without deeds. He talked a lot about modern day slavery...how can people of faith allow this to go on, not only in foreign lands but in this country as well. The sermon lasted about 20 minutes.

Then we sang another hymn ("This so sweet to trust in Jesus"), and then it was time to collect the offering. He spent about 10 minutes saying how much this church needed money. By the time they had met the payroll this week, there is no money left in the account. Next week they have to pay utility bills, etc., and they need money to do that. You don't want to come to church next Sunday and not have any lights or air conditioning, do you? Then the plates were passed and brought to the front. Then he reminded everyone that this is the fifth Sunday of the month, and on the fifth Sunday everyone is supposed to put in an extra \$10 for "apportionment." We were then told what that money was used for. Since he had forgotten to mention that before the first offering was taken, let's take up another offering so people can put in that extra \$10!! As the ushers walked down the aisle a second time holding the plates and sort of looking to see if anyone wanted to put in more money, the preacher said that wasn't the right way to do it! They were told to make sure the plates were passed to each person.

The service finally ended about 1:00, and we were invited to share refreshments with them. All the people were very nice and very welcoming. Overall, I must say I enjoyed the service and the overall experience. And yes, Rick and I did utter a few "Amen brothers!"

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Our one other option for church had been a Baptist church. That one started at 10:00, and driving by that church later in the day, I imagine they didn't get out much earlier than the Methodists did!

Taking advantage of the use of the truck, we drove around a little after church and ran across a Petco store. Beamer the psycho dog has not been groomed since we left home on May 18, so she was a little grungy looking and I had hoped to get her groomed while we waited here for the river to reopen. So we went into Petco to see if they could do her, and sure enough they had time to do her today. So we drove back to the marina and got her and took her and dropped her off for the afternoon. Psycho dog that she is I'm always a little apprehensive about leaving her in a strange place, but when we picked her up they said she had been fine...she just wouldn't let them cut her toenails and didn't like having her face done. But she didn't bite anyone and she sure looks (and smells) better than she did.

We seem to have the marina entirely to ourselves tonight. It is very peaceful here (and the aroma of the landfill next door only bothers us when the wind blows a certain way). We're very close to the facilities and have a great wi-fi signal. So we are content to stay here as long as it takes. We expect several of our looper friends to meet us here within the next few days. All is well. Amen and amen.

09-01-09 Marine Services Corp., Dolton, IL

We think we have great news.read on!

We're still sitting here on the Little Calumet River waiting for news of the Asian Carp closure of the Illinois River, just a few miles from where we are. We are now collectively known as the "carp captives" waiting to go through the "carpel tunnel." After having the marina to ourselves for the past couple of days, today several of our looper friends joined us here to wait. "Pookie II" and "Riff Raff" pulled in around lunchtime. Jack and Pia on "Still Busy" arrived late this afternoon after going home to North Carolina for a couple of weeks.they had stored their boat here while gone. Two other looper boats that we hadn't met before also came in today.

Both of the loopers that we hadn't met before are planning to leave tomorrow or the next day and pay the \$600 to be towed. The rest of us were still undecided, but leaning toward waiting until after the Coast Guard makes their decision on Friday as to whether or not we can go through on our own steam. Rick and I had decided that rather than pay \$600 to the tow company, we would pay nearly that same amount to this marina to be put on a trailer and hauled around by land if the Coast Guard's decision was unfavorable. Everyone feels the tow company is gouging us with the price and we'll do anything to keep from paying them.though we don't mind paying someone else!

Then just a few minutes ago we were sitting here watching TV and Rick's phone rang. There is a Glacier Bay owner that lives very close to one of public boat ramps on the Calumet River, just a few miles from here. He has offered to meet us at that ramp Thursday afternoon, and take us to Joliet, IL, the first town past the closure. Total trip will be at most 30 miles over land. He is supposed to call back tomorrow to firm up the plan. His boat is the same make, although at different model, and same length as ours, so his trailer should be perfect.

Rick had posted our plight on the Glacier Bay user's forum several days ago, and in fact had talked to the folks at Glacier Bay trying to find someone nearby with a trailer that would be able to help us. The guy that called tonight just happened to read the forum this afternoon for the first time in several months and saw Rick's post.

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So keep your fingers crossed that this will work out. Our stay here has been very relaxing and productive. we think we've solved our overhead leak problem, and we had a bilge pump replaced. Beamer finally had a bath and a haircut. But there's nothing to do here and we're ready to move on!

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8/23/2009	98	72	5.75	M	41°39.237'	87°26.214'	East Chicago, IN	\$150.00	2

Betsy speaks: As looping days go, today was not a good one! This is what happens when you are under a time constraint. We needed to have the boat in East Chicago, Indiana, tonight because we have an appointment to have the 600 mile service done on the engines tomorrow morning. If we didn't make it here for that appointment, the service man couldn't do it until next week because they are involved in a huge boat show starting Tuesday.

From Chicago to East Chicago on Lake Michigan is just over 21 miles.sounds easy enough. Weather forecast was the best we've had all week: sunny and warm. But the wind has been relentless ever since we arrived in Chicago (duh! It is the "windy city"). We left our slip at DuSable Harbor, right next to the old ship that houses the Columbia Yacht Club headquarters, at about 10:30. The harbor is behind two breakwaters. As soon as we got beyond the second breakwater I knew we were in trouble. Seas were very high and were right on our beam or right behind us. It was a rollercoaster I didn't want to ride. We went less than a mile before we turned around and headed back to our slip.

So what do we do? We can wait and get up very, very early tomorrow morning and hope the forecast which calls for one foot or less is right. But our experience with wave height forecasts has not been good. Our other option is to take the Chicago River, whose entrance is right next to our marina and is protected by the breakwater, into the Illinois River and then to the Calumet River. Then take the Calumet River back out to Lake Michigan at a location very near where we need to be. This is a total of over 60 miles (remember, it would be a 21 mile trip on Lake Michigan). This is what we decided to do after studying the charts carefully and calling the Coast Guard to make sure the river closure we mentioned yesterday is beyond where we make the turn to the Calumet River.

We certainly did not want to do the Chicago River section that goes right through downtown on a weekend, and had carefully planned not to do that. But we ended up having to do it on a Sunday and there were plenty of crazies out there. The river/canal is very narrow and there are lots of sizeable tour boats on it. We can deal with them because they know what they are doing. It is the weekend boaters in their little runabouts that have no clue how to drive that can get you in trouble. But we did the best we could and didn't holler at anyone. Once we got out of the downtown area it was smooth sailing. There was even a pretty lighthouse where the Calumet River comes into the Illinois River. And the Calumet River was very pretty until it neared Lake Michigan at which point it became very commercialized.

We passed our first barge on the river system while on the Calumet River. I wonder how many hundreds of barges are in our future as we work our way down the rivers once we leave here.

We did have to go back out into Lake Michigan for a short distance to get to the marina where we'll have the service work done, and it was still not comfortable but not as bad as this morning. Anyway, here we are at East Chicago Marina, right next to a casino where I'll spend the day tomorrow. Rick will stay with the boat and the dog. Wish me luck!!!

08-24-09 East Chicago, IN

[Rick] Not a lot to talk about today. We got up early to be ready for the technician from Calument Marine. He is to perform the 600 hour maintenance on the Honda Motors. Since I do not have my trailer, we used his trailer that normally carries a World Cat. He finally arrived at 1000, we took the boat out of the water and drove the 15 miles to his shop. His business is him, his two sons, and the mother. They seem very competent, and as best I can tell, did a thorough job, including hooking the motors up to a specialized diagnostic computer. The diagnostics were fine. The bill, including the hauling to and fro, was \$950.00. But, it has to be done. We do not want to be in the middle of the Mighty Mississippi

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and have engine problems, especially foreseeable problems.

While they were performing the maintenance, I spent some time cleaning the sides of the boat. Near the waterline, was really dirty as this was the first time I have really cleaned the outside since we left NC, over 3 months ago. I had ordered a new door latch and lock from West Marine and had it sent to the marine shop. I will put that on tomorrow.

You are probably wondering what Betsy did all day while I was gone with the boat. Well, there is a casino about 100 yards away. Enough said.

08-25-09 What a revoltin' development this is..

[Rick] The day started out with great joy. The river was to be opened at 0500. We would be able to go tomorrow, after waiting for a backlog to clear. I replaced the door latch and installed a new computer screen on the small laptop (QT Pie) that was broken back at Drummond Island. We had ordered the screen from Ebay and had it delivered to the Calumet Marine, the folks that worked on the motors. It was a beautiful thing.

ZAP. Lightning strikes. We went online to view recent notes about the river closure/opening and found that the Coast Guard had issued a document that the river will be closed until at least September 9, and maybe longer. In fact, the Coast Guard Captain indicated the river may be closed for months, years, and maybe permanently.

The real "downer" is that the note also indicates that the CG and Corps of Engineers will meet THIS WEEK to decide on testing protocols. They do not even know what they are testing, what test to do, what is considered pass or fail. It is government at its worst, all full of ego and power with no concern for the people that pay the salaries. All of this and the river has already been closed for two weeks.

Later, when the day warmed up, I turned on the Air Conditioner and it promptly cut off. I got an error code indicating that the pressure was too high. I checked and there is no water going through the system. So, we will wait for a town that has a Cruisair dealer to look at it. It appears that will be Chattanooga, TN.

Such is the life of a looper. Pure Joy one minute and not so joyful the next. At least we get to stay here, for \$30 a day, and recharge our bodies and clean up the boat.

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8/19/2009	94	116	6.25	M	41°53.055'	87°36.760'	Chicago, IL	\$316.06	
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Betsy speaks: We've seen many beautiful sunsets, but we don't see many sunrises. We wanted to get an early start this morning to take advantage of what was going to be our only chance to get to Chicago this week. So we got up about 5:30 and were ready to go by 6 o'clock. But we had to delay our start until 6:30 because we didn't want to leave in total darkness. It was a beautiful sunrise over Muskegon, our final port in Michigan.

Forecast called for seas one foot or less, but upon leaving Muskegon harbor we quickly discovered the forecast was a little optimistic. Seas were easily two feet, so we debated whether to go the 110 miles to Chicago or hug the shore and pull in at another Michigan safe haven if necessary. After going about ten miles we decided to make a run for it, and we're glad we did. By twenty miles out seas had calmed down and it was a beautifully sunny day. We put Beamy the autopilot to work at about the five mile mark and didn't alter our course or touch the steering wheel for nearly 100 miles. In the middle of Lake Michigan seas were flat and glassy for at least 40 miles.

Many loopers go farther south on the east side of the lake and then make a crossing of about 30 miles. We decided to go ahead across today because the forecast for tomorrow is seas 4 to 6 feet, and Friday is even worse. It was also time for the 600 mile service on the motors, and Rick has arranged to have that done early next week in nearby East Chicago, Indiana. A hundred miles is easy for a boat our speed if the weather cooperates.

After quite some time with no land in sight, we were able to see the faint Chicago skyline from 40 miles away. As we neared the city, seas picked up again. The last five miles or so were a little rough, so we were glad to pull into our slip at DuSable Marina at about 12:45, but now we are in the Central Time zone so we backed our watches up to 11:45.

After a quick lunch on board we walked into town to see about taking the Architectural Boat Tour, something we were told not to miss. On our way, we passed Millenium Park where the locals were cooling down by playing in the fountain. Looked like fun!

We were able to get on a 3:45 boat and thoroughly enjoyed the one hour tour along the Chicago River. This is the best vantage point for viewing Chicago's many skyscrapers. Their styles are varied, and many of them are really beautiful buildings. Neither of us had been to Chicago before (except for a harmonica jam camp I came to here several years ago, but I didn't do any sightseeing then).

By the end of the boat tour the skies had clouded over and rain threatened. We decided to grab a quick bite of supper before going back to the boat. It started raining as we ate, and by the time we got back to the boat it was pouring. The deluge continued for an hour or so. Then the skies cleared and we enjoyed Chicago's weekly Wednesday night fireworks over the harbor. This was our third fireworks display in as many weeks, but we never tire of them. My new camera has a special fireworks setting, so I took a number of pictures.

Tomorrow we plan to take one of the hop on/hop off bus tours, and the Shedd Aquarium is also on our list of things to do while here.

08-20-09 Chicago, IL II

[Rick] Our second day in Chicago started as so many before, raining like crazy. We waited until lunch to even venture out to catch a hop-on-and-off tour bus. We decided on the three day package that allows us to ride, hop on and off, and take the three neighborhood tours further out in Chicago. Unfortunately, we were on a double decker bus and it began to rain very hard. We did complete the whole loop trip, 2.5 hours worth and plan to go back tomorrow and get off at some places, like the Shedd Aquarium and the Fields Museum. We will probably take a

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neighborhood trip to the Chicago Zoo and Wrigley Field, home of da Cubs.

For supper, we rode our bikes to the Navy Pier. This restored pier is a hub of activity with all types of food and entertainment. Harbor cruise boats leave from this pier and take cruises of the lake. At Harry Carey's Tavern, we ate a very good pizza. The prices were very reasonable. After the pizza, we strolled to the end of the pier. Reading the historical information signs, we learn that the pier was built in the early 1900s for 4.5 million. In 1995-1998, the renovation and upgrade costs over 200 million. During the war, this pier served as a training station for fighter pilots. President Bush 41 trained here. Over 200 airplanes are in the water just off the end of the pier.

The Navy Pier has a huge Ferris wheel. The current one is one-fourth the size of the original built by Mr. Ferris for the 1892 Colombian World Exposition. Each car on the original held 60 people and took one and one-half hours to complete one revolution.

On our way back down the pier, we saw a sign about a stained glass exhibit. We entered, and to our surprise, found a permanent exhibit dedicated to stained glass still open at 10PM! Chicago is famous for its stained glass, in tradition of Frank Lloyd Wright. This exhibit had a special section for Louis Comfort Tiffany, who was prolific in glass production from 1870-1920. The exhibit was made possible by the Smith family, collectors of stained glass. The exhibit is world class, is free, and open to the public to just walk in and enjoy.

We biked back to the boat about 2230, just in time to miss another downpour.

08-23-09 Chiacago III

[Rick] As we had purchased a 3-day ticket on the tour bus, we decided to take the neighborhood tour or Chicago's South Side. The South Side is predominately African-American. It is very affluent, including the homes of President Barack Obama, Louis Farrakhan, Muhammad Ali, Jesse Jackson, and many others. The South side was the site of the 1893 Columbian Exposition, and only one building from that Exposition remains. That building currently houses the Museum of Science and Industry. We decided to jump off the bus and went into the museum. It is huge, including a three car train, the Zephyr, which set a speed record from Denver to Chicago in 1934. The basement houses a captured German U-boat. Tours are given on the U-boat and the Zephyr. There is huge room filled with model trains, running around a fantastic model of the City of Chicago. Betsy spent about an hour watching a baby chick pecking itself out of its shell.

For supper, we returned to the Navy Pier. We visited more exhibits that we had missed yesterday. All in all, the Navy Pier is a wonderful destination. We noticed an abundance of foreign speaking tourists. Not sure why so many. Also, since we had no pictures of the Navy pier last night, here are some from today.

Since this is a short blog, permit me to make an observation from Chicago. There is no recession in Chicago. The tour buses are full. The line at the museum was about 300 people to purchase tickets, 2 hours after the museum opened. The Navy Pier is shoulder to shoulder. The wait at The Bubba Gump Shrimp Company for dinner was over one and one-half hours. The marinas are full, and there are over 8,000 slips and mooring balls. We saw a dinner cruise loading at the pier, the boat was full and the price was \$98 PER PERSON. Every cruise boat was full.

08-22-09 Chicago

Betsy speaks: Wow! What a full day we had today. Finally we had a beautiful sunny day in Chicago, although it is still chilly outside. We caught the first bus out to the Lincoln Park Zoo this morning, and spent several hours there. It is a free zoo, and since it is Saturday, it was a crowded

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zoo. Although we prefer the natural habitat zoo such as the one in North Carolina, this was a nice zoo. We did see one animal that neither of us had ever seen before, a Sechaun Takin, pictured here.

We grabbed a quick pretzel for lunch before leaving the zoo, and on the way back to Millennium Park on the trolley (part of the 3 day bus pass we had purchased) we went by Wrigley Field. Then we enjoyed a long run along Lakeshore Drive, passing Oprah Winfrey's residence, the famed Drake Hotel, and several nice "beaches" along the way.

At Millennium Park we picked up our bikes and immediately rode to the Shedd Aquarium, not far from our marina. We spent several hours there among hoards of people. As Rick said yesterday, there seems to be no recession in Chicago. Cost of the aquarium is \$28 per person, and it was jammed. Although this is reputed to be the second largest aquarium (behind Atlanta) in the country, we both felt like the National Aquarium in Baltimore seemed larger.

One interesting exhibit in the aquarium was of the Asian Carp. You may have seen videos of these fish jumping out of the water and into boats, often injuring the people in the boat. They are an invasive species that spread through the river system all the way to Florida. Extensive measures are being taken to prevent them from entering Lake Michigan via the Chicago River. We heard just yesterday that this may cause us to be stranded here in Chicago for longer than we anticipated. The Chicago Sanitary Canal, which we plan to traverse on Tuesday, is currently closed to boaters in an attempt to halt the migration of the Asian Carp. They have installed electrified grids to stop the fish, and they have amped up the electrification of the grid for the time being, thus preventing boats from going through. When we first heard of this, from the America's Great Loop Cruising Association's network of information, the closure was for an indefinite period of time. We did hear today that the canal is supposed to reopen on Tuesday, so we are hoping that will happen.

Tonight we rode our bikes over to Millennium Park again for dinner and to see some of the park we hadn't had a chance to enjoy. I must admit neither of us understand some of the modern sculpture, but we did have fun with "the bean" which reflects its surroundings in an interesting way. There are free concerts here several times a week, but we did not have a chance to enjoy that in our short stay here in Chicago.

Our bikes have been crucial here. We're glad we had them "tuned up" a few days ago.both were having issues with the brakes. We are quite some distance away from the Navy Pier and from Millennium Park, and having the bikes has really helped us get around. There are wonderful bike paths here, and where there is not an official bike path there are wide sidewalks. So the bikes have made it much easier to get around.

We plan to leave Chicago tomorrow morning and head for East Chicago, Indiana, Southeast of the city of Chicago, for the 600 hour service on the motors. There we will stay at a marina next to a casino for at least two nights, so you know what I'll be doing!

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8/18/2009	93	60	4.00	M	43° 13.744'	86° 19.774'	Muskegon, MI	\$35.00	

[Rick] Today marks exactly 3 months since we left Sneads Ferry. In that time, we have traveled 2195 miles, passed through 74 locks, and purchased \$5097.54 in gasoline. It has been a great ride..

Today, after 5 days in Lovely Ludington, and a lovely sunset, we felt that we just had to get some miles behind us. The weather, mostly wind related, has been terrible for the past week. Today, the waves were to be 1-2 feet, so we left at 0745 for Muskegon, 60 miles away. We made the trip in 4 hours. The last hour, the waves built up and we were in 2-3 footers for a while, but they were at a favorable angle for the most part. Along the way, we had to bypass the town of Pentwater, MI. This small town had been recommended to us by Margaret Croft, but we just could not stop. We had to push on.

We did something today we have never done. We tied up at a marina, won't mention the name, and before we checked in, we decided to move on. The dock was wobbly and there was a lot of rolling wake. We called another marina, got a slip, left the first place, and moved on. The new place, Harbor Towne Marina, is quite nice, steady docks, no wake, restaurant nearby, cable TV, etc. I think we made the right decision. We are in a permanent slip, and this one is named, Paradise Ain't Cheap.

Tomorrow, the waves are supposed to be less than one foot, according to NOAA. If this is the case, we will take off across the lake to the Windy City, Chicago. The distance to Chicago is 100 miles. Tune in tomorrow to see what happens.

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8/13/2009	88	53	2.50	M	43°57.054'	86°27.025'	Ludington, MI HarborView Marina	\$200.00	0

[Rick] We had another pretty easy day. We left Frankfort bound for Ludington, MI, another small town 53 miles to the south. The waves were 1-2 feet, but lay down as we progressed. It only took 2.5 hours as we were able to average 18.5 mph. Along the way, we passed the Point Sable Lighthouse. It really looks like a North Carolina Lighthouse.

Ludington is another of the small, friendly, not-touristy towns along the Lake Michigan shore. As usual, they have an abundance of flowers, green grass, and very nice parks for recreation. There are several marinas here, and we chose Harbor View. It has everything you could ask for and all of it is well thought out and of first quality. They have a spectacular complex of restrooms, showers, lounge, laundry, library, ships store. They have floating docks that include cable TV. The wi-fi is 5 bars and very fast. So, all is good in Ludington.

We have decided to stay here at least 2 days, and kind of rest up after a week of traveling every day. Betsy will have more on Ludington tomorrow, so come back then.
08-16-09 Ludington, MI Continued

Betsy speaks: OK, OK, Rick says we've gone several days without updating the blog. Well, we've been in the same place for 3 nights, Ludington, Michigan. We decided it was time for a break from daily moving, and also, the weather has turned lousy again. Not lousy really, just windy, and waves today were reported by the fishermen that came back early as being three feet and building. Forecast calls for four feet before the day is out.

However, what a great place this is to be "stuck". This is the nicest marina we've ever been in! Yet the rates are very reasonable. less than \$1.20/foot including all amenities. There is a pool, hot tub, beautiful landscaping, nice floating docks with matching dock boxes at each slip.

One of the most memorable aspects of doing the loop is the people you meet. Docked next to us here in Ludington is a wonderful man named Sid. Sid really lives in Kansas City, but spends his summers here in Ludington, along with his lovely wife Carol, at a cabin/cottage nearby that his parents had purchased many, many years ago (sound familiar?). He keeps his beautiful Tiara Yacht here at the marina, and comes here nearly every day to just polish the boat and sit and enjoy the marina and the friendly people here. Sid is an active member of the US Power Squadrons, involved in several of the same things Rick is: teaching, boat inspections, etc. I haven't been to a Wal-Mart since leaving home nearly 3 months ago, so needless to say we took Sid up on his offer to lend us his truck for a trip to Wal-Mart. One new computer*, new digital camera and a load of groceries returned to the boat with us. Thank You Sid!!! You will be remembered!

There are lots of fishing boats here, all with scads of fishing poles sticking up. The Cabo next to us has no less than 20 rod holders, most with rods in them. And boy do they catch fish! Every time they go out they come back with coolers full of King Salmon or Steelhead Trout. HUGE fish!

The marina has a state of the art fish cleaning station, complete with macerator for the bones, innards and skin. It is in use most of the day, and these folks walk away with enough fish for a year after only a couple of days of fishing.

For those that want to eat the fresh catch while it is fresh, the marina provides gas grills already hooked up and ready to use.

Like all the other towns along the Lake Michigan coastline, there are beautiful flowers everywhere and lots of parks nearby. The Ludington park has several beautiful bronze statues. Ludington is also famous for the murals on several buildings, 12 in all. Most murals have a "hidden object"

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for the viewer to find. The one pictured here is a three dimensional mural that seems to move as you walk by.

Another Ludington highlight is the ferry boat that carries cars and pedestrians across Lake Michigan to the Wisconsin side. The trip takes four hours, and the cost is \$77 per vehicle PLUS \$74 per person one way. not a cheap way to travel, but I guess it beats driving all the way around the lake. Ludington is about halfway down the lake. The history of the ferries is interesting. It started in 1897 as the world's first steel hulled railroad car ferry. By the 1940s this was the world's busiest car ferry port, with several of the huge boats operating 365 days a year.

By 1980 the ferries were not being used enough to stay in business, so the ferries were sold to a couple of Ludington businessmen who tried to keep them going. However, their venture failed and the ferries seemed destined for the scrap yard. In 1992, another Ludington entrepreneur purchased the three remaining ferries, invested his own money to refurbish and improve the boats and began a new car ferry service across the lake. Proving that the ferry service still had a bright future for cars, commercial trucks, and leisure passengers, he sold the business in 1994 to three more Ludington businessmen, and today it is a very successful endeavor, running two round trips a day.

We enjoy seeing the different names on boats, especially when they are different or unique. Rest assured if your boat name has the word "sea" in it, it is not unique. we've seen numerous boats with names like Sea-la-vie, X-ta-Sea, Seas the Day, etc. We could write a book about trite boat names. But we do see some that we get a chuckle out of. Here's one we hadn't seen before.

Looking at the weather report yesterday, we thought we would be here until Tuesday, and we weren't complaining because this is such a nice place. But we do have reservations in Chicago starting next Thursday so we do need to get underway ASAP. We had extremely high winds here this afternoon, with waves breaking over the breakwater and splashing up high on the light houses. But late afternoon forecasts seem to indicate maybe the high winds this afternoon have helped push out the weather that was forecast, and now it looks like we may make it out of here tomorrow (Monday). Every looper we know has been marina-locked since last Thursday or Friday. So wish us luck!

*Now for a word about the new computer we purchased at Wal-Mart. We had not forked out the big bucks for GPS chips to cover Canada, but relied on paper charts and an inexpensive computer program for which we had the Canadian Hydrographic Service charts, similar to NOAA Charts. It worked perfectly, and we were able to have my little 8.9" computer on the dashboard along with a USB GPS receiver so we knew where we were and where we were going at all times. Our last hour in Canadian waters was our roughest part of the trip, fighting 3 to 4 foot waves. About 5 minutes before we crossed into the USA, where our GPS units with US charts would have kicked back in, we took a big wave and a big bounce, and the 8.9" "cutie pie computer" bounced off the dashboard and onto the deck, ruining the LCD screen.

Fortunately these "netbooks" are very inexpensive. even with purchasing a new one we come out way cheaper than we would have if we had purchased Garmin or Lowrance chips for the Canadian waters. Also fortunately I brought all of my navigation software with me just in case something like this happened. We really don't need the computer for charting anymore, but it is nice for each of us to have our own computer on rainy days

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8/12/2009	87	76	4.30	M	44° 37.897'	86° 14.418'	Frankfort MI	\$59.50	
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Betsy speaks: I have to back up a day and mention something that happened yesterday that we tried our best to forget about. Those of you who have been reading the blog since day one know that shortly after we left home there was a problem with our Florida heat pump at home that caused water to leak all over the ground level of our townhouse. The carpet in our home office was completely saturated. Our wonderful neighbors Tom and Billie Hayden, who are looking after things for us while we are gone, saw to it that the water was extracted from the carpet, the carpet was deodorized and dried with fans and dehumidifiers. The heat pump, barely a year old, was completely replumbed. There seemed to be no lasting aftereffects, and all was well.

Early yesterday morning Tom called to tell us one of the plumbing joints had come undone and this time it was not a small, slow leak like before, but a real flood of probably hundreds (or thousands?) of gallons of water. The carpet was completely saturated again!!! So we had to go through the same process again. Fortunately, all the books on two large bookcases that had to be moved the first time had not been put back, so maybe it was a little easier this time (look on the bright side). Rick has told the heating and air people, who did the plumbing as well, that he expects them to pay for the carpet and for the labor to move the furniture this time, as well as for fixing the problem.

When Rick first spoke to Tom about checking on things while we were gone, it was really meant to be just bringing in the mail. Who ever dreamed so much could go wrong!!! We couldn't continue on this trip without a little help from our friends. Thanks Tom and Billie.

Now back to the trip. We left Charlevoix this morning and headed back into Lake Michigan. On the way out of Charlevoix we passed by the mushroom houses that Rick mentioned in his blog yesterday. Yesterday there was a picture of one of those houses from the street side. Here is that same house from the water.very exclusive!

The sun was shining and the lake was glassy smooth. Our intended destination was Leland, just over 30 miles south. Three of the other four boats we've been sort of hanging with had left several hours before us (they are slow, we're fast). As we approached the turn into Leland, we decided it was such a gorgeous day we would continue on to Frankfort, another 42 miles farther along. I had charted both courses so the decision was easy. We radioed one of the other boats that was within earshot and told them to pass the word that we were continuing on and would see them in a few days. Rick was at the helm, but Beamy the autopilot did most of the driving today.

Last night I received an e-mail from a friend in South Carolina asking if we would be seeing the Sleeping Bear dunes. I didn't know what he was talking about, so I looked them up in one of the cruising guides. I had heard of the high sand dunes we would encounter on Lake Michigan's shore, and these are in the Sleeping Bear State Park. Sure enough, we passed them today. Thanks to Jerry's head's up we hugged the coastline so we could see them up close, and they are spectacular. Here's a picture showing people climbing up and down them. they are so high the people look like ants from where we were. Rick said maybe the Topsail Beach Shoreline Protection committee should take a lesson on how these sand dunes are made!

Just past the magnificent sand dunes we came to Point Betsie Light, described as being the most photographed lighthouse on Lake Michigan. Too bad they didn't spell "Betsy" right! I was riding on the bow as we passed, and again was amazed by how incredibly clear the water is here. In 20 feet of water I could clearly see the bottom. It's sort of scary, because at home if you can see the bottom you are probably getting ready to hit it!

We love the protected harbors of Lake Michigan. They are well marked and so easy to navigate. Being used to treacherous inlets in North Carolina, I couldn't picture how Lake Michigan would have such easy access to harbors. It is so nice to be in a huge body of water, and then

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simply come through a jettied passage into a protected, safe harbor.

Once we arrived in Frankfort I walked just a couple of blocks back to the "seashore" we had passed on the way in. Looking out over the white sand, it was really just like standing at the ocean. Many people were swimming and sunning on the beach. I stepped into the water about calf deep and it was very comfortable. I can see why people would want to summer here. It is really beautiful, and there are no sharks or crabs! And you don't have sticky salt water on you when you come in from a swim!

Later this afternoon our friends on Pookie II arrived here in Frankfort. They had pulled into Leland and docked, then reconsidered and decided to come farther just like us on this beautiful day. They are in a smaller, much slower boat, so they need to make as much progress as possible on beautiful days like this.

After dinner with Pookie, Rick and I walked back to the beach, walked out on the "pier" to the Frankfort jetty light, then sat on a bench on the beach and watched a beautiful sunset over the water. It has been quite some time since they've had a nice sunset apparently, because once the big red ball slipped beyond the horizon people started clapping!

Tomorrow we plan to head out again, probably to Ludington. We had thought we might stay here for two nights, but weather reports are starting to get a little bleak so we want to make progress when we can.

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8/11/2009	86	19	1.25	M	45° 18.946'	85° 15.463'	Charlevoix, MI	\$30.00	

[Rick] We left Petoskey, MI at 1030 for the short 20 mile run to Charlevoix, MI. Charlevoix is one of the busiest marinas in the Michigan system. The town is considered a must-see for loopers, since it has a huge boating community. Also, the marinas are very well protected by a breakwater and a long canal leading to Lake Charlevoix.

The ride, though short, was slow since we had the 2 ft waves on our starboard beam. This makes for some back and forth, and is not really comfortable.

Once we arrived in Charlevoix, we had to wait for about two hours for a slip. The marina is busy but they don't take phone reservations, and there was a flotilla of sailboats coming in today. They had to wait to see who was leaving before assigning a slip. While waiting, a gentleman came over and indicated he had a Glacier Bay 2690, 2005 much like ours. We went over and found that even though the two boats were made in the same year, there are some differences. He had a very pretty and clean boat, not at all like ours at this time.

Betsy rode her bicycle down the bike path to the mushroom houses. Earl Young began the design and construction of these unique homes in the 1930s. He built over two dozen of them. Today, they are in a very exclusive neighborhood on the water.

One of the public spots at the marina includes a dancing fountain. Kids are encouraged to play in the fountain during the day. At night, the fountain puts on a waltzing waters show from 2100-2300. Once again, this city has many parks, many flowers and very green grass. We have agreed that the flowers and grass is due to the fact that it does not get so hot and parch the greenery.

This evening, we attended the weekly concert by the Charlevoix Community Band. They played a variety of music, including show tunes, marches, classical pieces, and the crowd favorite, the theme from "The Lone Ranger", The William Tell Overture. There was quite a crowd on hand and all seemed to have a good time.

Tomorrow, off to Leland or Frankfort, depending on the weather. Right now, it looks great, but you can never tell.

(Betsy adds): I played flute and piccolo in the high school band and have always loved band music, so I really, really enjoyed the band concert! Brought back great memories.

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8/10/2009	85	60	3.00	M	45°22.604'	84°57.581'	Petoskey, MI	\$30.00	

Betsy speaks: After filling up with gas we left beautiful St. Ignace, Michigan, this morning at about 8:30 and headed under the Mackinac Bridge, through the Straits of Mackinac and down to Petosky, Michigan, a total distance of about 60 miles. We were slightly concerned about fog first thing, but once we were under the bridge and actually onto Lake Michigan (St. Ignace is actually on Lake Huron), the fog lifted and we had a perfect run on flat, glassy seas. After the day after day of high seas, wind and rain on the North Channel, we were certainly due for some smooth water, and we had it Friday on our run to St. Ignace and again today.

We had hoped to stay in Harbor Springs tonight. Harbor Springs is on one side of Little Traverse Bay, while Petosky is 3 miles away on the opposite side of the bay. Several of our friends were headed for Harbor Springs. Problem is they don't take reservations. It is strictly first come, first served. We called a couple of hours ahead of time (and ahead of our friends since we are much faster than them), and they said the chances of our getting a slip for the night were slim to none, but they couldn't tell for sure until we stuck our nose into their harbor. I was able to call Petosky and get a confirmed slip, so we came here without even trying Harbor Springs. Once we arrived here, we listened on the VHF radio as all of our friends got slips at Harbor Springs. By then, I was already glad we had come here instead. And now that we've been here all day I must say Petosky may be my favorite stop yet on this entire trip.

The marina is very comfortable and is nestled right in a beautiful park. In fact, it seems there is a park on every block. The shopping district is large and colorful with beautiful flowers everywhere, and is an easy walk from the marina. This town doesn't seem as touristy as some of the towns we've been in. It has a real homey feel.

Like much of Canada, I am amazed at the beautiful flowers everywhere. Their cool climate must be just perfect for growing annuals, and they just don't look parched and dry like annuals do in our part of the country by this time of the summer. There is beautiful color everywhere. In front of both businesses and homes.

We ate lunch in a downtown pub that overlooked the water. It had a dog friendly outdoor seating area, but we had left Beamer the psycho dog behind to guard the boat so she wasn't there to terrorize the restaurant. This is a very dog friendly town, with a special area in one of the parks to let dogs run free and swim in the beautiful water.

You can walk on the breakwater out to the lighthouse, which appeared to be a favorite gathering place for the local teen set. Today is one of the first days it's been warm enough to really get out and enjoy the water and swim, and the teens were all jumping off the breakwater and having a blast.

I loved the beautiful clock in the park that framed the lighthouse in the distance, as you can see in this picture. The clock chimes loudly on the hour and half hour, a beautiful sound.

There is a wonderful museum right across the street that has a lot of history about Ernest Hemingway spending his summers here as a boy. His family owned a summer cottage on a nearby lake, and it is this area that he describes in some of his novels.

There is a bike/pedestrian path that runs the entire length of the waterfront all the way to the next little town. Nice and flat, so I went for a long bike ride and just took in the beauty of this place.

Right next to the marina park area there is a softball field, and Rick and I enjoyed a fast pitch softball game late this afternoon. Final score 14 to 2.

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Then we enjoyed a glorious sunset on the opposite side of the Bay, right over top of Harbor Springs where our friends are staying.

So I'm sure our friends will be raving about Harbor Springs, but I'm glad we're here at Petosky! In fact, Michigan's state rock is the "Petosky Rock" which is plentiful here. It is actually fossilized coral deposited by the glaciers, and I found several pieces of it at the water's edge. Many of the jewelry stores sell necklaces and pins of polished Petosky Rock.

There is an Indian casino nearby, but I was enjoying Petosky so much I didn't even make an attempt to go! That should tell you something!

Tomorrow we'll head to Charlevoix, less than 20 miles south of here. Weather reports for the next several days sound perfect.it's about time!

8/7/2009		82	53	3.00	M	45°52.001'	84°43.139'	St Ignace, MI	\$90.00	
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[Rick] Well, it is a special day. It is our anniversary. That's right, 38 years ago we were married in Durham, NC. I remember this date since it was one year ago that I forgot it. (Just Kidding). I say congratulations to us both..

We left Drummond Island at 0900 headed for St Ignace, MI. The run is to be 53 miles. As we left the Detour Channel, we were very pleasantly glad to see that Lake Huron was absolutely FLAT. Yes, it looked like a mirror out there. We passed the Detour Channel lighthouse, put on the autopilot, and sat back for the next 2 hours.

We arrived at St Ignace, got our slip, took a walk around the waterfront, and settled in for a couple of days. St Ignace is an island about 2 miles from Mackinac Island, the tourist mecca of this area. We decided not to stay in Mackinac since there are lots of ferries, little space, and very expensive. We plan to go to Mackinac by ferry tomorrow, take the carriage ride, eat some lunch, check out the stores, and return to St Ignace. I think Betsy has a shuttle to the local Indian Casino already booked. We understand that the The Grand Hotel, whose porch was featured in the movie Somewhere in Time will only allow you to go onto the porch if you have a coat and tie and pay \$10.00.

The marina at St Ignace is owned by the city and is part of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. A few years ago, it was run down and had very limited facilities. What a difference. Today, there are over 200 slips, modern facilities, including bathrooms/showers, laundry, wi-fi. And the landscaping is very nice. The docks are first class, and this is one of the nicest marinas we have visited. Also, the cost is only \$30 per day for our boat.

There are at least 5 looper boats here, and we all went out to dinner. Had a great time.

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8/6/2009	81	40	3.25	M	45°55.513'	83° 6.880'	Meldrum Bay		

[Rick] Today was a big day, a long day, and a tough day. It started innocently enough at 0600 when we departed the Gore Bay Marina. The sun was just coming up and there was no wind. It was picture perfect. The wind reports for 0500 were for 7 knot winds and 4 knot for 0800. So, we figured the waves would be laid down and make for an easy run to Drummond Island. As soon as we got out there, we realized this was not the case. But, after a few minutes of 2-3 ft waves, straight on the bow, it did start to lay down and for a while, we were on auto pilot at 20 mph. We decided to bypass Meldrum Bay, our escape strategy in case of bad weather. However, less than a mile later, we could tell it was getting worse again. So, we turned left and went to the Meldrum Bay Marina. This is a very small place with one Inn/restaurant, a general store, and the marina. We arrived at 0930.

For lunch, we went to the local "hotspot" for lunch and free wi-fi. This would be the restaurant in the Inn. The food was very good, the service exceptional, and the wi-fi was a dish, so it was kind of slow, but it did work.

Around 1500, three sailboats came in and said that it had laid down to less than one foot. We are sure that we can handle this, so the kind marina lady refunded our money, and we lit out Drummond Island.

08-06-09 Drummond Island (back in the USA)

Drummond Island is the closest and most logical place to clear customs for returning to the US. A marina there has a customs officer, and there is usually very little wait.

The first hour of the 43 mile trip was very nice. Waves were 1 ft or less and we let Beamy (the autopilot) drive the boat at 20 mph. Then within a span of 15 minutes, the waves were 2-3 feet, coming from all directions. The last hour was miserable. Along the way, we saw and photographed the USA behind a small sailboat. We finally turned into a bay on Drummond Island and headed for Drummond Yacht Haven. This is a full service marina. In fact, the US Customs maintains an office on the lot and a Homeland Security Officer comes to your boat and executes your entry process. For us, he sat on the gunwale, completed the paperwork, asked a couple of questions about vegetables and fruits from Canada, gave us an inspection number and bid us good-day. However, it was too late as we were already beaten up and tired from starting at 0600 and battling the waves for several hours.

In the spirit of a full service marina, they have something I have never seen. A live bait vending machine.

Several of our friends from the loop are here, including Riff Raff, Pookie II, Morningside, Spey and Theresa.

Betsy adds: GOD BLESS THE USA (even though the weather is still cold and miserable).

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8/6/2009	81	43	2.50	M	45°55.519'	83° 6.732'	Drummond Island - Yacht Haven	\$31.00	
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8/3/2009	78	39	5.75	M	45°55.144'	82°27.699'	Gore Bay, North Channel, ON	\$87.36	

[Rick] After gassing up the boat with 577 liters of gas, \$640.00 (Canadian), we left the Town of Little Current for the Town of Kagawong and eventually the town of Gore Bay, where we will spend the night. For those technical types reading, there are 3.78 liters to the gallon, so 577 liters is really 152.3 gallons. However, a liter of gas is over \$1.11 thus making a gallon of gas \$4.16 per gallon (Canadian). We will have a lesson on converting Canadian dollars to American dollars at a later date. Suffice it to say, gas is expensive here. This is odd, since Manitoba Province has one of the largest crude oil fields in the world. However, they have no refinery here, so they ship the oil to the US, for refining, and then import it back into Canada for consumption.

Kagawong is only 16 miles from Little Current. We almost did not go there as the weather was not cooperating. It was raining, again. But, as we approached the decision point, it looked clear toward Kagawong, so we turned off the main channel and into Mudge Bay for Kagawong. We are glad we did. This little town has two main attractions, Bridal Veil Falls, and the Anglican Church.

Bridal Veil Falls is about a half mile from downtown, and is accessible from the highway or through several wooded trails. We took the blue trail. This trail is bordered by a babbling stream, from the falls, and is very peaceful and green. The hike to the falls takes about 15 minutes. Once there, one can walk in the pool beneath the falls, walk behind the falls, or go up top to the observation section to take great pictures of the falls. The Falls were indeed beautiful. Betsy waded into the pool and in an act much like her mother, picked up some small rocks to take back home as a remembrance.

The Anglican Church, St John the Evangelist, is located right at the marina. It is a small church, barely holding 50 people, and is pastored by the Rev. Beth Topps. Back in 1970, 4 people lost their lives in a tragic accident at sea. A couple of years later, two locals brought the bow of the wrecked ship to shore, where it was later incorporated into the church. The bow of the boat is the pulpit. The church, all very nautical, has an anchor, a bell, and the decoration on the pews is the weight from a fishing net. The church also has a beautiful stained glass window. Check out the pictures.

We ate lunch at the one restaurant in Kagawong, and as we ate it started pouring rain. We could see the marina and the bay out the window, and visibility was down to about zero. We were afraid we may end up staying here overnight, which would really be depressing, not that its not a beautiful town, but just that we are tired of the lousy weather. However, the rain stopped and visibility improved just as we finished eating, so we headed for Gore Bay as planned.

The 17 miles to Gore Bay was rough but manageable. One time we were taking the waves directly on our beam which was very uncomfortable, and the rest of the time we were heading straight into them, which was a little better but still uncomfortable. We arrived in Gore Bay late afternoon to find our friends Pookie II and Perfect Remedy waiting out the weather. They had left Little Current a day ahead of us trying to get back to the US before their 45 day allowed time in Canada was up, but they aren't going to make it. At least 2 more loopers are stuck here as well. Weather reports for tomorrow are abysmal!

Regarding the 45 day rule for being in Canada, if you are here for more than 45 days you are supposed to bring your boat up to Canada's safety standards, which include having an axe on board, having more flares than the US requires, and a couple of other things. If you're not stopped and checked, no problem, but if you do get stopped by the Coasties and don't meet their requirements, you could be in trouble! We were later entering Canada than the other boats here, so it is not a concern for us.

08-04-09 Gore Bays

<u>--Date--</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Miles Today</u>	<u>Time Today</u>	<u>MA WP</u>	<u>Lat(N)</u>	<u>Lon(W)</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>COST DOCKAGE</u>	<u>NUMB LOCKS</u>
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Betsy Speaks: When we arrived in Gore Bay late yesterday afternoon we talked with several other loopers about the prospects for getting out of here today. They had all checked the weather reports and said they were pretty sure today was going to be a no go. Tomorrow should be much better, and they had already been pounded by 5 to 6 foot seas a couple of days ago and didn't intend to do that again. We looked at the forecast for both skies and wind last night and agreed. So this morning we slept in. Imagine my surprise when I looked out at about 0800 and they were all gone! The only remaining looper was "Theresa" who had anchored out in the harbor rather than staying at the marina.

The sky was sunny, and the winds appeared fairly calm, so we got ready quick. In other words, we skipped breakfast (we have some power bars on hand for days we do this), skipped the morning shower and were ready to head out. Rick even went to the marina office and checked with the local weather/wind conditions guru. He said today would be the best day out of the next 4 days, so off we went.

The trawler "Theresa" had pulled out about 20 minutes ahead of us. As we left the harbor Theresa called us on the radio to see our status, and we said we were just a few minutes behind her but should be passing her post haste. Teresa is a 46 foot Alaskan trawler with wooden hull. She weighs 50,000 pounds. We weigh less than 10,000 pounds. She called us again a few minutes later to see how we were doing in the rough water. By then we were getting bounced around pretty good, but said we were hanging in there. She had tried to call the other 3 boats that left before either of us got up to find out their status and had been unable to reach them. In fact, I had tried to call them the minute I realized they were gone and had not been successful.

Anyway, we went just a few more miles and were bouncing so bad the bikes were coming loose on the bow. Rick offered to go outside to tighten them, but I said no, he was worth more to me than the \$100 we had paid for them (we agreed later there might have been days I would have gladly let him go out there in spite of the weather!). So I had pretty much kissed the bikes good bye. Then the GPS went out. In Canada we have been relying solely on my little midget computer with a USB GPS antenna. We had acquired the Canadian Hydrographic Service electronic charts (similar to our NOAA charts), which work well with Maptech's Offshore Navigator Lite program I have a very inexpensive solution for charts we'll never use again. And as always, we had the paper charts clearly marked with a highlighter and nearby. But we decided that was pretty much the last straw. The closest port we could have pulled in to had we continued was at least 3 hours distant, and we would have been beat to death by then, so we decided to turn back.

In reality, we had only gone about 15 miles. Once we made the turn to head back we easily rolled with the waves and made it back to Gore Bay Marina with no problem. There's a huge difference in hitting 4 to 5 footers head on as opposed to riding with them at your rear. I know that usually people tend to overestimate wave height, so I called "Theresa" on the radio to get her estimation. They are from California and are used to cruising the Pacific where they routinely have waves this size, and his estimation of today's waves was 4 to 5 feet with an occasional 6 footer. This conversation took place after we were safely back in the bay, and he said it was getting worse out there rather than better so we knew we had made the right decision.

Also, Rick had paid for 2 nights of internet access here, so this way we're getting our money's worth out of that. And we managed to not lose the bikes since it was smooth sailing once we turned around. AND since we had gotten here too late yesterday to see any of the town or to visit the museum that was a good reason to stay. So we're trying to look on the bright side! We visited the local museum today, that is housed in the old jail. So each exhibit room is in what was a jail cell. Lots of old stuff, very interesting. The highlight was the "prisoner's table" which was completely covered with names carved into the wood, along with length of stay.usually only a few days.

Below are two pictures taken from the top of an observation tower here at the marina. One is not zoomed, and the other one, from the same

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location, is zoomed to try to show the breakers in the distance. Hopefully you can see how deceiving it is to be in a well protected bay as opposed to being out in the open of the North Channel. The calmness inside here can really fool you!

One thing we'll remember about Gore Bay is the bugs! Last night and this morning our boat was covered in tiny black flies. It seems they only live a few minutes, then die. There were zillions of them on every surface. They are sort of like gnats or no-see-ums only slightly larger. They don't bite or sting but they are just a nuisance. Maybe they chase off mosquitoes, because the mosquitoes don't seem as bad here as other places we've been.

08-05-09 Gore Bay Lighthouse

We're still holed up in Gore Bay due to high winds on the North Channel. One 28 foot sailboat made an attempt to leave this morning but came back quickly. We did hear that our friends (3 boats) that left very early yesterday made it to the next port safely, although beaten up and scared to death. The fourth boat, Theresa, that left just before us is a huge trawler with a very high bow, much higher than the typical trawler. She made it to the next port as well, but had water over the bow and all the way over the top several times. So we know more than ever that we were right to return to Gore Bay rather than fight the waves.

We probably wouldn't have done a blog today, but I had a picture I just had to share. I rode my bike out to Janet Point lighthouse late this afternoon. After visiting the lighthouse I walked to the water's edge. There were two women there picking up rocks, just like we pick up seashells on our shore. The moral of the picture is: always look over your shoulder to see if anyone is there before you bend down! I took several humorous pictures and these ladies never knew I was there!

The Janet Point Light is typical of lighthouses all along Georgian Bay and the North Channel. This one has a family living in it. They lease it from the town. I'm not sure if any money is involved, but the family takes care of the yard and basic upkeep, and they have it open for tours from 1 to 4 PM Tuesday through Saturday. The lease has been handed down from generation to generation in this same family for about 4 generations. They only live there during the summer. During the winter it is vacant, not suitable for year round living. Although the woman describes herself as the keeper of the light, the actual light is cared for by the Coast Guard.

The coastline of the North Channel is covered by rocks of all sizes and shapes. So different than the sandy beach we are used to. Although normally smooth and calm according to people we've talked to, this week it has looked just like the ocean with waves washing ashore. Everyone is marveling over how bad the weather has been this summer. Many Canadians say this is the worst summer they've ever experienced, just our luck! Today was beautiful and sunny but the wind has not let up. Tomorrow is supposed to be much better and we intend to leave at the crack of dawn. Wish us luck!

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7/31/2009	75	53	4.00	W	46° 3.009'	81° 28.677'	Baie Fine Fjord		
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[Rick] Yesterday, in our haste to get from Killarney to Little Current, we bypassed a recommended side trip to Baie Fine(Bay Fain) fjord. This is a natural fjord, with quartz and limestone, rather than granite. So, today, we ate lunch, got some gas in the boat, and headed out for Baie Fine.

It turns out that because of the way you have to go, the end of Baie Fine is EAST of Killarney and while Killarney is 22 miles from Little Current, Baie Fine is a round trip of 54 miles. It is basically a canyon, hills on both sides, and rock islands in the middle. The sides of the hills are tree covered. At the end, the pool, there wre about 14 boats anchored enjoying the scenery. Several boats were anchored on the way in, off in various coves and hideaways.

There are several cottages in the fjord, and we saw one that had a rope bridge to the next island.

In the areas we thought to be shallow, Betsy rode up front and watched for problems. We had none. Most of the depths were 25 or more feet. But, you never know when a rock will jump into your path and cause problems. It turns out that while in 07-31-09 Baie Fine Fjord, we attained the northernmost point of our trip. The first time over 46 degrees North at 46 03.009N and 81 28.667W.

We were a little disappointed, and we think that if one does Collins Inlet, it is not necessary to do Baie Fine. They are very similar. In fact, they both look a lot like many places in Alaska. At any rate, we came, we saw, we recorded. Enjoy.

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7/30/2009	74	22	1.75	M	45°58.989'	81°55.657'	Little Current, ON	\$191.10	
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[Rick] Thursday found us making our way from Killarney to Little Current, a distance of 20 miles. It is a very easily navigated stretch and very little stress. We thought we needed to be here by Thursday as they have their annual Haweater Festival this weekend. Haweater is local term for anyone that eats the Hawthorn Berry, locally very plentiful. We were told that if we waited until Friday, the locals would get all the spaces and the marina, run by the town of Little Current, does not take reservations. First come, first served. The festival will include fireworks, parades, barbeques, boat races, and a whole page more. We later find that we could have come Friday and gotten a space.

Little Current is on Manitoulin Island, the largest inland island in the world. The island was relatively undiscovered until the late 1960s when an old railroad bridge was converted to a one lane car bridge. This bridge is the only one to the island and opens for boat traffic for 15 minutes at the top of the hour. The normal height is 16 feet.

During the trip, we meet a tall ship in full sail. Looks like the 1700s all over again. She was not going very fast, but she was pretty.

We arrived early, around 1100 and docked at the town dock, the Port of Little Current. Pookie II and Perfect Remedy were close behind. We are docked just in front of the ice cream store. We did some exploring, to find that this town has most anything you need. They have a huge laundry, grocery, LCBO, bank, etc. The marina staff is very helpful and they have over 200 slips.

08-01-09 Little Current Cardboard Boat Races & Ski Show

Today was a very relaxing day. After breakfast, we walked to Low Island, the scene of a waterski show and demonstration at 1100 and the local Cardboard Boat races at 1200. All this is part of the Haweater's Festival here at Little Current.

The waterski show was good. They did all the standard tricks, skiing on a paddle, lifting a girl into the air, the pyramid at the end, skiing on a round table, barefoot skiing. Of particular interest was the hydrofoil ski. This device let a person ride about 2 feet out of the water, with a foil in the water for control. The skier did some very tough acrobatics including front flips. (Betsy comments: I used to do several of these tricks, including skiing on a paddle and the round disk, when I was younger, in my heyday as ski queen of Topsail Beach, a title I maintain to this day!) Several people from the marina came to watch in their dinghy. One dinghy had 7 people in it, about 5 too many. But, the police boat was close by to pick up anyone that managed to go overboard.

The Cardboard Boat Race was next. The rules are simple. Construct a vessel made of cardboard, duct tape, and you can use a wooden rod for a handle. There were 4 age groups, and the little ones had it better as they did not weigh as much. Also, the wind was blowing very hard against the rowers. So, a square, not-pointy bow was a liability. The contestants had spent weeks making the boats, and they were decorated to the nines. They raced in their age group, and there was a winner in each group. It was hilarious!

Low Island and Park is a particularly nice park. It has tennis courts, a skateboard area for the kids, a pavilion with restrooms, many picnic tables, and other amenities. The town of Little Current and NEMI, Northeastern Manitoulin and Islands, are to be congratulated for providing so much recreation area for the residents.

We joined our friends on Pookie II and Perfect Remedy for dinner at the Anchor Inn again, and came back to our boats in the pouring rain. We cannot stress how awful the weather has been here in Canada! Once again, we are very thankful to have the "den" enclosure on our boat when it rains!

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Pookie II and Perfect Remedy are planning to leave in the morning, so we bid them good bye. We plan to stay here one more day to enjoy the Haweater festivities.

08-02-09 Little Current Church, Parade, Fireworks

[Rick] It is Sunday and we begin the day by going to an Ecumenical Service with Anglicans, Methodist, Catholics, and some we are not sure of. The service was held at Cenotaph (you should look that word up in your Funk and Wagnall's) Park. We sang 4 hymns and The Rev. Faye Stevens of the Little Current United Church of Canada presented the message by relating 3 stories that relate to the unwavering and forgiving love that God has for each of us. Her message came from the prodigal son scripture.

The main street was sealed off and vendors from the area set up and proceeded to sell hot dogs, chicken, pop corn, clothes, sunglasses, shoes, etc in the main street. Noon signaled the beginning of the parade, with horses, Shriners, bands, a bagpipe and drum corps, and some old cars. It lasted about 20 minutes. Then it was back to eating and buying from the vendors. The theme of the Hawberry Festival was "Messin' with Recession". They stressed the need to shop at home.

I told you that we were docked right beside the ice cream store. All day, from 1100 in the morning until 2300, there was a line of at least 15 people waiting for service. They had a good day. At dusk, as people were waiting for the evening festivities, the line was at least 25 long even though the temperature was somewhere around 50 degrees and it seemed colder because it was very windy. These Canadians have tougher skin than we do!

At dusk, there proceeded a parade of lighted up boats down the channel. Since they cannot do this at Christmas (remember, the bay freezes here), they do this as part of the Haweaters Festival. There was one little dinghy, all lit up and having a great time.

Immediately after the parade, the fireworks began on the mainland across the channel from Little Current, which is on Manitoulin Island. They lasted about 30 minutes, and the finale was a good as we have ever seen. They estimate that over 5000 people were on the bank and in the marina area. An interesting note, first thing next morning, I walked the marina area, and it was absolutely clean. There was an occasional napkin or bottle, but for the most part, you would never have guessed that there had been 5000 people there, with a band playing and people partying until about midnight.

One last thing. You will recall that when we were in New York, the marina had only one bathroom/shower. And we never, not once, waited to use the facilities. This place has 12 combination bathroom/showers, and every time we went, we had to wait. Go figure...

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7/29/2009	73	65	6.00	M	45°58.258'	81°30.967'	Killarney, ON	\$40.25	

[Rick] July 26, 09 was spent in Britt as were the prior two days. Since we had "unofficially" hooked up with Pookie II and Perfect Remedy to go to Killarney and Little Current, we stayed in port as the winds blew in excess of 20 knots and create waves between 1 and 2 meters. That is 3-6 feet. Pookie II is a 25 ft Ranger tug that goes about 8 miles per hour and we had about 20 miles in open water to navigate. So we stayed until we at least had a chance of a good day. The marina was pretty nice. They had decent facilities, and supplied the gas for the grills. They had lots of picnic tables and chairs for us to spend our time. We were well inside a sheltered inlet (4 miles in). The locals said the wind never blew in there, but it blew the whole time we were there! Just more of the weather woes we've had.

So, on July 30, 09, we lit out for Killarney. Betsy and I decided to take the Small Craft Channel mainly to enjoy more of the beautiful scenery, and this route also gave us protection from the worst of the waves. This is a route behind some islands and avoids the worst of the open water. Pookie II and Perfect Remedy (47 feet) went outside and had a tough day. Not miserable, but pounding. On the Small Craft Channel, we once again found very narrow passages and some areas where the markers let you know not to get out of the channel. We weaved our way north of the Bustard Islands, and had to go outside for about 6 miles until we entered Beaverstone Bay on the way to Collins Inlet. Our outside run was very pleasant, and we sped past Pookie II and Perfect Remedy, who had left an hour before us, just before heading inland.

Collins Inlet is really a fjord, carved by the moving glaciers 30,000 years ago. It is narrow. It is beautiful. There are few houses or structures. It is about 20 miles long. The inlet is also a haven for boats that want to anchor out and not go to town. It is quiet, peaceful, and I am told that loons make beautiful sounds.

We arrived in Killarney, 65 miles from Britt, about 1430. Killarney lies on the western end of Georgian Bay. So we have completed our journey of Georgian Bay. It has been quite a trip, rocks and all. We tied up at the Sportsman Inn and proceeded to walk around this quaint town. One lady had a bedspread of stuff out in her front yard with a sign that said "Free". Betsy was thrilled to pick up a thumb piano, a little instrument we've seen in the Appalachian Mountains, for free! It needed some tuning, but she was able to do that with no problem, so now she has another noisemaker!

This town is really built on the water. The grocery store has a dock. The Post Office has a dock. The LCBO (liquor store) has a dock. But, the most amazing thing we noticed saw was the flowers. We have seen beautiful and plentiful flowers everywhere in Canada. But, here in Killarney, they are spectacular. Shasta Daisies are 4 feet high. Many of the flowers are annuals, and must be replanted every year.

The waterfront is very busy and they even dock boats across the channel on the island. When we arrived, we had to wait for several boats ahead of us to dock before we could pull in. It is really a bottleneck. A water taxi runs back and forth to take people to and from the town and the overflow docks on the other side of the channel. Fortunately we were on the town side.

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7/27/2009	71	51	4.00	M	45° 46.065'	80° 35.151'	Byng Inlet-Wrights Marina	\$124.44	

Betsy is writing today's Blog because she has nothing else to do! We stayed at Killbear Marina an extra night (Saturday) because of weather, and it looked like we might have to stay again. But we were anxious to leave because even though it was a pretty setting, the restaurant was way too expensive and the food was not to our liking anyway, we had no TV (which we've pretty much lived without throughout the trip) and no internet, even with our air card. So when the clouds started to clear mid-morning on Sunday, we decided to make a run for it. Our destination was Pointe au Baril, approximately 30 miles away, all inside amongst the rocks.

Here's a picture of Beamer, depressed after days without sun. (Remember, her full name is "Sunbeam Chaser!")

And here's a picture of Rick, depressed being stuck here with nothing to do.

Once we pulled out, the sky did clear for a while, and we carefully worked our way through what is called "Canoe Channel." Could that name be because it is so narrow nothing but a canoe should pass through it? But it is the marked preferred route, so we had no choice. This red and green combination lets you know you are heading in the right direction! Look at the tiny channel ahead...that break in the trees (remember you can click on the image to make it larger, but that does not make the actual channel any larger for us!)

The next image is as we approach the entrance, and then a picture while we are actually in the channel. I was sitting on the bow at this point, and was glad that the water is so clear you can see that the rocks go straight down on both sides. The charted depth is about 8 feet, but it is the narrowness that is scary. And our 8.5 foot beam is much smaller than most boats that do this!!!

This picture attempts to show how clear the water is. At the waterline, what you see underneath is the actual underwater rocks, not a reflection. It is hard to describe or believe how clear the water is!

Right after making it through Canoe Channel, the rains came in torrents but visibility was still fairly good and we do stay dry in our cabin so we continued on. The rain lasted about 15 minutes or so, and then the clearing began again. Right before reaching our intended destination we passed this marker that we had been told to look for: it is the boiler of a large boat that hit a rock here years ago and sank. The marker is now right on the boiler as a reminder of how careful you have to be!

Around the next bend was the marina that we had been told was now accepting transients, and that we wouldn't have any trouble getting in to because it was a well kept secret. Well, it wasn't a secret this weekend! There were hundreds of people on the bank leading up to a grand hotel, and the docks were jammed full of "cottagers," the term for people that own these cottages on these islands. There must have been some kind of festival going on, and the marina wouldn't even answer our call on the VHF radio. By now, approximately 1300 hours, the sky was sunny and the wind was calm.

So now we had a choice to make. We could go farther up a channel inland and hope to find a place to stay (there were several options), or make the outside run to Byng Inlet, about 17 miles total. We decided to make the outside run, and it was a good decision. The sky was sunny the whole way and the seas were very comfortable swells at a most favorable angle.

In spite of the nearly continuous bad weather, when we are able to travel we see nothing but beauty. We are still amazed by the houses built on rocks, or the single house on an island by itself. I spoke to one of the "cottagers" yesterday (she was doing her laundry here at the marina). Her house is on an island by itself that her husband's grandfather bought in the early 1900s from the Canadian Railroad Company for pennies an

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acre. Hers has no power other than solar panels and propane. Like those of us that knew the old Topsail Beach style of living with no telephone, no video games, no TV, she is glad her children enjoy coming to the island in the summertime, getting away from those things and enjoying the basics of nature and wildlife. She says most of the islands that are privately owned have been in the same family for generations, and that it is extremely hard to buy an island today. She said that the vast majority of those that don't have structures on them belong "to the crown," and as such are part of the Canadian Parks System.

Still, we marvel at the lone cottage with all the "toys".note the boat, the floatplane, etc. in this picture.

Going out the Pointe au Baril inlet we saw where the name came from! There is a barrel on a rock. Nearby is a sign explaining that before the days of reds and greens like we have today, the channel was marked with barrels, and this is a picture of what that would have looked like right at the entrance to the channel. There is also a lighthouse here now, but apparently these barrels marked the channel even before the days of lighthouses.

We arrived at Byng Inlet, which takes you into the tiny town of Britt, about mid afternoon. The channel leading to Wright's Marina in Britt is narrow and beautiful, and the sun was still shining. I have to mention this because we are seeing so little sun!

Last night we went with two other loop boats that are here to a local restaurant.they were nice enough to pick us up, even though it took two trips with the six of us. We were impressed by the candles on the tables.made out of old propellers! The food and the service were not that impressive! But we had fun and it is really the only place in town.

After returning to our boat, the bugs last night were as bad as any we've seen. It seems that every night there are more and larger mosquitoes. I think that Rick swatting them with the fly swatter is making them procreate all the more!

Our plan was to leave this morning, go outside again for a 20+ mile run to Collins Inlet which would take us through another fjord like channel to Killarney. But again, the weather is not cooperating. We are bundled up against the cold, rain threatens constantly, and not only are the winds blowing, they are blowing out of the worst direction. Weather reports make it look just as bad for tomorrow. Earlier I showed pictures of Rick and Beamer being depressed individually. Now they are depressed together.this is not a staged picture! It is real boredom setting in. Maybe leaving Sneads Ferry on May 18 in the rain and cold was an omen. Even the Canadians are complaining about what a lousy summer it has been.they are very apologetic, as if they could do something about it!

Look on the bright side: We haven't hit a rock hard enough to do any damage...which reminds me...let me backtrack a bit. Way back in Trenton, at the very beginning of the Trent-Severn Waterway, we met the boat "Whiskers," a power catamaran even smaller than we are. You may remember the picture of them and Maurice's boat "Quotidian" along with us, and we were so proud to be the biggest boat in the marina for a change. Well, Whiskers (not members of the official looper association) went on ahead of us, and ended up getting to Killbear a week before us. As they were leaving Killbear, moving at about 10 MPH, they hit a rock and ruined the lower units of both of their outboards. They have been at Killbear for a week, and expect to be there another week waiting for parts and insurance settlement. Remember, Killbear is where there is no phone, no internet, no TV, one very expensive restaurant, and nowhere to go. Needless to say, Linda and Deke on Whiskers are bordering on deep depression. She is barely speaking, he prattles on non-stop about that stupid uncharted rock that he came 2,000 miles to find. And remember, they're on a boat smaller than ours and its been raining a lot!

SOOOO, we have much to be thankful for. We are still enjoying ourselves for the most part. I'm getting a lot of reading done (right now I'm in the

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middle of re-reading The Heart is a Lonely Hunter which I had read in high school).

Don't look for any more blogs until the skies clear and the winds calm!!

7/24/2009	68	50	4.00	M	45°21.463'	80°14.335'	Killbear marina	\$78.00	
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[Rick] We were expecting some bad weather, so we made no attempt to get going early in the day. As the morning progressed, the weather got much better and at 1145 we left Bay Moorings in Penetangishene for the fabled Georgian Bay. This is, by all accounts and stories, the place you have to go on the loop. When we first started talking about the loop, we were going to go the entire length of the Erie Canal, and not go into Canada. But, so many who had done the loop told us we just had to see Georgian Bay and the North Channel. So, we changed our plan and came on this route.

It really is the land of 30,000 islands. Legend has it that an Indian giant, spurned by the love of his life, grabbed up a handful of earth and tossed it onto Lake Ontario, creating the 30,000 islands. Today the Georgian Bay adventure begins.

Along the way, we witnessed hundreds of islands, many with homes built on them. Most of these are weekend homes, but several looked to be permanent dwellings.

We motored behind, in front of, beside hundreds of islands on our way to our first stop, the town of Sans Souci, on Frying Pan Island, arriving at 1445. This is the home of the "world famous" Henry's Restaurant, home of the "the world's best customers". Since it is on an island, the "parking lot" is the floating docks where boats and floatplanes motor in and tie up. When we tied up, I inquired as to where to go to settle our bill, and was told that they would take care of that later, just go on inside and have lunch. So we did. While certainly edible and plentiful, it was not spectacular. After lunch, we found the restrooms, but did not find the showers. I mentioned to Paul, the head honcho, the reason we used marinas instead of anchoring was for the shower/restrooms. He said nothing. Then, about 1800, a young man came around to collect for dockage. I told him we had found the restrooms, but not the showers. He indicated that they no longer have showers since "some people had been abusing them". I told him that we would not have even considered overnight if we had known there were no showers. We talked it over and decided that \$1.50 per foot and no showers was a bad deal, and since the next place to stop was only 15 miles away, we were outta there. I do not think the person at Henry's lied to us, but they were certainly not forthcoming, especially since they indicated they knew the guidebooks said they have showers. So, our recommendation for Henry's Fish Camp is that it is a day stop, eat some fried fish, and move on to Parry Sound. Except for a walking trail to a monument to Champlain, there is absolutely nothing else to do on the island.

So, at 1815, we depart Henry's heading to Killbear Marina in Killbear. Our original plan was to take an inside route to Parry Sound, explore there some, and then end up in Killbear. Since we ended up leaving late in the day instead of the next morning, we bypassed Parry Sound by using a more outwardly route. In just over an hour, we arrived at Killbear Marina, docked on the wall and had a wonderful evening. The only problem at Killbear is that your cell phone will not work, and more importantly, your air card will not work and there is no internet of any type. There is a PAYPHONE in the lobby of the restaurant. Tomorrow's blog listing will give more details about the marina.

Someone wrote to ask if we Twitter. The answer is NO. Between the blog, the log, posting pictures, charting tomorrow's route, and playing captain, we do not have time, even if we had the internet connectivity.

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7/20/2009	64	25	4.00	M	44° 47.224'	79° 56.124'	Bay Moorings Marina	\$136.50	2

[Rick] Well, it was a big day. We traversed the Railroad Lift at Big Chute. It was very thrilling. We got up a little early and were second on the Blue Line for entry to the chute. At 0830, the loudspeaker called the first boat, Meander, into the carriage and we were the second boat into the chute. The lockmaster said that they had a Glacier Bay last week and did not use any of the straps, just let it sit on the bottom. I told him that was fine with me, and so, that is what we did. The carriage started to move and up we went. Here are several pictures of the event.

Once over the Big Chute, we went to the town of Port Severn, and the last lock on the Trent Severn Waterway. We have now done 44 locks on the waterway. Leaving the lock, we encountered some of the narrowest channels we have ever seen. Also, the channel marker reversed themselves, now Red on the right and Green on the left. We literally snaked our way through very narrow channels until we could get out into open water and head for the town of Penetanguishene, ON, and the Bay Moorings Marina.

Bay Moorings is one of three very large marinas as well as a town dock in a very busy boating community. Bay Moorings has over 400 slips and most were full. This is one of the nicest marinas we have seen. The restrooms/showers are fabulous and earn our highest rating so far. They are clean, private, secure, drain well, have hooks, a heater, and anything else on the list. The docks are fixed, not floating, but they stagger the finger piers, a high one then a lower one, so that they can accommodate most any boat need for getting off and on the boat. There is only one boat per slip, so, you can back in, forward in, and have no fear of hitting anyone or anyone hitting you. There is a ships store, a motel, restaurant, pool, exercise room, and most everything you could ask for.

We are here for a gathering of loopers before heading for Georgian Bay and the North Channel. Bay Moorings is having a wine and cheese party for us on Tuesday and a Barbeque cookout on Wednesday. We plan to leave on Friday for the two week jaunt into Georgian Bay. Also, we have talked about the Canadian obsession with recycling. In Canada, beer is purchased in The Beer Store, a separate entity, run by the government. Since every can and bottle of beer has a 10 cent deposit, people bring their empty cans and bottles back to the Beer Store for refund. The sign says that everything purchased in The Beer Store is recyclable and on average, they reclaim 96% of the bottles and cans sold. Quite a record. This explains why we see people taking cans and bottles out of any trash. They are taking it back for refund.

07-21-09

Today was a very enjoyable day in Penetangishene. The sun came out and we had the second straight day of warm weather. It has been really cold and overcast for the most part here in Canada. Since it was so nice, we decided to clean the cockpit of the boat. It has been 9 weeks, and it needed it badly. So, we started by removing everything in the cockpit, washing it down, drying it, and putting back most of what went out. Yes, we did have some trash.

After noon, we untied the boat and motored to the town dock, a couple of miles toward town, so that we could go to the grocery store. The Grocery store, Foodland, is open 24 hours. However, the catch is that you must walk up a huge hill, and with your stuff, come back down to the city dock.

Along the way, we saw this mural on a store front and visited the huge church. There was no sign, but, we are sure it is Catholic. The church was built in 1897 and is the largest structure to be seen in the area.

Penetangishene is the home of the Curling World Champion. It is also the home of the famous individual curling champion, Russ Howard. There is a monument to Russ and his accomplishments.

From 1900-2100, Bay Moorings hosted a wine and cheese party for the loopers. Had about 50 people there, including the staff. It was very nice

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and a lot of stories (true and not so true) were exchanged. Ken MacDonald, the regional manager of the Parkbridge Marinas, was our host.

7/19/2009	63	32	4.00	W	44°37.873'	79°23.918'	Big Chute Wall		2
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Today was one of the highlights of the trip. We left Rama, ON and traveled 4 hours to Big Chute. Along the way, we saw beautiful homes built up on the rocks with excellent docks and "play" places on the water. The houses were more spectacular than the ones previously. It has been cold up here, so we were surprised at these "crazy Canadians".

Big Chute is the home of the only rail lift lock in the world. We arrived and tied to the wall, not the blue line, so we could go and observe the operation and see the thing in action. It is a carriage, on two rails that take boats from one side of a road to the other, by passing OVER the road. Boats enter the carriage, are strapped in, then lifted 65 feet into the air and then transported to the other side and deposited into the water. Due to the construction of the railway, with two sets of tracks, the load stays level at all times. Based on the size of the boats, the chute can take from 1-6 boats. We decided to spend the night on the wall, go through the lock tomorrow morning and head for Pentetangishene for the gathering of loopers in Canada. Here are several pictures of the Big Chute.

7/18/2009	62	7	1.00	M	44°39.364'	79°21.166'	Ojibway Marina-Rama Tribe	\$49.61	
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After the Scottish Festival in Orillia, we left Orillia and went 5 miles to a marina at the RAMA Casino. It was time for Betsy to get her "fix". The marina was crowded, but they found us a spot under the shed and near the restrooms. The restrooms and showers were excellent. We rate them a 9. We caught the shuttle to the casino, run by the Ojibway Indians, in the town of RAMA, ON. While getting a player card, the lady at the desk said she could get us tickets to see Crystal Gayle for the 2100 show. So, we said Thank You very much. We went and Crystal gave a great show. Tomorrow, we are off the Big Chute and the fun really begins.

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7/15/2009	59	25	4.00	M	44°36.761'	79°24.710'	Orillia Marina City Dock	\$78.44	5

We had a very easy day of it today. We did not leave the marina until 1100, and passed 5 locks in 4 miles. Then, it was on to Lake Simcoe. We skirted the Eastern part of the lake, heading for Orillia, ON. The total time was 4 hours and the distance was 25 miles. The lake was glassy smooth and we made great time. Cruising guides and locals warn that the lake can be very rough in a hurry if the wind kicks up, but it was perfect for us.

Before arriving at Orillia, we decided to pumpout our holding tank. We stopped at a marina in the narrows. The cost to pumpout was \$20. This seems excessive to us, especially since most of Canada is very serious about waste control, recycling, and keeping the water clean. A lower pumpout price will encourage boaters to pumpout, rather than dump the waste into the water systems.

Orillia is a rather large city, and is one of the "must" stops on the loop. Many people stay here three days since the town marina, run by the Chamber of Commerce, offers 3 nights for the price of two. And the rate is \$1.40 per foot. They have excellent restroom/shower facilities (we rate them an 8) and power (hydro) and good free internet. We did have to move to get a better internet signal but it is great now. A large boat in front of us blocked the signal, as it was good before the boat arrived. Such are the trials and tribulations of being the smallest boat in the marina, as we frequently are.

We need to be in Penetanquishene on Monday for a mini-rendezvous, so we will stay here for at least 3 days. Then we may stay at a nearby casino marina one night so Betsy can get her fix. We have only 4 more locks, including the Big Chute, and only 50 more miles to cover in the Trent Severn Waterway. We will be creating a small blog entry each day, but mostly we will be touring and seeing Orillia.

07-17-09 Orillia, Ontario Canada

Not much to tell today as we haven't moved from our spot in beautiful Orillia, Ontario. We intend to stay here 3 nights, as they have a buy 2 get 1 free deal and this is a nice location with lots of shopping nearby and nice facilities. We spent a good part of this morning cleaning the boat inside and out. Then just before lunch we looked up and saw our friend Maurice chugging in on his 21 foot Ranger Tug. We had left him behind in Bobcaygeon and weren't surprised that he caught up with us here. He's docked right next to us again.

The other looper boat that is here is Idyll Time, a 48 foot trawler, so you have the smallest and the largest boats that we've seen looping here together.

So since there's not much to tell today, I want to talk a little about things we like about Canada. Generally, it is a beautiful country with beautiful waterways and wonderful people. But there are several specific things that we have appreciated and that we think the US would benefit from.

First, they are SERIOUS about recycling. At some marinas in the US we saw signs encouraging you to recycle, but that is hard to do when there aren't any recycle containers to be seen. Here in Canada, there is a recycle container next to nearly every garbage can. We have always been able to find the place to put our cans and bottles, be it at lock sites, restaurants, marinas or city parks.

If you want a plastic bag to carry your groceries in, it costs you a nickel. They have reusable grocery bags available everywhere for about 99 cents. They want you to buy and use them rather than using plastic bags. I know I've tried to get in the habit of taking reusable bags to the store when I go, but I usually forget. If I had to pay a nickel for every bag I brought home from the grocery, I'd be more likely to remember to take my own bags!

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On another subject about grocery shopping: how mad do you get when you see someone leaving their cart in the middle of the parking lot, too lazy to push it to the cart holder or back to the store!? It infuriates me! At some of the grocery stores here, you have to pay a quarter deposit to get a cart. Then when you return the cart you get your quarter back. What a great idea! However, there's a funny story to go along with that. The first time I saw this was at the grocery store in Peterborough. I saw a long line of grocery carts right outside the store. I tried to pull one from the line, but I noticed they were locked together with a chain on each cart locking it to the next cart. I just figured this was some way to get all the carts back to store without them coming apart. I didn't pay much attention to it and headed for another group of carts just inside the door. A man was pushing his cart from the parking lot toward the store, so I just reached for it and said "I'll take that for you." He gave me a funny look and sort of hesitated, so I said again "I'll take that cart into the store for you." He let me have it and soft of walked away shaking his head. It was then I noticed a quarter sticking in the slot in the handle. You're supposed to stick a quarter in the slot to get your cart, and then you get your quarter back when you take your cart to the proper place and attach it to the next cart and your quarter pops back out at you. So that poor man I'm sure thought I was some crazy American too cheap to use my own quarter.

Another smart thing the Canadians have done, and I think we've touched on this in previous blogs, is to turn the lock operation over to Parks Canada, which has done a marvelous job of making the lock grounds beautiful. The lockmasters and their interns all wear nice uniforms and all are exceptionally nice and helpful. Always cheerful, they go out of their way to welcome you to "their" lock. Each lockmaster is responsible not only for the operation of the lock, but for the landscaping of the lock site and for the maintenance thereof. The first thing every morning they go around with a broom and clear spider webs off all surfaces (there are LOTS of spider webs up here). The bathrooms are always clean. The picnic tables are always clean. There is not trash falling out of the garbage cans. It is just incredibly clean and fresh and beautiful. You can stop at any lock before or after locking and tie up to the wall and go in and use the restrooms or have a picnic lunch. If you want to spend the night tied up to the wall, they give you a key or code to use the bathrooms during the night. We did not find this to be the case at most of the locks on the Erie Canal.

Everywhere you look there are beautiful flowers. Where our annuals in North Carolina are usually parched and spent by mid July, here they are beautiful. There are lots of hanging baskets, lots of gardens, and all are so vibrant and healthy looking. Nearly every lock has gardens and baskets, all the parks have beautiful flowers, and nearly every city has hanging baskets on the light poles, which is reminiscent of Alaska and of Europe. I'm sure climate has a lot to do with it.

As we travelled in New Jersey and New York, we were often appalled by the language we heard in restaurants, on the street, or dockside. I know I'm a little trashy mouthed sometimes, but we heard language in public that I would never use, and we heard it over and over and over. We have not heard any foul language out of the Canadians.

We've met many very nice Canadians, but one just stands out and I want to tell you about him. His name is Al. I have no idea what his last name is. We first met him at the marina in Peterborough. Al travels in a little 17 foot homemade boat. He had cut a plan out of Popular Mechanics magazine in 1958 and saved it. Then in the mid 70s his wife encouraged him to build that boat. So he started on it in the mid 70s and finally finished it in about 1990. He told me he really built the boat for his wife because she loved the water, and they had a great time on it for one year and then she died.

Now Al travels back and forth on the Trent Severn every year, probably several times a year, by himself. Several of lockmasters told us he was a regular. He never stays at marinas, always at lock walls. He eats 3 meals a day on the boat; for his evening meal he gets out a checkered table cloth and puts it on a nearby picnic table and cooks on a little portable grill, usually something real simple like a baked potato.

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Inside his boat I couldn't stand up, but Al is short so he could stand up. The boat itself was made from the plan, but all the insides he did himself. The seats are old automobile seats, so he tries to keep them from getting wet. He has plastic/canvas enclosures, but if there is rain coming, he covers the entire cabin and helm area with a single sheet of plastic to keep the inside dry. The steering wheel was custom made by a friend because every storebought steering wheel he tried was too large. The friend has since died, and Al put a bronze plaque on the wheel saying who had made it and when.

We ran across Al on several occasions after Peterborough. Our final meeting with him was the night before we got here to Orillia. We pulled over to a small marina to spend one night. As the marina staff was showing us which slip to take, we realized we were going to be next to Al. Turns out this was his home port, and he was through travelling for this week. He actually lives 2 hours away from where he keeps the boat, and he said he was going home long enough to pay the Visa bill and then go boating again.

I just loved Al's little boat. It reminded me of my daddy building our first boat in our backyard in Durham when I was about 7 years old. It was made out of wood, then coats of fiberglass. I remember him telling me to stay away as he put the fiberglass on so I wouldn't get the bits of glass in my fingers. I remember the smell of the coating. I wonder if his was a Popular Mechanics plan as well. That was the June Bug I, which was finally lost in Hurricane Fran. Wonderful, nostalgic memories.

Al's boat had a 75 horsepower Mercury outboard, which meant it could probably go pretty fast. But Al never went more than 6 or 7 miles an hour. He always wore a life jacket (smart). He was just a nice, nice man with a beautiful boat and he loves the water.

Enough of that. Tomorrow we plan to leave Orillia and just head across the lake to the Ojibway Indian marina and casino for one night. Sunday or Monday we will make it to Big Chute to do the railway lock. You won't want to miss that!

Special Edition 07-18-09 Scottish Festival....

Will someone in our church family please make sure my friend Howard Orr sees or hears about this blog. I don't know if he is a daily reader or not, but I want to make sure he hears about this!!

We are still in Orillia, and one reason we stayed here for several nights is that we knew there was a Scottish Heritage Festival this weekend. I don't know that either of us has any Scottish blood, but we'll stick around for any festival!

Over the past several days we've heard bagpipes in the far distance every night, practicing up for the big day. Well today was the big day. We are docked right next to the park where the festival is, right at the bottom of the hill on the town's main street. The Scottish Heritage Festival Parade started promptly at noon, and we had front row seats. I didn't count how many pipe and drum bands there were, but my estimate would be at least 30 or 40. All were playing different tunes (although they all sounded pretty much the same), and I want Howard to know that I really, really enjoyed it. I don't know that I've ever heard a real, practiced pipe and drum band before, and these were great!

The bands were from all over Canada, many representing police and fire departments, some representing schools, some just representing pipe and drum clubs. They were obviously all very serious about what they were doing. Having been a former parade marcher myself (way back in high school days), I thought there formations were excellent.nice straight lines, all marching on beat. The front men (in a band we call them drum

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majors, I don't know what they are called in a pipe and drum band) were so serious, very somber faced! I got a real kick out of the one little boy that was following the major, imitating him. I was impressed by the number of young pipers there were.

The parade went on for about 45 minutes, and I was sorry to see it end. In addition to the pipe and drummers, there were Shriners riding around in their funny little cars with their funny hats on, and local dignitaries in antique cars.

Now I'm sitting on the boat, but in the distance I still hear bagpipes. There is some sort of competition going on, but its about time for us to pull out and head over to the casino marina.

So, Howard, I take back all the bad things I said about bagpipes!

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7/14/2009	58	37	7.00	M	44°31.181'	79° 4.575'	Bolsover, Kirkfield Lock 36	\$34.13	3

Rick speaks. We got up this morning and had breakfast at a local restaurant with our "new best friends" John and Gail, residents of Bobcaygeon, ON. They have been very helpful to us as they are just finishing the loop after 2 years. They are going to have some adjusting to do after being on the boat for so long.

We left Bobcaygeon for Fenelon Falls. There, tied to the lock wall, were Jack and Pia Griffin on board the boat "Still Busy". We had met these folks, from Charlotte, at the rendezvous in Charleston in April and they have been about 3 weeks ahead of us. However, they went to Ottawa and Montreal and came to Kingston via the Rideau Canal, so we caught up with them. We had a grand old time catching up. Afterward, we toured a very nice museum, dedicated to the town of Fenelon Falls. This is a tourist stop, for all types of folks, including boaters. There are about 10 ice cream shops and other touristy places.

When we returned from eating and visiting the museum, we found, as several people told us, that a houseboat entering the lock had been attacked by the wind and had run into our boat as it was tied to the wall. Fortunately, there was no damage. One bystander had jumped onto our boat and pushed the attacking houseboat away before any damage was done.

We made our way to the next lock, Rosedale. As we left the lock, the port engine would not go into gear and at the same time, the steering wheel seized up. We immediately thought that the houseboat had done damage and we were just now finding out. But, we had just been across a large lake, with no problem. So, we raised the motors and found that one of our lines had gone AWOL, jumped out of the boat, and become entangled in the port prop. Rick cut the offending line, cleared the prop, and off we went. Moral of the story. It is not always perfect each and every day. There is some stress, some days.

We cross Balsam Lake and according to the GPS, we reached the highest elevation we can expect, 852 feet. From now on, we will be going down, and the locks will be much easier to negotiate.

We easily negotiate Trent Canal. This canal is carved from rock for several miles and one does not get out of the channel. It is only about 40 feet wide and 7 miles long. Then, we get another highlight. We ride the Kirkfield Lift Lock. This lock is like the Peterborough Lift, except it is made of steel, not concrete. However, we start out up top, and look out over where we are going as we descend 5 stories. We were the only boat in the lock, and it was a thrill.

We then navigate the Trent Canal more and come to the "Hole in the Wall" bridge. The picture speaks for itself. All of this afternoon has been in very closely marked narrow channels. Some of the markers look like airplane runways. By 1800, we arrive at Sunset Cove Marina. We decide to stay here as we need a shower after two days on the lock walls. It is an old marina, but they have what we want, hot showers.

In all, we cover 3 locks and 37.1 miles. Tomorrow is another day..

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7/13/2009	57	33	6.50	W	44°32.235'	78°32.807'	Bobcaygeon, ON		4

Betsy speaks - We went through 4 locks today, for a total of 33.2 miles. We stopped along the way in Buckhorn for lunch, eating again at a picnic table right next to the lock, all part of beautiful and well run Parks Canada.

As we finished lunch, we saw many canoes approaching the lock. They pulled over to the blue line, which meant they were going to go through. They were fairly well spread out, we saw 4 or 5 at first, but then they just kept coming. Each canoe held 3 young teenagers, along with plastic garbage bags full of gear and clothing. They were well weighted down, and the kids were having a hard time controlling them. The final count was 21 canoes that went into the lock at the same time, and we heard the adult in charge tell the lockmaster there were 3 more stragglers. The lockmaster said they would have to catch the next opening, as there were boats waiting as well. This is a very busy lock, and one of the very few where the lockmaster has a loud speaker to tell boats what he wants them to do.

So here are 21 canoes, 7 rows of 3 each, holding on to the right hand wall of the lock, along with 3 boats on the left hand side. As they were going down, the lockmaster asked "which one of you is going to lick the wall this year? Last year someone took chunks off the wall and actually chewed them!" Now, these lock walls are covered with disgusting slime, literally dripping off the wall. Apparently it is customary for some of these kids to lick the wall each year (the lockmaster told me later this is a once a year thing for this camp). Anyway, one of the boys licked the wall, then turned around to spit. This caused uproars of laughter and they got so carried away that someone let go of the wall. The first two rows of 3 canoes each ended up floating away from the wall toward the boats on the other side. They were very inexperienced paddlers and had no clue how to get back to the wall. Their counselor was up on the wall yelling at them to pull the paddles toward the canoes to sidle over to the wall, but it was fruitless. Pure mayhem!

Once the lock was down, the lockmaster slowly opened the doors, the canoes all floated out without any control at all, with the counselor up top yelling at them to grab the wall as they left so they could wait for the 3 stragglers that were now waiting at the top of the lock to come down with the next opening. There was a slight bend in the wall, so we really couldn't see the final outcome, but I'm sure it wasn't what the counselor had in mind. We hear this camp costs \$3,000 per child per week. I wonder if the parents of these kids have any idea what was going on! The kids did all have on life jackets, but the canoes were way overloaded, the kids did not know how to paddle well enough for this undertaking, several had already swamped (I saw one girl in the bathroom using the hand blow dryer trying to dry out her clothes. she told me her canoe sank from having too much weight in it. Several of the kids were dipping water out of their canoes as they were in the lock.

It was a very windy day, and the water was very rough in places. What a story these kids will have to tell, if they survive! I remember well learning how to handle a canoe when I was at Girl Scout camp in my youth, but I don't think we ever did anything like this!

We finally left Buckhorn and crossed Pigeon Lake heading to Bobcaygeon. Again, it was a very windy day and the lake had a stiff chop. It wasn't a problem for us, but we did try to radio our friend Maurice in his 21 footer to warn him. By the time we reached him he was at the point of no return, and ended up pulling into Bobcaygeon several hours behind us.

The creek leading to Bobcaygeon was one of the prettiest things we've seen. Quiet and peaceful after the lake crossing, beautiful homes on each side, beautiful landscaping. We had met some Bobcaygeon residents during our trip that were finishing their loop, after 2 years. They reached home about 4 days prior to our arrival. They had told us to be sure to look them up once we arrived, but I wasn't sure how we were going to do that since we've disabled our cell phones. We had e-mailed them thinking we would arrive in Bobcaygeon on Tuesday, but we actually arrived Monday. As we approached the lock, we passed a marina and I saw their boat. Thinking I saw someone on the boat, I tooted the horn, and sure

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enough there was John. So we pulled over to the marina and Gail also came around the corner. They were proudly flying their gold AGLCA burgee, which you get once you've completed the loop. We chatted with them for a while, and arranged for them to come to our boat later in the evening as it was John's birthday and they already had dinner plans.

They stopped by after dinner and shared a drink. Then we arranged to have breakfast with them the following morning.

Bobcaygeon is the site of the very first lock built on the Trent-Severn. It is a lovely little town with wonderful shops and restaurants and a nice museum. We are spending the night here on the wall. Tomorrow a marina will be in order because 2 days without a shower is enough.

I am constantly in awe of how beautiful the Canadian waterways are. The scenery day after day is just breathtaking. We keep reminding ourselves it is only good for boating about 3 or 4 months out of the

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7/12/2009	56	16	6.50	W	44°29.319'	78°13.905'	Youngs Point Lock 28		8
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Betsy speaks today: We spent three great nights in the city of Peterborough, the largest city we've seen since Kingston, Ontario. The marina is right in the center of downtown, near grocery, shops, hotels and restaurants. We did a lot of bike riding here, nice flat land with wide sidewalks made it easy. Here is Rick leading the way.he looks great from the rear!

The marina is right next to a sizable park. We returned to the park one afternoon and right near our boat was this man playing a Romanian Pan Flute. For the first time on this trip I went to the boat and broke out a couple of harmonicas and went back and played with him a little while. I think Amazing Grace was the only thing we both knew all the way through, but we kind of played off each other with various other tunes. He had 2 pan flutes with him, an alto and a tenor. Both were beautiful instruments, which he said only improved with age (unlike a harmonica). He said you can get an "inexpensive" one for a couple of hundred dollars (you can get a really good harmonica for about \$25, so when it wears out with age you just throw it away!). He said most people have a hard time getting a sound out of the pan flute, but since I used to play the flute and since he offered to let me try, I gave it a shot. I immediately was making pretty good music and played a couple of tunes.the concept is just like playing a flute which helped me as opposed to someone who has never played a flute. It is a very simple instrument, really. We had fun.

Friday night we went to the annual barbecue ribfest just a couple of blocks from the boat. Many vendors were cooking ribs. There was live music and very expensive beer available.\$2.50 for a 6 oz. Dixie sized cup of beer. We bought a plate of food, and I bought 2 beer tokens before I realized how tiny the beer servings were. We took the plate back to the boat to eat because it was so crowded and noisy and I had cheap beer on the boat! I thought it was funny that one of the places was advertising "South Carolina Barbecue".remember, we are in Canada!

Saturday we rode our bikes a couple of miles to see the Peterborough Lift Lock that we knew we would be going through the next morning. This is one of the highlights of the trip that we had heard much about. Completed in 1904, this is the world's highest lift lock, constructed of unreinforced concrete. There are only 2 lift locks in North America (we will go through the other one in a couple of days, going down instead of up). There are 6 other lift locks in Europe. There is a very nice visitor's center adjoining the lock where we spent some time learning the history of this incredible structure.

Saturday night the was a concert in the park right next to the marina. Thousands of people attended to hear a U2 tribute band. Not my kind of music, really, but a fun time anyway. Hot dog, popcorn, cotton candy vendors set up all around the perimeter. We got something to eat and listened to just a few minutes of the concert, then joined some other loopers on their boat and just listened from a distance as we shared looping tales.

Finally this morning we left Peterborough and actually entered the lift lock. It consists of two "tubs", one of which goes up as the other one comes down. Several boats can fit in each chamber.we were in the chamber with two other boats. The lift is totally hydraulic, operating only by gravity.no electricity involved. Once the boats are in place, one foot of water is added to the upper chamber, thus causing it to fall as the lower chamber rises, sort of like a seesaw. Because of physics and displacement and all sorts of other things I don't understand, it doesn't matter what the boats in the chambers weigh, only that there is more water weight in one than in the other.

We then travelled a total of 16 miles the rest of the day, going through a total of 8 locks. Very slow going! We stopped in the town of Lakefield and stretched our legs after eating lunch at a picnic table next to a lock. Then went a few more miles and stopped for the night at a lock wall not in a town, but with a couple of restaurants and shops that have just built up around the lock. Our friend Maurice on his little Ranger Tug is tied up behind us again, so we enjoyed his company for dinner again.

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7/9/2009	53	40	5.25	M	44° 17.770'	78° 19.093'	Peterborough, ON Marina	\$114.66	1
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Just a note from yesterday. You will recall that we traveled 23.2 miles from Lock 10 to Hastings Lock #18. Looking at Google Earth, we discovered that the distance, as the crow flies, is 8.47 miles. Yes, the Trent Severn Waterway is curvy, meandering, and quite long.

Today, we covered the 39.4 miles from Hastings, Lock 18 to Peterborough. As the crow flews, it is 17.2 miles. We got to make up a little time as we crossed

Rice Lake. This beautiful lake was full of fishermen and recreational boaters. After the lake, we meandered to the little town of Campbelltown. They have a free town dock. However, it is barely 40 feet long and only one boat at a time can tie there. We were fortunate to get that one spot, so we stopped for lunch. We didn't see a town at all, just the middle of nowhere.

Proceeding on, we entered our only lock of the day, Lock 19, with a rise of 9 feet. For the first time, the lock was full.4 boats. We were the first ones in so it was easy for us. The last ones in have to be a little more careful! The lockmaster was full of information about the events in town and where the restaurants are located. The Peterborough Marina is very large, has 50 transient slips, gas, diesel, pumpout, 6 washroom/shower combinations, and sits beside the city park which has a concert every Wednesday and Saturday night. This Saturday, a U2 tribute band will play.

Upon entering the harbor, one cannot escape the huge water fountain in the center of the harbor.

We have decided to be here at least 3 nights, through Saturday night. There is a lot do here. They have an excellent marine store, called Boaters World. (Not the same as the ones in the states that just closed). There is a ribfest on Friday, with a competition for the best ribs and home brewed beer. This is a very large town compared to most we have visited. With that in mind, we will probably not blog for a couple of days while we get some R&R. But, when we begin again, we will have some good stuff. The world famous Peterborough Lift Lock, the world's largest lift lock, is just around the bend and will be the first thing we do when we leave here. Stay tuned.

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7/8/2009	52	23	7.00	W	44° 18.350'	77° 57.427'	Hastings Lock #18		8

We are still in the Trent Severn Waterway. Here is a bit of history regarding the TS. Canadians, from the early 1800s had wished for a way to travel from the great lakes to the Atlantic Ocean without going through the United States. Placing a canal or waterway from Georgian Bay to Lake Ontario would do the trick. There were several starts and stops, some locks built and abandoned. Then in the mid 1800s, someone figured out that you could convert the water falling over a dam into electricity (hydroelectric power). The rest is history for the TS. Dams were built to harness the power and locks were built to bypass the dams, and Canada had a way to go from the Great lakes to the Atlantic, without going through the United States. Parks Canada took over the locks, made them all parks, for recreation and business. It is not unusual to see a dozen people fishing at the lock site. There are no "No Fishing" signs as we would have in the US. The lock sites are clean, well landscaped with lawns and beautiful flowers, have restroom facilities, trash pickup and generally are well run parks. The lockmasters have been very helpful and friendly.

Now for today. We traveled over 7 hours to traverse 8 locks and managed to cover 32 miles. The scenery was very pretty, looking more like Alaska on the sides of the Trent River. We even saw a seaplane parked in someone's back yard. We caught up with Maurice in his 21 ft Ranger tug, and he is just across the river from us tonight. We got some good pictures of his small boat entering the double lock. He looks so tiny. We are on lock 18 wall in the town of Hastings. The lock is in the center of town. You can walk to everything. This is the second night in a row we've stayed at a lock wall with no showers or power. The little portable generator does fine for power, but we will have to stay at a marina tomorrow to take a shower. Betsy says two days is long enough. We can sponge bathe on our boat or in the bathrooms at the locks, but a shower will feel good!

We encountered both of the two step locks on the system. These locks are used to raise you up a large distance quickly. Actually, it is two locks, back to back. The door that opens to let you out of lock 1 is the door into lock 2. The locks raise you up 48 feet in one set of locks. If you go to Ottawa, there is a set of 8 step locks that take you over 2 hours to complete (we will not be going that far). The rest of the locks today were the regular ones.

(Betsy speaks) Like yesterday, the sky was foreboding all day. For two days in a row we've seen very black skies, then a little rain, then bright blue. One time yesterday the sky to the right was as black and stormy looking as any I've ever seen, and to the left it was bright blue with white fluffy clouds. Somehow, we never saw rain from that. Today we were not so lucky. Just as we were preparing to enter a lock the sky let loose and Rick, riding on the bow to handle the lines as we entered the lock, got drenched. I handed him the poncho as soon as I could get away from the wheel. Now you understand why I like to do the driving! Several of the lockmasters have commented that it is usually the woman getting wet while the man is dry, inside at the wheel. We sort of laugh and say I got wet one time doing the lines, then decided to learn to drive the boat! All the lock masters along this waterway are super friendly and very helpful.

We pulled over to the wall at the top of one lock and had a delightful lunch at a picnic table. This is so peaceful. The water as we crossed a larger lake today was glassy smooth. Speed limit is generally 6 MPH except when you are crossing a lake or in a wide area, at which time we may jack it up to 9 or 10 MPH.

Tomorrow, we will get to the famous Peterborough Lock. You will need to come back for that discussion.

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7/7/2009	51	28	7.75	W	44° 16.060'	77° 47.571'	Trent Severn Lock 10		10

We left Trenton this morning and entered the Trent Severn Waterway. The TS is a connection of rivers, lakes, canals that run for 240 miles through Canada connecting Lake Ontario with Georgian Bay. Along the way are 45 locks that can be traversed for a fee. Most of the locks are the standard type, except that they are manually opened and closed. The lock personnel turn a turnscrew to open and close the lock. I have a picture of Rick opening Lock #10 (pretending). The locks are really parks in the Parks Canada system, and as such provide recreation activities to the communities. People fish, walk, and picnic as each lock has picnic tables, trash pickup, and restrooms. For boaters, there is a wall that they can tie and get off and stretch their legs. If one wishes, you can spend the night on the wall, as we are doing tonight, for a fee. Remember, there is no electricity (Hydro in Canada), and no showers. The restrooms are locked at 1830, and the lockmaster will give a boater a key to use the facilities at night, if they have paid the fee.

Since you can tie up to the locks, above and below the chamber, the lockmaster needs a way to know if you are going through or not. They do not respond to VHF radio. Each lock has a blue line, approximately 150 feet in length, painted on the lock wall. If you want to go through the lock, and it is closed, you tie to the blue line. The lockmaster will see you and open the lock. If you do not want to go through the lock, DO NOT tie to the blue line. Luckily, at this time in the year, most people are locking from East to West, and the lockmaster calls ahead to the next lock to tell him to expect you. They've asked us at each lock if we intend to go through the next lock, and as the day got later, they asked us how many more we intended to go through today. The locks, the 10 we did today, are open for the most part and ready to go. We have not yet tied to the blue line.

The scenery is beautiful and the locks are well maintained. Many have flower gardens, and very informative signage. The lock personnel are professional and very helpful. The locks are easier to navigate than the Erie, as the chambers are smaller and the method of stabilizing your boat in the lock is a plastic covered cable, attached at the top and bottom of the lock. You just pull up, pass a line around the cable (do not cleat), front and back, and hold on for the ride up or down. In the Erie, there were several methods of holding on, and you never knew until you entered the lock which one to expect. Also, in the Trent Severn locks the cables are much closer together, making it easy for each one of us to secure to a cable, whereas in the Erie the cables in most cases were so far apart that it was very difficult for each of us, in our relatively short boat, to hold a line.

Here are some pictures from the first day on the Trent Severn that may interest you.

<u>--Date--</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Miles Today</u>	<u>Time Today</u>	<u>MA WP</u>	<u>Lat(N)</u>	<u>Lon(W)</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>COST DOCKAGE</u>	<u>NUMB LOCKS</u>
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7/6/2009	50	72	4.00	M	44° 6.122'	77° 34.475'	Trenton, ON	\$32.50	
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Betsy speaks: We left Kingston about 10:00 this morning after a heavy downpour with much thunder and lightning last night. Poor Beamer doesn't fare well in thunderstorms! It was sunny and calm, and we had an easy 72 mile trek to Trenton, arriving at approximate 2PM.

We were thrilled to be docked next to our friend Maurice McGough, who we've been trying to catch up to for several days. We first met Maurice at the AGLCA (America's Great Loop Cruising Assoc.) rendezvous in Charleston in April. His little 21 foot Ranger Tug was docked right in front of us there. His boat has a tiny, tiny, tiny cabin, barely room for one person. He is doing the loop solo. He began the loop at his home on the Florida panhandle, so has already done the part we are probably dreading the most, the long open run across the Gulf of Mexico. There have been several times during our trip that we've thought of Maurice and wondered how he was doing and whether he was still going strong or had decided it was too much for a lone man in a tiny boat. We weren't sure if he was ahead of or behind us, because I knew he was going to go up the Potomac to Washington, and I didn't know how long he had stayed there.

Anyway, I decided to e-mail him after we crossed Lake Ontario to see how he was doing. He immediately e-mailed me back and we discovered he was just a couple of days ahead of us. He was in Kingston when we were in Alexandria Bay. His e-mail was very short and he didn't tell us what his schedule was. Then, a couple of days later, as we were entering Kingston we saw what we thought was his boat leaving Kingston in the distance. But it was a nasty, windy day and we couldn't imagine that it was really he heading out at that hour. So I e-mailed him again that night, and sure enough, he had left Kingston just as we arrived.

Now, 4 days later, we pulled into Trenton, Ontario. As we were gassing up prior to docking for the night I asked the dockmaster if he had seen the little boat "Quotidian" and he said, "yeah, he's right over there." So we are now docked next to Maurice and we had a wonderful dinner with him to compare war stories on small boats. Also at this marina is one other looper, and believe it or not, they too are smaller than us. So for once, and probably only once, we are the largest looper in the marina! Here's a picture of our boat, next to Maurice's boat, with the 3rd little boat, a 24 foot Sea Cat in the background. Yes, we're the big boat!!!

Educational tidbit for the day: "Quotidian" means commonplace, everyday, simple. The perfect name for Maurice's bare-bones little boat.

We will stay here one night and enter the much anticipated Trent-Severn waterway tomorrow morning. I'm sure you'll be reading more about the Trent-Severn in future issues.

<u>--Date--</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Miles Today</u>	<u>Time Today</u>	<u>MA WP</u>	<u>Lat(N)</u>	<u>Lon(W)</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>COST DOCKAGE</u>	<u>NUMB LOCKS</u>
7/3/2009	47	35	3.00	M	44° 13.683'	76° 28.715'	Kingston ON	\$141.91	
<p>With our engine maintenance completed, and our tour of Alexandria Bay complete, we started out for Kingston, ON. The weather was overcast and a threat of rain. However, as we progressed through the 1000 Islands toward Kingston we saw some of the most beautiful scenery we have encountered on the trip. It is stunning here. There literally are 1000 islands and most have a house or houses on them. Sometime it is a shack and other times it is a grand mansion. Of course, all have a boat dock, elaborate to the nth degree. The route is well marked with day beacons and buoys. We past several tour boats that were heading for Boldt Castle. The castle must get 40 tour boats a day, some from 20 miles away in Gananoque, ON. These are large boats carrying about 250 passengers.</p> <p>We reached Kingston, 35 miles West, in about 3 hours and settled into the Flora MacDonald Confederation Basin, a city run marina. The marina has over 300 slips and about 200 of them are for transient boaters. It turns out that there is a craft fair going on and the waterfront is covered with tents and vendors selling their homemade wares, from Honey to weird paintings. Very much like Autumn with Topsail, but with over 150 vendors.</p> <p>Since we are entering Canada for the first time, we must clear Canadian Customs. This involves flying the yellow "Q" flag (Q for quarantine) until you are checked in by the customs agents. The quarantine is a holdover from the time that sailors would be at sea for months and would enter a port with all types of diseases. They were quarantined to protect the citizens. At any rate, the custom continues. Rick, only only one person is allowed to leave the boat to check in, went up to a pay phone, dialed the Canadian Customs toll-free number, and had a pleasant talk with the agent. Rick provided the names, boat registration number and boat data, amount of "spirits" onboard (too much and you pay a duty), and a verbal certification that Beamer has been vaccinated. The agent provided a Number to be written down and kept in the forward window of the boat and that was that. No boarding. We are told that about 50% of the entrants are boarded to verify that they are not bringing in vegetables, plants, too much "spirits", or weapons. Guns of any type are not allowed to be brought into Canada by visitors. They are confiscated if discovered and not returned. We are LEGAL visitors to Canada.</p> <p>Late in the afternoon, it pours rain, and we are trapped on the boat for about 2 hours. We catch up on Americas Got Talent via our Tivo at home. Tomorrow, July 4, we will tour and explore this very old city. Tune In for the details.</p> <p>July 5, 2009</p> <p>There was no blog yesterday as we were too busy exploring this wonderful city. Yes, we know that we have described several places as "happening places". But so far, this one takes the title. Let me try to describe the city for you.</p> <p>The city is very European in nature. The sidewalks are full of walkers, many with dogs. There are sidewalk cafés, small restaurants, bands and music in the streets, all types of food, from Thai, Indian, Mongolian, to McDonalds. We saw one sign that said "Chinese and Canadian Food". We are not sure what that means. We arrived to the street and craft fair. In the background, a band from Australia is performing, one member playing a Didgeridoo, a native Australian instrument. It made a haunting sound that is suppose to reconnect the listener with nature. It was quite beautiful.</p> <p>Another aspect of the city is that it is multilingual. Many people here speak French and English. Most of the signs, for monuments, directions, etc are in both languages. Although Quebec is the French province of Canada, French is spoken almost everywhere. It is interesting to hear the people go back and forth between the two languages.</p> <p>At one time, Kingston was to be the capital of Canada, and a huge government building was built. A fort was built in the 1850's to protect the city and the entrance to the Rideau Canal, of which Kingston is the Western terminus. At that time, the Canadians were afraid the United States would invade and take control of the canal, thus controlling the region. They did not realize that we were getting ready to fight our own War of Northern Aggression, and Canada was the last thing on our mind.</p>									

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Since it is Sunday, we decided to go to the Presbyterian Church. We walked to it yesterday and found that the start time was 11:00. Since the church was opened in 1837, it is an old established city church that is huge, holding over 500. It has a vaulted ceiling and stained glass windows. We are always a little apprehensive about going to a new church. We do not want to offend the people in coats and ties, and we surely do not want to sit in someone's seat. We knew we had found the perfect place for us today as the minister, Lincoln, welcomed us in clerical robe and collar and blue and white tennis shoes. He gave a very well thought out sermon on King David and necessity for giving God the credit when accepting his gifts. They had a fellowship time afterward.

FYI: Canada is divided into provinces, much like our states. Ottawa is the national capital, and each province has a capital. The capital of Ontario is Toronto. The Canadians have income tax, much like the US, but in addition they have a hefty 13% sales tax on almost everything. This is 5% General Sales Tax (GST) and 8% Provincial Sales Tax (PST). And, of course, everything is quoted with no tax, so your bill is always 13% higher when you pay. By the way, they just reduced the tax from 15%.

We leave in the morning for Trenton, 60 miles west on the Bay of Quinte. Trenton is at the end of the Trent River, and the start of the Trent-Severn Waterway. This waterway, with 45 locks and 280 miles long, will take us to Georgian Bay and the North Channel. It should take us about 10-12 days. Come back and ride along with us.

<u>--Date--</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Miles Today</u>	<u>Time Today</u>	<u>MA WP</u>	<u>Lat(N)</u>	<u>Lon(W)</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>COST DOCKAGE</u>	<u>NUMB LOCKS</u>
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7/1/2009	45	76	3.50	M	44°20.447'	75°54.800'	Alexandria Bay, NY	\$104.00	
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Betsy speaks: We departed Oswego this morning at 0800. It was sunny and calm, and we had two boats with local knowledge to lead us almost to our destination on the other side of Lake Ontario, about 50 miles away. We had met these people the day before staying at the same marina where we were docked. They said they generally travelled about 24 MPH, and we said that would suit us just fine. We managed to keep up with them, but as loaded down as we are we were really struggling to keep up! Although the seas were as calm as could be expected on such a large body of water, we did roll a bit and would have been happier going about 5 MPH slower. But we made it to the other side in fine form, and our escorts were kind enough to lead us right up to the town dock at Clayton, NY. This was about 15 miles short of our final destination, but made a good lunch stop and gave us the opportunity to walk around this lovely little town. One of the "escort" boats live here, and the other intends to move here upon retirement.

After using up nearly all of our allotted 3 hour free dockage we headed for Alexandria Bay, a little farther up the St. Lawrence River. Our original plan did not include this leg, but this is where we've made arrangements to have the motors serviced tomorrow. It turns out to be a very good thing, because we are seeing things loopers that go straight to Kingston, Ontario, do not see and it is just lovely. We are on the St. Lawrence Seaway in the Thousand Islands area, and it is easy to see where that name comes from. There are little rock islands everywhere, most with several nice houses on them. Access is by boat only on most of them, but they do have power, and roads I presume. I can't describe how pretty this area is.

Directly across from our marina is Boldt Castle, quite an imposing structure that we hope to visit. The 6 story, 120 room castle complete with tunnels and a drawbridge was started in by George Boldt, millionaire owner of the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, as a token of his love for his wife. When she died suddenly 4 years later, Mr. Boldt called the men working on the castle and ordered all work to be stopped. He never returned to the island. The castle was abandoned until the 1977, when the Thousand Islands Bridge Authority took it over and spent millions on rehabilitation for the public to enjoy.

I saw in brochure that there would be a concert in the park tonight at 7PM. I thought that sounded like something fun to do, so we rode our bikes to town, had a quick dinner and went to the Scenic View Park to enjoy the concert. We had no idea what kind of concert it was going to be. Turns out it was a husband and wife team playing bass and guitar and singing bluegrass music. The funny thing was this park is right next to a hospital. As we arrived, we saw several people being pushed in wheelchairs from the hospital over to the park, and there were many patients already there. We leaned our bikes up against the open air building and I asked Rick if we should lock them up. he sort of laughed and said most of the people here already had their own wheels and we shouldn't worry about the bikes!

Anyway, lover of bluegrass that I am, I thoroughly enjoyed the music. It was a perfectly beautiful setting overlooking the water, and we enjoyed a beautiful sunset.

Tomorrow I'll spend the day walking around this charming town while the engines get serviced (I hope).

<u>--Date--</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Miles Today</u>	<u>Time Today</u>	<u>MA WP</u>	<u>Lat(N)</u>	<u>Lon(W)</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>COST DOCKAGE</u>	<u>NUMB LOCKS</u>
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6/29/2009	43	30	5.50	M	43°27.686'	76°30.582'	Oswego NY	\$78.00	8
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It was the best of days. It was the worst of days. Since the worst leads to the best, let's start there. The Winter Harbor Marina in Brewerton, NY, had made arrangements with Aero marine, a Honda Dealer, to perform the 500 hour maintenance on our twin Honda motors. This was to be done on Monday, the 29th. We arrived at Winter Harbor on Sunday in anticipation of this maintenance. After several calls, and some phone tag, the owner of Winter Harbor told us that Aero had called and said they are too busy to do the job, but they can do it next week. Remember, we made an appointment last Thursday with them for Monday and all was well. So, Aero Marine gets one DB. Rick immediately got on the phone and internet to try to find someone to do the service. After several referrals, he found a dealer in Alexandria Bay, NY, a bit off our planned route. But, we made plans for TI Marine to do the job on Thursday, July 2. However, TI Marine is at least 3 days away, so we make the decision to leave Winter Harbor at 1130 and head for Oswego, NY, on Lake Ontario in prep for a trip to Alexandria Bay, NY.

Shortly after leaving Brewerton, we left the Erie Canal for the Oswego Canal. Here is a picture of Erie Lock 23, and the sign directing a boater to the proper canal. Also, the fee schedule is here.

This is the good news. Even though we went through 8 more locks, all descending, we got to Oswego by late afternoon. The trip was very pretty. We saw many houses built on the hills above the Oswego. We are reminded of the houses on the Intracoastal Waterway. Here is a picture.

We hopped off at the Town of Phoenix, at the free town dock and looked around. Phoenix is the location of Oswego Lock 1. They have a program for the teens to assist boaters in tying off and docking. They bring menus of various eating establishments. After you make your choices, they go get your food and deliver it to your boat. Keeps the teens busy in the summer. Keep in mind that all of these canals and waterways are frozen over all winter. They ice fish on Oneida Lake, which is 20 miles long and 10 miles wide. So, it gets cold up here in the winter.

We also finally found a stretch of the Oswego Canal that looks like what we thought the Erie would look like. Most of the canals look like the Dismal Swamp, tree lined, rural, and country. But we finally found a stretch that is wall lined, and rough looking. Here is a picture.

Folks often ask what we eat on the boat. Generally we eat breakfast and lunch on the boat and supper outside. Many times, when we eat out, we have food left over and we have it boxed up. This serves as our lunch, in many cases. Here is a picture of a leftover lunch, ham with cherry sauce, pineapple, toasted bread, a drink, and yogurt for dessert. Here is a picture.

At the end of the day, we had a fierce thunderstorm. Then, Mother Nature reminded us of better and brighter days to come with a beautiful rainbow.

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6/28/2009	42	23	2.00	M	43° 14.632'	76° 9.582'	Brewerton, NY	\$23.40	0

Betsy speaks: After several days of exhausting travel due to the locks, we are happily situated at Winter Harbor Marina in Brewerton, NY. The past several days we have been travelling long hours, not arriving at our destination until late afternoon, sometimes as late as 6PM. Working the locks is strenuous, holding the boat off the lock wall as the water pours in. As Rick said in yesterday's blog, we were relieved that the last two locks were lowering us, which is much easier than rising.

I loved Sylvan Beach where we were yesterday. We were docked at the back of a creek off the Erie Canal in a very peaceful spot, with boats on either side that were locals and very friendly. We bicycled over to Oneida Lake a couple of blocks away and enjoyed comparing the difference to our seashore. This is a fair sized lake, over 20 miles across, and yesterday afternoon it was choppy in the distance with small waves breaking on the shore. Many people were swimming, although it seemed a little chilly to me to be in the water. They could wade out several hundred feet and still be only mid thigh deep.

We left Sylvan Beach early this morning, about 8 o'clock, hoping for a smooth ride across the lake. Some of our cruising guides say you need to be wary of changing conditions on this lake, and that waves on the far side can reach heights of 6 feet if a storm comes up. But we were very fortunate to have a beautiful sunny morning, smooth waters all the way across. The first thing we marveled at was the seagulls on the rock jetty as we left the canal and entered the lake.

We had read that the water is exceptionally clear here, so at one point we stopped the boat and looked down to see what we could see. We were in water charted at 20 feet deep. I can't say we could see the bottom, but it was very clear. We dropped a couple of coins in to see how far down we could see them, and it was incredible how far down we could see.

The scenery as we neared the far shore was just beautiful. a tree lined shore with nice houses all along the beach. There are no dunes, and in most cases no sea walls of any kind. Just water coming up to a shoreline, then a flat beachy area, then grass and houses. So its very different than our ocean or soundfront. This being the weekend, there was a lot of boating activity.

Eventually, we re-entered the Erie Canal (actually the Oneida River here). The house pictured here is not typical of what we saw, but I did think it was pretty. Shortly after re-entering the canal we pulled into Winter Harbor Marina. This is a full service boat yard, and we will be here for several days as we have the 500 hour service on our outboards. Not really full service, though, because the themselves don't service outboards! But they are making arrangements for a nearby Honda dealer to come here to service the engines (the Honda dealer doesn't have space for transients to dock).

As usual, we are by far the smallest boat, nearly eclipsed by the big guys!

We may not do a blog for the next couple of days as we wait here for the service to be done. But keep checking back and we'll start back as soon as we leave here, or maybe sooner.

There are numerous other loopers here, most of whom were also at Sylvan Beach yesterday but were spread out over several different locations there. Here we are all grouped together and several of them are also having service done. This is a good location to spend a couple of days because they have all amenities including wi-fi, cable TV, nice showers, and two loaner cars.

<u>--Date--</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Miles Today</u>	<u>Time Today</u>	<u>MA WP</u>	<u>Lat(N)</u>	<u>Lon(W)</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>COST DOCKAGE</u>	<u>NUMB LOCKS</u>
6/27/2009	41	28	3.00	M	43° 12.023'	75° 43.570'	Sylvan Beach - Lake Oneida	\$32.50	3
<p>We depart Utica and head for Sylvan Beach. This involves about 30 miles and three locks. The good news is that 2 of the locks, 21 and 22, are taking us DOWN. Locking down is much easier than locking up, as you do not have the turbulence in the lock chamber. All of the turbulence is outside the chamber gate. We descend to the level of Lake Oneida. The town at the Eastern end of the lake is Sylvan Lake. This town is a throwback to the beach towns, like old Topsail and old Atlantic Beach. They have a huge tourist business, swelling from 1800 population in the winter to 18,000 in the summer. The town has an old timey arcade, amusement park with rides, roller coasters, putt-putt, etc. They also have a bandstand with live music every weekend. Every type of food is available including a restaurant named Eddy's. This restaurant was started in 1934, and has managed to survive under the same family management. We met Eddie Jr., who is now in charge, but his son really runs the business now. He also owns several blocks of the waterfront property. He gave Betsy a Sylvan Lake shirt, just for chatting with him. The lake has no natural current and no tide, so people just tie their jet skis and boats and walk out to get them. Three hundred yards out from the shore it is only waist deep.</p> <p>We stayed at the Mariner Marina, a business of the Oneida Indian tribe. This is a huge campground and marina combo. It is quite old, but acceptable. We gave the showers a 5. They were very friendly and helpful in docking. In one of those deals where the plan does not match reality, they charge a \$5 deposit for a shower key. But, when we went to check out the showers and when we went to actually shower, they (all 3) were open and not locked. So the key was worthless, except to return it for the \$5 refund.</p> <p>We did eat supper at Eddy's restaurant. It was huge, and the food was excellent. Their specialty, from the mother, was pies of all type. Here is a picture of Eddie Jr. He is the official pie taster. The beach looks like Topsail, but it is not sandy, rather more like whiter dirt. Not granular.</p>									
6/26/2009	40	32	5.00	M	43° 6.705'	75° 12.930'	Utica Docks	\$26.00	4
<p>Rick speaks: We left St Johnstown at 1130. This was due to the rain the entire morning. We traversed 2 locks, including the Lock 17. This lock is unique in the United States (there is another in Ottawa, Canada). All other gates open sideways, hinged on the side and meeting in the middle. On Lock 17, the gate is a huge single door, and lifts UP to open this lock. You then drive into the lock under the door, which is dripping like a pouring rain. The lock raises you up 40 feet, the highest lift in the Erie Canal System. Here is a picture.</p> <p>We stopped in Little Falls for a couple of hours. This is a very old, historic city in lock history. This was a city of portage in the 1800's as travelers on the Mohawk River couldn't make it over the rapids here. The rapids are right downtown. We visited the Visitors Center and met a lady who owns the house in the photo. It is 4 stories and she host banquets and weddings on the second floor. The third floor, once a bowling alley, is a dance studio. There is pottery operation on the first floor. She also lives in the building all alone! It is quite a building.</p> <p>We mentioned before about the fenders we had made for the locks. They are exercise balls, wrapped in laundry bags. Here is a picture of the final product.</p> <p>After Little Falls, we proceeded to Utica, passing two more locks. At Utica, we are staying at the Utica Marina, where the price is only \$1.00 per foot including electric and water. You are allowed to use the restrooms in the restaurant, but there are no showers.</p>									

<u>--Date--</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Miles Today</u>	<u>Time Today</u>	<u>MA WP</u>	<u>Lat(N)</u>	<u>Lon(W)</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>COST DOCKAGE</u>	<u>NUMB LOCKS</u>
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6/25/2009	39	51	8.00	M	42°59.684'	74°40.778'	St Johnsville Municipal Marina	\$26.00	8
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Well, it was quite a day. We covered 52 miles, 8 locks and were raised up 91 more feet. We have now been raised over 300 feet in two days. It takes between 15 and 30 minutes for each lock. We are lucky in that we are Westbound and most boaters are at this time of year. For this reason, many of the locks are already open and ready for us when we arrive. If they were all closed and we had to wait, it would take an hour. The rise in height varies from 4 to 16 feet today. Locks are made to raise and lower the level and to get around a dam. Here is a picture of the lock(on the left)and the dam.

We stopped for lunch at Amsterdam at a place called Riverlink Park. This was a nice place, very new, and not detailed in the travel guides. They had very clean and new restrooms and showers. Best of all, if you wanted to stay the night, it was only \$1.00 per foot. We needed to go a few more miles so did not stay the night. This place is located just before Lock 11.

We had planned to stop for the night at the Canajoharie Municipal Park, which offers free dockage including electricity. This was just before lock 14. Too bad, because three large boats (40 ft plus) were docked, but not close together so there was no room for us. If they had gotten closer, we could have docked there. But we went on a few miles to St Johnsville Municipal Marina and they have just about all you want, except wi-fi. Also, the cost is \$1.00 per foot. They have plenty of room, nice restrooms and showers and laundry, which we needed today. We do laundry about once a week, and our week was up!

We have 91 miles to go to get to Oswego, where we cross Lake Ontario. This will take at least 2 days, maybe 4, depending on the speed of locks and if we stop to sightsee. At Oswego, we hope for a visit from Betsy's nephew Chris, who lives in Rochester, NY. We'll need to call him a day or two in advance to see if we can synchronize schedules.

We also saw a canal boat, which we think was rented in Waterford, NY and the renters cruised up and down the Erie Canal.

Back in 2001, we made a two week trip from Florida to Rhode Island via the Intracoastal Waterway. The boat at that time was the Grand Mariner by the ACCL Corp. They do Erie Canal and Down East cruises in the Summer and are in the Caribbean in the winter. They passed by while we were eating breakfast.

Many people think the Erie Canal is lined with rock walls and a path on each side for the mules to pull cargo down the Canal. However, in many places it is like any other river, with lush forest and trees, and in other places lined by houses. Here are a couple of pictures.

<u>--Date--</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Miles Today</u>	<u>Time Today</u>	<u>MA WP</u>	<u>Lat(N)</u>	<u>Lon(W)</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>COST DOCKAGE</u>	<u>NUMB LOCKS</u>
6/24/2009	38	15	3.75	M	42°51.063'	73°53.199'	Schenectady Yacht Club	\$37.50	6

Betsy speaks: I was thrilled to have my lifelong friend, actually from nursery school, join us in Waterford. We debated whether she could stay on the boat with us, and knowing Louise was a girl scout like me and did a lot of camping in the past, she and I decided we could make it work! So we converted the dinette table into a bed, we all slept in more clothes than usual, and we had a ball! However, I don't think any of us would recommend further overnight visitors! Too bad Louise had to join us on a night when I would rate the facilities only about a 3 (scale of 0 - 10), but that's what you get when you stay at a FREE dock! They were clean if not elegant and that's what really matters. We took full advantage of her visit, letting her buy our dinner, take us to the grocery store, and two trips to West Marine about 25 minutes away.

We departed Waterford just after noon and went directly into Erie Canal Lock 2 (there is no Lock 1, long story). The first 5 locks are in quick succession, and Louise followed along in her car and met us at each lock, waving and taking pictures. When we made it through Lock 6, we waved good bye and she started on her 4 hour drive back to New Hampshire. Almost immediately thereafter, the black cloud that had been threatening us through each lock broke loose and it poured rain for about 10 minutes. Then the sky cleared and the rest of the afternoon was perfectly beautiful. The Erie is just beautiful, glassy smooth. There are very nice houses along some stretches, and nothing but nature along others. We saw several small waterfalls.

We had always thought the lockwide speed limit was 10 MPH, but that turns out not to be true. It is actually 45 MPH except when you are approaching a lock or a bridge, or of course any marina or other no wake zone. So we saw people waterskiing and wakeboarding. We went through one more lock along the way and finally stopped late afternoon at the Schenectady Yacht Club. Don't be fooled by the name! It is nothing fancy, just a rundown set of floating docks that offers all amenities. The cost is a mere \$1.25/foot, including electric.

Now I want to tell you about "Freddy Freddy". Three years ago we were docked for just a few minutes at the Carolina Beach State Park Marina on our way to or from Myrtle Beach when in behind us pulled what looked like a beat up old trawler with two elderly people on board. The name of the boat was "Freddy Freddy." We marveled at the boat's design, and at the fact that it looked like it had seen its better days. Its just a sight that we both remember vividly. Then last year, we saw that same boat in the Chesapeake Bay, anchored out in Solomons. We both knew it was the same old boat we'd seen before, and I actually took several pictures of it because it is so unique.

Then, 3 days ago as we were coming up the Hudson River between Haverstraw and Kingston, way off to the side of the river there was that same old boat chugging along! (We found out later it is powered by a 27 HP diesel engine; the boat is 39 feet long). I looked at it through the binoculars and just couldn't believe that we were seeing it again! That night I actually looked at the pictures I had taken in the Chesapeake to confirm that it was the same boat. When we pulled into Waterford yesterday, we were lucky to get the very last spot at the free town dock, and we pulled in right behind that same boat. Incredible! We finally got to meet, and get to know, the two "elderly" people on board, Floyd and Della. It turns out the boat is not nearly as old as it looks (and neither are the people). Its just painted a steamship gray and has a design like that of an old lobster boat that makes it look old. It was designed and built by Floyd himself out of plywood covered with layers of fiberglass, and is actually only about 7 years old. Della didn't like the idea of having a head inside the boat because she was concerned about odor, so the head is on the very back of the boat, sort of like an outhouse. They live on the boat full time and just travel from place to place, anchoring out about 99% of the time rather than staying in marinas. They stayed on the wall in Waterford only because it was free. Floyd seldom uses a GPS, and has none of the fancy electronics that most boaters rely on.

Floyd and Della had done the entire loop about 2 years ago, including the entire Gulf Coast over to Texas and around the Florida Keys. The Erie Canal was their favorite part, so they are back to do that part again. They do not take the turn into Canada as we will do, but do the Erie the entire

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way, which is unusual for Loopers. I think they don't have some of what would be required in Canada (like a rabies shot for their cat), so they just stay in the states.

Anyway, it was a treat to finally meet these interesting people on this most interesting and well travelled boat!

6/23/2009	37	66	6.00	W	42°47.178'	73°40.711'	Waterford, NY Town dock	\$0.00	1
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06-23-09 Waterford, NY
It turns out that Kingston NY is a great place. We had a great time. The only negative, if there is one, is that they have a "No Dog Policy". It is strange that they have spent so much money on the waterfront and yet do not want people to bring dogs. Actually, they do not enforce the policy, and I suspect it is just a knee-jerk reaction to some event several years ago. So, go ahead and take the dog, just pick-up after them.

We left Kingston for Waterford around 0930. It was a very easy run with a stop for lunch below Albany. We arrived to find Betsy's friend from kindergarten, Louise, waiting for us. She came from New Hampshire, a 4 hour drive, to see us. We, of course, will take advantage of her and her car by getting her to take us to the grocery store and to West Marine.

Waterford Visitors Center is great for boaters. Power, showers, pump out, electricity, Wi-Fi, and the magic word, it is FREE. Yes, that is correct, Free. The town is quaint. We will leave tomorrow for the Erie Canal. We can see the first lock from our docking space. We went through the second lock today, the Troy Federal Lock. Tomorrow, we will do at least 5 and maybe 8 locks, taking us up about 210 feet. We are out of the salt water, and due to the locks, there is no tide and no current. So, it should be easy going for a while. We blew up our lock fenders today and deployed them. They are exercise balls, enclosed in laundry bags and tied to the sides of the boat. We will leave them out, on both sides, until we hit a stretch with few locks. They should protect the boat and keep us off the lock walls.

We will try to post some pictures tomorrow, so come back to this post and check it out.

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6/21/2009	35	53	4.00	M	41°55.055'	73°58.982'	Kingston NY City Docks	\$114.80	

We departed Haverstraw Bay Marina at 0930 heading for Kingston, NY. The ride was a tad bumpy. We compare it to Topsail Sound with a Nor-Easter, some white caps, but not miserable. We average 17 mph.

We passed West Point, The US Military Academy. It is very impressive from the river. I cannot understand why Benedict Arnold wanted to give it to the British before the Revolutionary War. Prior to 911, one could stop at a dock at West Point and tour the facility, but not now. No docking allowed.

We also passed hundreds of houses on the high hill on both sides of the river. Some were very impressive, basically mansions. The scenery was as advertised, beautiful, lush forest, high cliffs and hills on both sides. A wide river and no boat traffic.

Since there has been so much rain, we had to be on the lookout for debris in the river. In fact, we saw several trees in the river along with many branches and other stuff. The entrance to Kingston, a stretch of about a mile from the river, was full of logs and other flotsam and jetsam.

We passed some very impressive lighthouses. They are all different, yet interesting in their design and layout. The town of Kingston, NY has had a sort of rebirth. Twenty years ago, a huge (8000 employees) IBM plant closed and destroyed the economy and community. Today, the town has been able to rebuild and beautify the waterfront, restaurants abound, and several marinas are here, including the Kingston City Docks where we are staying. There is a local Maritime Museum and a quaint welcome center. The whole waterfront is a walking path, with benches, memorials, and other points of interest. We would encourage anyone in the area to visit this town.

We will stay here for two days, and on Tuesday go to Waterford, NY, the entrance to the Erie Canal. Look out Canada, here we come..

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6/19/2009	33	30	2.00	M	41° 12.972'	73° 57.982'	Haverstraw Bay	\$131.50	
	06-19-09	Haverstraw Bay, NY							

Rick speaks: We were happy to leave NY this morning. Not that it is not a happening place, but the 2.73 inches of rain yesterday coupled with the rolling and rocking while we were captive on the boat, made for a long day. The rocking and rolling was unbelievable. Any wave from a passing ferry, tug, or sailboat, goes across the deep Hudson, hits the shallow marina, wakes up, then hits the concrete wall and gets you coming back. It is like a tsunami. Even at that, we are glad we stopped in NY and did enjoy the visit.

An old house boat, moored at the 79th st Marina was moved today. It had been at the marina for over 30 years. Apparently the city made the people move it, so the owners donated it to someone up the Hudson. They left at 0400, and we passed them on the Hudson. Here is a picture.

We only went about 30 miles up the Hudson to Haverstraw Bay, NY and we are staying at the Haverstraw Bay Marina. This is a huge marina, with 75 transient slips and over 300 total slips. It is in exact contrast to NY as it is dead calm. There is a pool, a ships store, a first class restaurant, and floating docks. Since tomorrow is to be a bad weather day, thunderstorms in the forecast, we will stay two days here and leave on Sunday morning. So, there may be no blog tomorrow, as we wait out the rain.

Because of our short length and limited facilities (20 gallon water tank, 10 gallon waste holding tank, and 6 gallon hot water tank), we depend on the marinas for a lot our comfort. As such, we look for certain things. An ideal marina will have:

Clean restrooms and private showers. Preferably a room with the shower and toilet in one private room, as described previously at Dowry Creek.

Floating docks with long finger piers.

Security.

A loaner car or be very close to town and basic food shopping.

Laundry facilities.

Protection from rocking and rolling from passing wake.

PumpOut for waste, preferably Free. (The only way to get people to not pump overboard is to make pumpout attractive to use. And charging \$15 for a 10 gallon pumpout is not attractive.)

Gas/diesel.

Cable TV (free).

Wi-fi (free). We have found some marinas that charge \$10-\$14 for 24 hours of wi-fi. And guess what, no one uses it and they wonder why.

Captains Lounge where you can get off the boat and relax.

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Most marinas have most of these things, and the really good ones have all of them. Again, the size and type of boat will dictate what you need. For example, a 40 ft Monk Trawler will usually have Direct TV, full head and shower facilities, and have no use for these at the marina.

There will be a test at the end of the trip....

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6/15/2009	29	56	4.10	M	40°47.190'	73°59.141'	New York, NY	\$326.00	

06-15-09 NEW YORK CITY

START SPREADIN' THE NEWS..WHEW!! WE MADE IT TO NEW YORK, NEW YORK!

Betsy here: I was a little apprehensive as we pulled out of our slip at 8:30 this morning heading for Manasquan Inlet, just minutes away from the marina. I had seen several fishermen come in already. I asked a couple of them how it was outside, and they kind of groaned and said "real choppy." But the weather radio was still calling for 1 to 2 foot seas, so we decided we had to at least give it a try.

The inlet is a straight shot out, with rock jetties on both sides. But it is rather narrow, so the waves bounce off the rocks and create turbulence. As we were entering the inlet, another boat was coming in from offshore, and I maneuvered by it OK. But then just as we were coming to the end of the jetties, and could see waves breaking in front of us a very large sport fish boat rounded the corner to come in. I know he was fighting the waves, but he passed right in front of me and made no attempt to slow down He was putting out a huge wake that then bounced off the rocks. We took two huge waves that completely enveloped the boat, but we bounced right back from each one. Fortunately we had all the windows and hatches closed and the "den" zipped and buttoned up. It was very rough, but I could see the sea buoy in the distance, and I just felt if I could get out there things would be better. I surely didn't want to turn around and go back through the inlet!

Once we got a little farther off shore it was still pretty rough, I'd say closer to three feet than the one to two that was forecast. But I kept telling myself it wasn't as bad as what we had been through in the Chesapeake Bay last year when we crossed from Portsmouth to Onancock. Once through the inlet we never took water over the bow again, and the swells were coming at a favorable angle. So we forged ahead, and once we made the slow curve around Sandy Hook, about 25 miles, things really calmed down to the forecast level. We passed within sight of several trawlers that were probably also loopers that were really rocking. At least with our speed we got through the bad part quicker than they did! We were doing 15 - 20 MPH most of the way.

Seeing the New York skyline in the distance was really a thrill, but we weren't able to take pictures because we were both holding on tight as we rocked! Rick would have killed for one swallow of Pepsi, me for one sip of coffee, but we would have spilled it all over ourselves if we had tried!

Anyway, we finally made it to the Verrazano Narrows bridge and soon had Lady Liberty in sight. I turned the wheel over to Rick and crawled out on the bow with camera in hand and started taking pictures. Every looper takes the obligatory photo of the bow of the boat with the Statute of Liberty in the distance and the AGLCA burgee proudly flying on the bow rail. We normally fly our burgee on top of the cabin attached to the all-around light, because its flapping on the bow is distracting to me when I drive. But this morning before we left we had transferred it to the bow rail, right in the middle. Those waves that nearly sank us in the inlet had knocked it down so it was in a horizontal position, but I quickly propped it back up once I got on the bow in New York Harbor.

I was hoping for a sun shiny day, and it was sunny for the most part. Some clouds came in just as we were entering the harbor so some of the pictures of the skyline are a little foggy. But overall it was an overwhelming experience. There was not a whole lot of ship traffic, but there is always a lot of ferry and sightseeing boat traffic and we experienced all of that with no problem.

We passed the Statue of Liberty at approximately 11:30, exactly one month to the day and almost to the minute from when we left our slip in Sneads Ferry. Then we meandered up the Hudson River intending to go to Tarrytown, where we did have reservations for the night. But as we passed a marina that we had considered and decided against, we changed our minds and decided to see if they had room for us. We are at the 79th street City Boat Yard, right on the Hudson, just before reaching the George Washington Bridge. So we are within walking distance of Central Park and a quick metro ride from Times Square. There is a very busy city park along the waterfront right where we are, with lots of joggers,

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bikers and dog walkers right along the water's edge. A very nice spot, with a nice restaurant, the Boat Basin Café. And we're on a floating dock which was very easy. We are rocking a little with wake from passing ferries, but not as bad as where we were yesterday. The rocking almost ceased as soon as dark arrived and the boat traffic subsided.

Once we got settled in, we walked a couple of blocks to an optometry shop for Rick. He had an eye exam and has ordered new glasses, which will be ready late Wednesday afternoon, so we're here for a couple of days. Not bad. Manhattan for \$81.50 a night. Free ice, free laundry, no tipping allowed.

06-16-09 New York City

YIPPEE!! WE MET RUPERT JEE!

Betsy speaks: Today we took the metro to Times Square, just 5 stops from where we are staying on 79th Street. We just ambled along Broadway, window shopping, marveling at the New York sights that seem so familiar because you see them on TV all the time - the flashing signs, the theaters, just the overall New York experience. If we had a goal, it was to see the David Letterman Theater, and maybe the Hello Deli. If you don't watch David Letterman, there's no reason for you to read further because you won't know what we're talking about.

At the corner of Broadway and 53rd Street, we saw the David Letterman Theater, and even stepped inside. No photos allowed once you are in the front door. We were given the opportunity to sign up for the lottery drawing for tickets, but opted not to do so. We then walked just around the corner and saw the Hello Deli. It was a couple of minutes before noon, so we decided to eat there. The place is tiny, tiny, tiny. There's room for only about 5 people to sit down. We ordered at the counter, and were lucky enough to get a seat. Immediately after we sat down, the place started filling up, with people lined up out the door to order. I guess the crowd really starts right at noon and we just beat it. The food was wonderful. We both had beef stew on rice. Rupert Jee wasn't there, but we heard someone else ask about him and I thought the lady behind the counter say he usually comes in around 3 o'clock, so I figured we wouldn't see him. I took several pictures inside even though he wasn't there. We finished lunch, and as we walked out the door, there was Rupert just walking up about 10 feet away. I squealed "There's Rupert!" Rick was right next to him, so I pulled out the camera and shot a picture of them together, then handed the camera to Rick and he quickly took a picture of Rupert and me! We told Rupert how much we had enjoyed lunch and he thanked us for the business. Then he went inside and we walked away. Then I thought it would be cool to get a picture of him behind the counter, just like you see on Letterman, so I went back in and sure enough he was behind the counter taking orders. So I snapped a couple of shots, waved a thanks, and went on.

At every street corner there are vendors trying to sell you tour tickets or theater tickets. We had asked earlier how much a tour was..\$44 each. Theater tickets to the good shows are around \$100 each. We got tired of saying "no thanks" every time we were approached. After meeting Rupert, each time I was approached by a vendor my response became "I met Rupert Jee for free". needless to say I got some strange looks.

We paused on our way back to Times Square and enjoyed some street performers ("buskers") break dancing. about 5 guys and a couple of girls, really limber and good. We tossed a couple of bucks into their bucket. Then saw some guy playing the pan flute, and then, the real thrill of the day. we saw the Naked Cowboy! It was funny, we had just passed by some artwork that had a couple of pictures of him and we chuckled, and then about a block away there he was. Too bad we'd put all our dollars into the bucket for the break dancers and didn't have anything to offer the Naked Cowboy so I didn't get my picture taken with him, but took several pictures of him with other women!

After several hours we were tired and overwhelmed so took the metro back to our stop and walked back to the boat after picking up a few

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groceries. We had dinner tonight with a couple of other loopers that we met this afternoon and that was nice. They are from Michigan and are doing the loop on a sailboat, started in September and will be home in August. They admit they haven't been able to sail much. They spent several months in the keys and Bahamas, which we don't plan to do..

On the home front, we owe a tremendous debt to our neighbors Billie and Tom who are watching our townhouse for us. They've taken care of getting the leaky heat pump fixed, and drying out the carpet that was saturated, which involved moving bookcases and furniture. Thank you Tom and Billie!!! It is great to have good friends, and we hope they will still be our friends when we return!

Tomorrow we plan to get the bikes out and just ride the bike path that goes along the waterfront from one end of Manhattan to the other. Today we reached 2300 hits on the web page, and we still have people signing our guest book every few days. Thanks to all of you for keeping up with us!

06-17-09 THE CLAMPETTS HAVE MADE IT TO CENTRAL PARK!

Today we just sort of relaxed in our West Side Neighborhood. This morning we rode bikes along the waterfront. This afternoon we walked the five blocks to Central Park and strolled around. It is really beautiful! And peaceful! We just missed seeing a wedding at the Strawberry Fields area that is a monument to John Lennon. There is a mosaic on the ground that says simply "Imagine". The bride and groom and the preacher were just signing the official papers when we walked up. she in full white bridal regalia.

In the Riverside Park where we are docked, there is a Red Tailed Hawk's nest with babies that have just come out of the nest and started flying in the past few days. They have attracted quite a crowd of people with binoculars and fancy cameras. We've had several very good sightings.

We've been fascinated by the architecture of the city. I love the row houses, which I guess are mostly apartments or townhomes. I'd love to go inside one just to see what it's like. One of the most interesting pieces of architecture is the Boat Basin Café, right next to our dock. It is gothic in design, and apparently used to be a depot of some sort for ships bringing in cargo. It is built under a traffic circle, very interesting and hard to describe.

Rick picked up two new pairs of glasses this afternoon, so hopefully these will last the rest of the trip. He made sure to get a written copy of his prescription just in case! The people at the optometry shop were super nice and he is very pleased with the new specs.

Since there's not much to say today, we felt like the Naked Cowboy deserved one more photo! Will this be our most lasting memory of New York City. I don't think so!

As usual, our boat is one of the smaller boats in the marina. The 62 footer we've been docked next to all week had a party of some sort this afternoon, with 20 or so people aboard all dressed to the nines. I'm sure the owner wasn't too pleased to have us right next to him, with our towels hanging out to dry, the filthy line at the waterline, the bikes lying on the dock, the dinghy hanging off the top. I often look at ours in marinas and feel like we must look like the Beverly Hillbillies! But we're having way more fun than most people, so who cares! Not only that, our boat is paid for! I think a lot of loopers share this sentiment.

Since there's not much more to say about today, we'll bring you up to date on the statistics so far. We've been gone 31 days and are still speaking to each other. Beamer can now do ALL her business on rocks and concrete. We've had over 2300 hits on the web site. Here are

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some interesting facts:

Days on the trip: 31 Number of Locks: 1 Number of Marinas stayed at: 14
 Number of miles travelled: 777 Average miles per day: 27
 Gallons of gas used: 491.2 Total Cost of gas: \$1350.04 Average cost per gallon: \$2.75
 Dockage fees: \$1682.72 Average dockage per day: \$58.02

06-18-09 NEW YORK CITY (STILL)

WE DO PUBIC!

Here we still sit in New York, waiting for the pouring rain to stop. It has been pouring all night, and never stopped this morning. It is now lunchtime, and anxiously watching the weather radar to see if there is any chance we can get out of here this afternoon. Even if we can only go a couple of hours, we'd like to make some headway. The Rick `n Roll is really rocking and rolling in our current spot, due to strong current and heavy wakes from barges and ferries passing by.

So since there's really nothing to tell, we wanted to talk a little about "doing public." Our close friend and fellow boater Dauna Gable travels with her husband Toad on a 45 foot Tollycraft. They have two staterooms, each with a full bath with real showers. They never have to use the facilities at marinas. One of Dauna's favorite sayings is "I don't do public!" She just can't stand the thought of using a public shower.

On our boat, we have a marine toilet with a very small holding tank (10 gallons), and a pull-out handheld shower that tends to spray water all over the bed if you're not careful. So WE DO PUBLIC! Starting last year when we stayed at a marina on the Potomac River that had the most awful showers we've ever seen, we've sort of rated marina facilities on a 0 to 10 basis.

The zero rating (we won't name the Marina) had a shower that was full of mildew, a drain that didn't work so you were standing in ankle deep water by the time you were through, no shower curtain so water ended up all over the floor even outside the shower, toilets that I couldn't stand to even look at. I didn't even want to brush my teeth in the sink! We only stayed there because we were desperate after a long day and there was nowhere else nearby to stay.

A five rating might apply to the marina we are currently staying in. This is an older facility, actually run by the City of New York as part of their parks program. One obstacle is that there is only ONE shower, unisex. Just outside the door that leads to the shower is the laundry, one washer and one dryer. The nice thing about them is that they are free! Another door leads to the ONE toilet, unisex. In the shower room there is no place to put your soap or to hang your wash cloth. There is no shower curtain. But it is sparkling clean and the drain works great. There are several hooks on the wall to hang clothes and your towel, and we did move a plastic chair into the room to have someplace to put our bags. Even though there is just the one shower and one head, we've never had to wait. One of us goes up there first thing in the morning, then we phone the other person as we are nearly completion.

I'm not sure we've had the ultimate 10 facility yet.you always need to leave room for improvement. But we have had a couple of good nines. Our favorite location is Dowry Creek Marina near Belhaven, NC. There are four individual rooms, each with an outside entrance. In each room has a nice shower, a private toilet, a nice sink. There are plenty of hooks and a bench. They are always clean. Dowry Creek also has a first class Captain's Lounge, complete with cooking facilities, cable TV, nice sofas to sit on, a nice wrap around porch with rocking chairs, and a swimming pool. They offer a courtesy car for a ride to town for groceries. Like many marinas, they have a nice book exchange.take a book, leave a book.

Morehead City Yacht Basin and Utche's Marina in Cape May rank just behind Dowry Creek because neither of them have the wonderful Captain's Lounge. They do both have a lounge, but Utche's doesn't have a TV, and Morehead City closes when the office closes at about 6 o'clock. But

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they do both have shower/head facilities that are as good or better than Dowry Creek, so I would rate them and 8.5. I think I mentioned in an earlier BLOG that Utche's is so proud of their bathrooms they have a picture of them in the cruising guide!

Oriental Marina provides towels.a nice touch. Several marinas provide soap and/or shampoo. Generally we find that the price of dockage really says nothing about how good or bad the facilities will be. Farley State Marina, run by Trump's, is a good example. It was the most expensive place we've stayed yet (\$4/foot on weekends), but the facilities were only mediocre with no extras.

The showers at Atlantic Yacht Basin were OK, but there was no curtain on the window in the ladies room! Granted, the window was high, but if someone was working on either of the two boats parked just outside they could have gotten a good peek! Rick said the pressure in the men's shower was terrible because the shower head was old and corroded, so he went to the hardware store, bought a new shower head, and replaced the head! It was the least we could do for a marina that gave us free dockage for 4 nights! So we might give them a 6.

Rick does not hesitate to tell proprietors what they need to do to improve shower facilities. His favorite pet peeve is no hooks on the wall. We think every proprietor should take a shower in their own facilities every now and then to realize what simple little things could make a difference. Things we consider important and easily remedied are: cleanliness, LOTS of hooks on the wall, a bench or chair to put your stuff on, and a rack or ledge inside the shower for your soap, shampoo, razor, etc. These are things that even the most basic facility can and should provide.

I'm sure you've heard all you want to hear about "doing public." It's after 1300 and still pouring rain, so we've just made the final decision to rock on here one more night..Betsy

<u>--Date--</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Miles Today</u>	<u>Time Today</u>	<u>MA WP</u>	<u>Lat(N)</u>	<u>Lon(W)</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>COST DOCKAGE</u>	<u>NUMB LOCKS</u>
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6/14/2009	28	66	4.75	M	40° 5.575'	74° 3.547'	Point Pleasant, NJ	\$72.50	
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Betsy speaks: In spite of dark skies and fog we finally left Atlantic City early this morning. Weather radar indicates that tomorrow may be the only day this week we have a chance of going outside and up to New York harbor, so we were determined to get to the Manasquan inlet area today. The fog obliterated the tops of the casino towers in AC, as it had all week, but near the ground the visibility was not so bad, and there was no rain in the forecast in spite of the dark clouds. (My winnings early in our stay were fast being depleted with every trip to the casino, so that was another reason for wanting to get out of that town ASAP!)

The trip north again was very much like travelling the waterways of North Carolina. Several times I remarked that we might as well be cruising along in Topsail Sound. Just a few miles before our final destination, we went through a very narrow manmade canal that was about 3 miles long, straight as an arrow. Sounds easy, right? It was actually one of the hardest parts of the trip so far! Because it was so narrow and in an area near an inlet so with strong current, the water was extremely turbulent. And with boats passing close by in both directions at very slow speed (5 MPH limit) putting out big wakes, holding the boat on course was physically very draining.

Once through, we were in the very pretty town of Point Pleasant. As has been our habit on this trip, we had not called ahead for reservations. This was the first time it looked like we might be out of luck. The cruising guide we are using for this area is somewhat outdated. Two of the places we were hoping to stay no longer take transients. The third place put me on hold for a long time, asked several times about the length and beam of the boat, and about the draft. Finally, they said they had a slip we could use.

The marina has stationary docks with tiny finger piers, so I had no choice but to back in. The slip is extremely narrow, and there was lots of wake rocking us as I was positioning to back in, which I'm not used to. But I must say I did a good job. even the dock hand commented on how well I did under pretty awful conditions. Unfortunately, we fear that we will see more and more docks like this as we progress.

We got here about 2PM, and the boat has rocked and rolled constantly ever since. Being Sunday there is lots of traffic, and they don't slow down for marinas! Poor Beamer is looking like a drunk when she walks. This is the first time she has seemed to be uncomfortable on the boat.

We walked into town to restock a few groceries. Point Pleasant is a very pretty little town from what we saw. When we got back to the boat we were repositioning the lines a little. Rick leaned over to re-cleat a bow line and heard something hit the water. He stood up and said "What was that that fell" and immediately realized one of the lenses had fallen out of those glasses he had just purchased 2 days ago in Atlantic City (for those that missed it, his frames had broken, so he had lenses put in new frames). \$69 down the drain! We immediately borrowed a minnow net from the boat next to us and dredged the approx. 8 foot mucky bottom for 20 minutes trying to come up with the lens but with no luck. So he's back to wearing his extra pair that is 2 prescriptions old.

We were just getting over that mishap when our neighbors that are keeping an eye on things at home for us called with more bad news. To make a long story short, our heat pump has sprung a leak and water has saturated the carpet on our ground floor. So tomorrow, as we're heading out into the great Atlantic we'll also be on the phone trying to get a carpet person to come suck up the water, and the heat pump people to come figure out what's going on with that. the unit is only a year or so old!

On to other things. let's talk about pump out problems. Every marina we've stayed at in New Jersey has had broken pump outs. Cape May, Atlantic City, and here at Point Pleasant, no pump out has been available! Since our holding tank is very small (10 gallons) we need pump out

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often! So we have to go to somewhere other than where we're staying to solve that problem.very inconvenient!

Checking the forecast for tomorrow, things look good to go.Rain in the afternoon, seas about 2 feet. We're heading out early in the morning, 25 miles in the ocean, then under the Verrazano Narrows Bridge and into New York. Hopefully will pass by the Statue of Liberty before lunch, and be settled into Tarrytown, NY before the rains come. From there, we can ride the train into NYC.

We feel like we're a couple of days behind what we want to be, so we probably won't spend much time in New York.that is a city that is maybe best visited at another time. We're anxious to do the Hudson and the Erie Canal.

Rick speaks: A little shower or a change in wind direction or a change in wind speed is merely a minor inconvenience for most people. However, for the boater, weather can change a great day into a bad day. Wind speed and wave height are so related that a small change in wind direction or speed can change 1-2 ft seas into 3-5 ft seas. And 3-5 ft seas are not comfortable for any small craft. The prudent boater does not venture from shore without a basic understanding of the current weather conditions and the current forecast. For those with VHF radios, weather for the area is given on channel 1,2,3, 4, 5,6 with 2 being the best one for Eastern North Carolina. Just press the WX button on the radio. It is for this reason that we have chosen to get to Manasquan NJ and up to the Hudson River on Monday. The weather forecast for Monday is winds 5-10 knots and waves 2 feet while the rest of the week is winds 10-15 knots and waves 2-4. Two feet in wave height makes a lot of difference in our comfort level. We have no doubt the boat can take the pounding, but we know the pounding is not good for us and makes for a bad day.

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6/10/2009	24	52	7.00	M	39°22.752'	74°25.752'	Farley Marina-Atlantic City	\$364.00	
<p>Rick writes: We made the 52 mile trip from Cape May to Atlantic City, NJ. While most loopers choose to go out into the Atlantic Ocean and enter Atlantic City via the Absecon Inlet, we chose to go by the NJ Intracoastal Waterway, the "inside route" that traverses NJ from North to South. It is much like the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway through NC, but more densely populated. We did this because we wanted to sightsee and have some view as we travelled. We could do this because we only draw 30 inches of water and the bigger boats draw much more, sometime up to 5 feet. However, we did everything we could to have a successful trip. We left two hours before high tide giving us at least 5 hours of above mid-tide level, we watched the markers, we stayed in the channel, and we did not travel at night. We never saw less than 7 feet of water below the boat. Yes, there are "no wake" zones and 8 bridges (we had to stop and wait for only two, due to our low air-draft of 9 feet) to traverse, but, it was quite enjoyable. We did stop once for about 30 minutes due to FOG, but we used the time to fill up with gas, 111 gallons at 2.70 per gallon (do the math). BTW, we hold 190 gallons of gas in two 95 gallon tanks.</p> <p>Seeing the NJ towns from the water is very scenic. Many homes are built right out on the water on pilings and they drive their boats up under the house. No CAMA in New Jersey, I guess. Small boats were fishing everywhere along the way, and of course, they can only catch fish in the middle of the marked channel. We saw one small boat with two men in black suits and ties fishing. We really enjoyed seeing AC from the back side. The local power company has 5 gigantic (300 feet tall, with three 200 foot blades) windmills producing power. They are quite spectacular, and once you realize what they do, they are not obscene or ugly.</p> <p>We are staying at Farley State Marina, managed by the Trump organization. It is the most expensive we have encountered thus far, \$3.00 per foot in the week and \$4.00 per foot on the weekend. Like everything in a casino, every square inch and operation is designed to legally separate you from your money. On the other hand, they have very nice facilities, close to the "action", bus and jitney rides in front of the hotel and multiple eating places. There are less expensive marinas in the area, but none have the convenience and completeness of Farleys.</p> <p>About 5 days ago, I broke the frame of my glasses. Luckily, I brought a second pair along (also a requirement of my Master License). I found a glasses lab today to put my old lenses into new frames, so now I have frames that make me look like the nutty professor, large, black, but "back in style" as the optician told me.</p> <p>You know the saying, "What happens in Atlantic City, stays in Atlantic City". Since we are staying here for 4 days, we will not be writing a blog each day. Check back about Sunday or Monday for the latest. Ta-Ta.</p>									

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6/8/2009	22	73	4.50	M	38°57.069'	74°54.321'	Utches Marina-Cape May	\$104.00	
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Betsy speaks: We've named the autopilot! Many people name their autopilots, usually something like "Otto". We've named ours "Beamy" so if you call us and we say Beamy is driving the boat, you'll know its not the dog, but the autopilot.sort of stupid, but what else is there to do when you're coming down the Delaware Bay and can't see land. You need to talk about something, and this was it for us today!

The autopilot has really turned out to come in handy on open runs of several miles, keeping the boat on a straight path without having to bend over the steering wheel constantly. Even in rough seas, it stays on course. We both consider it money well spent, even though we still are not able to use all of its features because it still isn't totally calibrated correctly. But for keeping a straight course it is great.

We made the 73 mile run from Chesapeake City, MD to Cape May, NJ in about 4 ½ hours. It was a foggy morning so we waited nearly an hour before departing, but once underway we never felt like we couldn't see well enough to keep going. We only passed 5 ships coming upriver. With the fog we were both keeping a close eye out for ship and barge traffic which we hear can be very heavy here, but we had no problem. The Delaware River portion was glassy smooth, the Bay got a little rougher, say 2 feet or so, but no problem. We've been very lucky with the seas this whole trip.

The fog lifted just before we entered the Cape May Canal, and we pulled into Utche's Marina about 1300. The marina is such that the only way to dock is stern in, which we are not used to, but I did it with no problem. We were surprised to be presented at check-in with a "goody bag" containing a bottle of wine, some snacks, soap, coupons for free coffee in the morning, and various other items. The restroom/shower facilities here are the best we've ever seen.so nice they are pictured in the cruising guide! I'm not sure that makes up for the lousy docks, though. However, we fear we will see more and more docks like this as we progress.

After a quick lunch on board, we rode the bikes into town. What was described as being about a mile and a half seemed more like 3 or 4 miles, but on flat land it was easy.again we are thankful to have the bikes, although we find that most marinas have loaner bikes available. We rode all the way to the ocean, and were surprised to see signs stating that to use the beach, even just to walk, was \$3.00 per day!!! We did not pay!! We made a quick stop at a hardware store to buy a new hose, as ours was leaking so much it was like a soaker hose (dry rot due to being in the sun all the time I think), and a quick stop at a CVS to buy Rick some new sunglasses to wear over his glasses.he broke his glasses this morning and the clip on sunglasses he had wouldn't fit on the extra pair of glasses he had brought along.

We've decided to take the inside route to Atlantic City. Weather reports for the next several days call for thunderstorms. By taking the inside instead of going out into the ocean, we will have many opportunities to pull into marinas if the weather gets too bad. Also, I think it will be a more interesting passage. Most loopers go outside because the inside passage is so shallow and has numerous bridges. With our shallow draft and ability to go under most bridges we should do fine on the inside.

We've been gone 3 weeks today and have gone 622 miles. We're still speaking to each other, and Beamer has learned to pee on concrete and rocks! Betsy

Day 2 in Cape may

Betsy here again: One of the basic rules for loopers is that when safety is an issue, one "no go" vote wins, and there is no discussion or argument. Period! Safety decisions usually involve weather or sea conditions. I had exercised a "no go" vote earlier in this cruise.I don't even remember the circumstance now. This morning Rick made the "no go" decision. Weather reports called for rain and scattered thunderstorms. But when we got up this morning the sky didn't look too bad. We ate breakfast and prepared to leave Cape May, planning to take the inside

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passage to Atlantic City and stop about mid way. I had studied the charts and cruising guides yesterday and saw there were plenty of places to duck into if the threatened thunderstorms became reality.

We had just unplugged the power and undone one of the bow lines preparing to leave. The sky to the west was getting blacker by the minute, but to the east, the sun was shining. I really didn't like this location very much so was anxious to go, even if just a little way. Then we heard a roll of thunder, and Rick said "I'm exercising my no vote" and that was it. We plugged the power back in and retied the bow line, and I got out the next book I was planning to read (my 4th for the trip, 3 Grishams, 1 James Patterson). Within minutes it was pouring, with lots of thunder and some lightening. And that went on most of the morning.

The rain stopped around lunch time, and the afternoon turned out to be very nice. But we were committed to staying (we'd already paid for another night), so we spent the afternoon straightening up and cleaning the boat. Hopefully we'll head out tomorrow morning. The weather forecast is still not great, but not quite as foreboding as it was for today.

We've made very few advance reservations along the way, usually just calling the next marina once we are underway, or in a couple of cases not even calling until we are within sight and call on the radio. But today we did make reservations for Trump Marina in Atlantic City for Thursday, Friday and Saturday night. Weekend rates are \$4.00 per foot, the most we've paid yet! Hopefully, I'll get lucky at the blackjack or craps table and be able to cover it!

We've had over 2,000 hits on the web page, which I think is pretty exciting! E-mails indicate many of you read the blog first thing every morning. We love it when you leave comments, and encourage more of you to do that. Thanks to all of you that have signed our guest book! I've had cousins I've never met sign in, as well as friends of cousins! Lots of church friends are following us, as well as neighbors from both Sneads Ferry and Topsail Beach.

Rick wanted to point out that there is a new link on the web page that has nothing to do with looping, but just something you might enjoy: Click on "Just for Laughs" to see.

Again, we love comments to the blog, personal e-mails, and phone calls! Thanks..Betsy

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6/7/2009	21	53	3.00	M	39°57.069'	75°48.622'	Chesapeake City	\$71.50	

It is Sunday and we made the 54 mile trip from Baltimore to Chesapeake City. The boat traffic was pretty congested on the way up. We have now travelled over 500 miles. Yeah!!!!

The city sits on the western end of the C&D canal, which connects the Chesapeake Bay with the Delaware River or Bay. The Chesapeake Inn and Marina, is very busy on the weekends. So much so that, they charge 2.75 per foot on the weekends and 2.00 in the week. But, they have good facilities and are just off the canal. The marina has 2 restaurants, a Tiki Bar, and a band every day. It is the happening place in town. We have never seen so many of the "go-fast" boats, the Scarabs, Fountains, Baja, and Donzi on the water and at least 100 motorcycles in the front parking lot. It was busy all day. Locals come in for lunch, pay \$5 and park their boat and listen to the music.

The town is very quaint, reminding us of an old English town, with old homes and bushy, crowded gardens. Brick sidewalks and narrow streets lead one to several B&Bs.

Tomorrow, we go down the canal 13 miles to the Delaware Bay. Then 47 miles to Cape May NJ, where we turn North for Atlantic City and New York. Keep following and see how we do..

This is a happening place. Boats in and out, eating at the restaurant or bar. Huge "go-fast" boats abound and each has to be louder than the last. We walked about the town and it is like an old English village. Apparently, the town suffered when the lock was removed in the 1940s. Town sits on the Western terminus of the C&D Canal. This is so popular on the weekend that the rate is \$1.75 during the week and \$2.75 on the weekend. They have a town dock, with a free wall and 8 spaces with electric and water for \$25. It was full when we arrived. No bathroom facilities.

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6/4/2009	18	34	2.00	M	39° 16.923'	76° 36.079'	Inner Harbour East Marina	\$171.42	
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Betsy here: I dried out enough last night to finally go to bed! This morning it was still misting rain, so we waited in Annapolis for a couple of hours, debating whether to forge ahead or wait til the rain stopped. We took a look at the weather radar at about 9:30, when the rain had stopped but it was still very overcast. Thunderstorms were predicted for this afternoon. The radar showed enough window for us to decide to make a try for Baltimore, so we headed out at about 9:45. The seas weren't too bad, maybe 2-3 foot swells, not choppy. We made one turn heading into Baltimore where we had pretty beamy seas for several miles which was uncomfortable, but we knew the end was near. It was a 2 hour run at about 19 MPH. The rain held off until just after we got settled in, and it has rained steadily ever since. It is on days like this that we are so thankful to have our newly added canvas/plastic/screened "den" which doubles our usable space, and continues to stay incredibly dry even in torrential downpours!

We are now comfortably docked at Inner Harbor East Marina, an older facility but with nice floating docks, fair facilities, and very friendly staff. We are within walking distance of the Aquarium, which we will visit tomorrow. Today we just lolled on the boat as it rained, getting caught up on chartwork, making plans for how to navigate New Jersey. We have to decide whether to try the inside passage, which is reportedly very shallow, or go outside and come back in at Atlantic City, then out again (you don't think I'm going to bypass that gambling opportunity do you?)

We got off the boat long enough to walk a couple of blocks to supper. We've stayed pretty much to plan as far as eating breakfast and lunch on board and supper out. No more news today.

Let me digress to Annapolis for one final thought: we were so lucky to be in the one spot on the city dock where there was a ladder up from the water to the dock. We were able to use that ladder to climb on and off the boat. Without the ladder, it was at times a 3 foot stepup, hard to do when you're balancing a dog in one hand.

06-05-09 Baltimore MD

Rick here: After the all day rain yesterday, the rain continued today, in earnest. We decided to venture out anyway and went to the National Aquarium located 2 blocks from our slip. This, being the National Aquarium, is a first class facility. We watched a 4-D movie, which is 3-D with additional effects like water, mist and wind. We attended the dolphin show which showcased the incredible learning and performing abilities of the bottlenose dolphins. There were thousands and thousands of fish, sharks, turtles, rays, and coral exhibits. It took us over 7 hours to cover the entire building(s). By the time we had completed the tour, it was 5:30 and we had managed to spend the whole day, out of the rain, and in a great place. I love it when a plan comes together. Tomorrow, we do more touring, hoping to tour Camden Yards, the home of the Baltimore Orioles, or Fort McHenry, the fort over which the United States Flag was flying when Francis Scott Key wrote The Star Spangled Banner.

06-06-09 Baltimore-Fort McHenry

Rick here: We took the water taxi over to Fort McHenry. This is the fort that was flying the Stars(15 of them) and Stripes during the War of 1812 (We won), with the action of the bombardment captured forever in poem by Francis Scott Key. That poem was later set to music, and still later, proclaimed by the Congress of the United States as the National Anthem of the United States, and is known today as The Star Spangled Banner. Key, a lawyer on a mission to free a captured doctor, was onboard a truce ship in Baltimore City harbor during the 25 hour bombardment and eloquently wrote what he saw.

The fort has a group of about 100 volunteers that enhance the visit by dressing in period cloths, parading, drumming and fifing, shooting cannons, etc. We were lucky enough to go on Saturday, the first day the volunteers performed this year. In fact, we witnessed the firing of a 16 pound cannon, capable of sending a 16 pound projectile over one and one-half miles. It was loud. In the evening, we rode the water taxi to "The Inner Harbor" for supper. This is a happening place. There are 100's of places to eat and shop. There were two concerts being held, one Rap and

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one 60's music. Guess which one we liked the best.

Missed opportunity for a great picture. Apparently, there was an Admiral Fell (Fells Point is named for him). In Fells Point, there is an Inn named for him. We did not get a picture of the "The Admiral Fell Inn" sign.

We plan to leave tomorrow for Chesapeake City. The marina, Inner Harbor East Marina, despite some construction, was very nice. The people, Bill, Millie, and Wes were very helpful and someone was on duty 24 hours. Very good security. We also enjoyed riding the Water Taxi. \$9.00 for the day, with unlimited transfers to 11 different stops.

6/1/2009	15	56	3.00	M	38°51.978'	76°26.853'	Ego Alley-Annapolis Md	\$165.00	
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Thoroughly enjoyable town. Right in the heart of the city. We biked, walked. It did do some raining. The first night, some vandals boarded a boat behind us, disconnected the power to another, and for us, turned on the water spigot just outside the boat, splashing up on the boat. The Naval Academy, with the tomb of John Paul Jones, is a must see. The facilities here were average plus(6/10). Another interesting place is the State Capitol Building, site of Washington resigning as Commander of the Continental Army.

Betsy here.

As we left Solomons Island this morning, we were again thankful for friends. Jim and Lisa Favors are spending the summer in Solomons on their yacht Kismet. Jim was kind enough to lend us his truck yesterday to go to the grocery store for minor provisioning. The Favors have completed the loop at least once, and are living aboard their boat in Solomons for the summer. We had met them in Charleston in April. They have written a book about the loop and Lisa is just getting started on a second book about women and boating. Theirs was one of the several books we had read prior to departure.

We had a smooth 3 hour cruise to Annapolis, and as I was working my way between mooring balls heading for the Annapolis City Dock, we were pulled by the Coast Guard. I knew I wasn't going too fast or making any wake because I was just creeping along making sure I was headed in the right direction. Rick did the talking while I stayed at the helm. they just wanted to board us for a safety check. First question was whether we had any weapons on board. The easy answer to that was "no guns or knives allowed on a 6,000 mile trip with 2 people on a boat this size!" Anyway, Rick answered all their questions and displayed all safety equipment required, so we now have an official safety inspection report that we can just show if they try to board us again during this trip. (Side note to Toad..we aren't required to have a bell!! Ha! Ha!)

We are in the heart of downtown Annapolis, docked at the City Dock. We would be happy for any friends or relatives in the DC or Annapolis area to visit us. Many restaurants are within sight, and all the shops are right at our fingertips. We plan to be here for 3 nights, then on to Baltimore for 3 nights. So if you want to see us underway, give us a call and we'd love to have a visit. sorry we can't provide overnight accommodations!

We had a perfectly delightful day here in Annapolis. We started the day with a visit and tour of the United States Naval Academy. The docent was excellent and the tour was "Top Drawer". The only negative was that the crypt of Johns Paul Jones was closed today for some repairs to the room and we did not get to see the crypt (or John Paul Jones). The chapel was very nice with Tiffany Glass in the stained windows. Three pictures are attached so you can see the beautiful windows. We then went to the Naval Museum second floor to see the world class display of model ships, dating from the 1600's. The Academy claims the world's best and most extensive display of wooden model ships. There is no value on the collection, as it is irreplaceable.

Later in the day, we took a 40 minute narrated tour of Spa Creek and the surrounding old Annapolis in a tour boat. All in all, another good day.

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5/30/2009	13	61	3.75	M	38° 18.926'	76° 18.756'	Solomons Yacht Club	\$104.40	
<p>Another old seatown. We found Jim and Lisa Favors, authors of loop books, and they lent us their truck to go to the grocery store. For the most part, we rode our bikes, which we have done several times.</p> <p>We have spent the past two days at Solomon's Island. The trip from Deltaville was 63 miles and the weather was almost perfect. This is a wonderful old timey sea town, with sailboats and power craft everywhere. Much like Deltaville, there are many more boats than people with mega marinas. Even the Comfort Inn and the Holiday Inn have marinas. Many people get around via dinghy. The Solomon's Yachting Center is very nice with floating docks and first class facilities. The town is busy with tourists and the restaurants are hopping. We attended the Solomon's United Methodist Church. The preacher stood in the front of the church and preached about Pentecost Sunday with very little notes. He was very good and the presentation was excellent. On Sunday afternoon, we once again went to the Calvary County Museum. This is one of the finest local museums you can find. We were particularly interested in the Predator Exhibit, fish and animals that are not suppose to be in the area, but are, and upset the ecosystem. The snakehead fish and the green crab are examples. We spent about 15 minutes with the otters. They are so much fun to watch and they are so active.</p> <p>When we turn to port out of the channel tomorrow heading for Annapolis, we will be in new territory for us.</p>									
5/29/2009	12	39	2.00	M	37° 33.595'	76° 18.756'	Deltaville, Va-Doziers Regatta	\$40.00	
<p>What an old seatown. They have 800 people and 3000 boats. This town has 2 West Marines within 3 blocks of each other. Every business in the town is related to maritime, either canvass making, motor repair, or marina. Rick broke his belt here and had to purchase a new one at West Marine, arriving with a cord holding up his pants. Most restaurants will send a car ot pick you up and bring you back after eating. We ate at Kokomos. We ran into John Haluska, on the loop, who taught at St Andrews in 1969, when Rick taught there and Betsy was a Junior there. Small world.</p> <p>Rick writes: We made the easy 37.5 mile journey from Yorktown to Deltaville, VA. Deltaville is a very old sea town. They have 800 permanent residents and over 3000 boats here. There are 6-7 marinas, mostly all full service. There are 5 sail and canvas shops in town. They have 2 West Marine stores, about 4 blocks apart. Almost every store has something to do with boats. Most of the restaurants will send a car for you and after you eat, take you back to the boat. All in all, a sleepy little town with a nautical character. One of our dockmates, also a looper, from Memphis TN, just happens to have taught at St Andrews when I did, back in 1969. It really is a small world.</p> <p>Since there is so little to report today, let me digress a bit on an important topic. When we left Great Bridge to go to Yorktown, we discovered that we did not have a trail or route on our GPS chartplotter from Portsmouth to Yorktown. It had been erased or something. The Chesapeake is a big body of water and with so many markers and buoys, it is easy to get lost. What could we do?? We got our out CHARTS, marked the route and proceeded with confidence. This incident underlines why the Power Squadron teaches to have charts on board at all times. If you are out of sight of your house, you need charts. GPS is a wonderful tool, but there can be malfunctions or interruptions. Getting lost in the Cheaspeake Bay will ruin your day...</p> <p>Tomorrow, Solomons Island..</p>									

<u>--Date--</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Miles Today</u>	<u>Time Today</u>	<u>MA WP</u>	<u>Lat(N)</u>	<u>Lon(W)</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>COST DOCKAGE</u>	<u>NUMB LOCKS</u>
5/28/2009	11	55	4.00	M	37° 14.334'	76° 30.425'	Waterside Marina-Yorktown VA	\$45.50	1
<p>WE GET BY WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS!</p> <p>Thanks to our friend and neighbor, Tom Hayden, for watching our mail and our house while we are on this trip of a lifetime.</p> <p>Thanks to friends Toad and Dauna Gable for lending us their Dinghy, which we haven't used yet but plan to soon!</p> <p>Thanks to friends Bill and Sara Epperson for selling us the fold up bikes at a great price! We used them first at Coinjock, then in Chesapeake several times and are really enjoying them.</p> <p>SPECIAL thanks to St. Andrews friends Duncan and Camie Mills for picking up our replacement air conditioner, then driving 2 hours to and from in Richmond to deliver it to us boatside. We enjoyed having lunch with them and catching up. We look forward to seeing them again in November.</p> <p>Thanks to our Wilmington friends, Jimmy and Gay Thomas, for calling us when they realized that they would be in Chesapeake dropping off an engine at the same time we were. We had dinner with them and a great visit.</p> <p>To bring you up to date, the air conditioner, hand delivered from Richmond by our friends that live near there (see above) is now fixed and working perfectly (replaced with a factory refurbished unit).</p> <p>The throttles have been worked on and seem to be working better.they did not need to be replaced, just needed a little massage.</p> <p>We had an uneventful 4 hour trip from Chesapeake/Great Bridge (finally, after 4 wonderful nights there) to Yorktown this morning. As we passed by Ocean Marine in Portsmouth, we saw the boat that nearly sank sitting in a lift at the marina. Yesterday morning, a tug boat came to push it on the hip to Portsmouth.</p> <p>We are sitting in Yorktown, in a thunderstorm but perfectly dry and comfortable. We are very thankful for our "den" addition, which stays remarkably dry. We met the same three looper boats we saw in Dowry Creek. They had come via the Dismal Swamp route. Tomorrow we will head for Deltaville, about 50 miles up the Bay.we have not been there before.</p> <p>Thanks to all who read this for keeping in touch and for following along with us on this great adventure. We love hearing from each of you and appreciate all your encouragement!</p> <p>Betsy</p>									

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5/24/2009	7	36	2.10	M	36°20.307'	75°56.965'	Atlantic Marine-Great Bridge		
<p>A very great place to stop. This marina is old, 3 generations have run it. It had average facilities, but is so peaceful, and the dock staff is excellent. The town of Great Bridge is about 3 blocks away with everything you need or want. The Great Bridge Lock is .25 miles away and opens on the hour. We will get our AC fixed here (we hope).</p> <p>Sunday May 25, 09. This is such a great place, we joke that we should just tie up for 9 months, and then tell everybody we did the loop. The place is dog friendly and people friendly.</p> <p>Monday, May 26, 09. Rick replaces the old showerhead in the mens shower. The old, corroded one was not putting out enough pressure.</p> <p>Tuesday May 27, 09. Watched a 82 ft Sunseeker (nice yacht) almost sink today. Man came in taking on water. The marina got out pumps, called a diver, and for about 5 hours worked like crazy to keep the boat afloat. Finally stuffed a tarp in the hole and a piece of plywood screwed to the deck to contain the water. The pumps could then keep up and eventually raised the boat. At one point, the swim platform was 5 feet under water and the bow was pointing to the moon. The owner (driver) was very calm and kept saying "It is just a boat". He hit the dogleg coming out of Alligator Creek at 40 mph and ripped something loose. The next day, a tug came from Norfolk to take him to Ocean Marine to lift him out and begin repairs. We saw her as we passed, up on the hard.</p> <p>Also, had the AC person look at unit and determined we needed a new one.</p> <p>Wednesday May 28, Got the AC fixed today. Had to replace the unit. Our friend, Duncan Mills and his wife Camie, brought a reconditioned unit from the factory in Richmond to save us having to send the service person at \$90 per hour. Had a nice visit with Duncan while the tech installed the AC. Also had our sticking throttles looked at. Helped some, but not much.</p> <p>Thursday, May 29, 09. We finally get to move along and head out to Yorktown, VA. We really enjoyed our stay here.</p>									
5/23/2009	6	84	4.50	M	36°20.070'	75°56.965'	Coinjock Marina, Coinjock NC	\$52.50	
<p>We had two very relaxing nights in Dowry Creek, near Belhaven, NC. There were 3 other loopers there, one from Michigan, one from Guntersville, AL, and one from England! We had a nice visit with them at the Dowry Creek Marina clubhouse last night and shared war stories. of course they all had more than we did so far!</p> <p>We pulled out of Dowry Creek at 0800, and our crossing of the Albemarle Sound was picture perfect. water was just one ripple above being glassy smooth. We are glad to have the Neuse, Pamlico and Albemarle behind us! We arrived in Coinjock just in time for lunch. My mouth was watering for the homemade potato chips I remembered from last year when we stopped here, and they were just as good as I remembered! The restaurant here advertises itself as the "Home of the 32 oz. Prime Rib" but we'll probably pass that up for more potato chips for dinner!</p> <p>Tomorrow we'll make the short easy run to Chesapeake, VA, where we will sit for at least 2 nights waiting to get the heat pump repaired or replaced. being a holiday weekend we'll have to wait til Tuesday morning to get it taken care of, but at least there is a dealer there that seems to have what we need. We also have a slight concern about the starboard throttle not responding very well. we had mentioned this to the marina that serviced the motors right before our departure but they neglected to fix it. The major concern is that it will lock up when I'm docking and I'll look like an idiot through no fault of my own! If the marina in Chesapeake can't fix it, there is a Glacier Bay Dealer in Yorktown that can!</p>									

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5/21/2009	4	72	5.50	M	35°31.975'	76°32.149'	Dowry Creek-Belhaven, NC	\$86.00	
<p>We left Morehead City this morning about 0900 and arrived at Dowry Creek about 1430. The Neuse was 2-3 feet waves and the Pamlico a bit better. We traveled about 72 miles. Dowry Creek is one of the best marinas around. Excellent facilities and great staff. We plan to stay here two nights, then on to Coinjock, and on to Atlantic Marina in Chesapeake Va. We have the AC guy scheduled for Tuesday morning, after the holiday on Monday.</p> <p>One of the better stops. Has everything. Great facilities, including private showers/bathroom combinations. Loaner car. Wonderful staff. Best Captains lounge we have ever seen. we rate this place a 9/10.</p>									
5/18/2009	1	40	2.50	M	34°43.288'	76°42.276'	Morehead City Yacht Basin	\$161.40	
<p>What a day. We left our home port of Sneads Ferry at 1100 as planned. We had 18 friends and neighbors on hand to see us off. Tom and Billie Hayden supplied Mimosas for the group. Betsy brothers John and Steve were on hand. We left on low tide, so we actually bumped the bottom on the way to the waterway. No big deal. As we made our way up the waterway toward Oriental, the wind began blowing stronger and the temperature fell dramatically. By the time we arrived at the Morehead Port turning basin, it was getting nasty, we decided to just pull into the Morehead Yacht Basin and call it a day. It was really blowing from the NE and would have made for a terrible trip to Oriental, not knowing the wave heights on the Neuse river we had to cross. We decided to turn on the heater, and when we did, we heard spitting noises. Upon investigation, Sparks were flying upon powering up the heater, so we turned it off and left it off. So, the first day we made it 40 miles on a perfectly miserable day.</p>									
<u>Grand Totals--></u>		4363	382.90					\$6,399.20	112