

Today is:  
Monday, March 15, 2010

## Rick, Betsy, and Beamer BoatLog Americas Great Loop Trip

<b><u>Days</u></b>		<b><u>Miles</u></b>						
300	Projected	6000		Average Time Per Day:	1.67	Total Number of locks:	117	
301	Completed	6034		Average Miles per Day:	20	Total Maintenance Cost:	\$6,418.75	
101%	Percent Complete	101%						
Gallons Gas Projected:		4000	Gas Cost Projected Per Gallon:		\$3.00	Dockage Projected per Day:		\$50
Gallons Gas Used:		3920	Gas Cost Projected:		\$12,000.00	Dockage Projected:		\$15,000
Percent Gas Used:		98%	Gas Cost Paid:		\$12,509.38	Dockage Paid:		\$10,047
			Percentage Paid		104%	Percent Dockage Paid:		67%
			Average Cost per Gallon:		\$3.19	Average Docking Cost per Day:		\$33.27
			Average Miles per Gallon:		1.5	Number of Docked Locations:		116

<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>
<u>3/15/2010</u>	<u>302</u>			<u>W</u>	<u>34° 21.418'</u>	<u>77° 38.537'</u>	<u>Topsail Beach - Thanks</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
<p>03-15-10 Sneads Ferry, NC - Thanks            [Rick] With us safely back in Sneads Ferry, the time has come to end our great loop adventure. However, we recognize that we would not have had such a great time without some help from many people. Along the way, we met many wonderful people and we have become friends with many. Included in this group are friends or relatives who joined us for a day or so. These folks include (dates are in parenthesis so you can look up the blog entry if you wish):            Louise, Betsy's childhood friend that drove 4 hours (one way) to spend a day and a night with us. She is the only overnight visitor we had. after all it is only a 26 foot boat! She slept on the convertible dinette table in a sleeping bag (6/24).            Chris Gunter, Betsy's nephew that lives in Rochester, NY, drove to visit us in Oswego, NY to visit (6/30).            Tina, Trina, and Tara, the Zephyrhills wild bunch. We drove there, then they drove to Clearwater, all during Christmas week.            Ryan, my nephew, and a great kid, and his mother Bonnie, visited us in Boca Raton (1/23).            Betsy's second cousin Ben Newland and his wife Rose, took us to Disney's Wild Kingdom and let us stay with them in Orlando, FL (2/9).            Another of Betsy's second cousins, Scott Makepeace and his wife Pat, drove from Jacksonville to St. Augustine to take us to Osteen's Restaurant for the best shrimp dinner we have ever had (2/16).            Friends from college days Duncan and Cami Mills, hand delivered an air conditioner/heater to us. They picked it up in their hometown of Richmond VA and drove all the way to Great Bridge, VA, to deliver it to us. We really used the heater. The air conditioner, not so much (5/28).            Jimmy and Gaye Thomas, friends from Wilmington also visited us in Great Bridge (5/28).            Kim Volek, a former member of our church in Sneads Ferry, dropped by for a visit in Beaufort, SC. We had never actually met Kim but she had been reading our blog regularly, and had moved to Beaufort after we left on our trip (2/27).            Sue, daughter of our Topsail Beach neighbor, and her husband Gary, dropped in for a visit while we were in Isle of Palms, SC. They just happened to be vacationing there and Sue's mother knew from reading the blog that we were there at the same time (3/3).</p>									

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There is another group of important people. These are the ones that we owe thanks, in a big way. We cannot name everyone, But, here goes: We start with Glenn in Chicago. He towed us around the Carp Crap and we are truly indebted to him. Not only did he save us \$600, he showed that there are friendly, helpful boaters on the water (9/3).

Sid in Luddington. He offered us, complete strangers, the use of his truck while we were weather hostages and he was great company docked next to us (8/16).

Bruce in Fairhope. Shared his lovely town and church with us (11/29).

Tom and Patsy Conrad. These wonderful people let us tie to their dock and kept us entertained for three days (12/1 - 12/2). In addition, Tom's weather musings, well respected by AGLCA loopers, helped us pick the right day to cross Florida's Big Bend.

Ron and Marji Cyr also let us dock at their home in Punta Gorda FL and were wonderful hosts just after they had completed the loop themselves (1/11-1/12).

There were many, many other loopers that we travelled with along the way that were so helpful to us, but we can't mention them all for fear of leaving someone out. Just know that if we travelled with you even for a day or two, you were special to us and we will not forget you.

I have saved the biggest thanks for last. We do not even know how to begin to thank Tom and Billie Hayden for all their help. Tom took care of our mail, certainly not the easiest of tasks. Tom and Billie "managed" the two disasters at home when the water pipes burst on the Florida heat pump and flooded our downstairs with thousands of gallons of water. They were a constant source of information and news from Sneads Ferry. Thank You Very Much.

This is probably our last blog entry for this trip. We will leave the blog and website open so anyone can refer back. We hope that everyone has enjoyed reading the blog as much as we have enjoyed having you as our "virtual crew". Now, cast off your lines and go live a little....

Betsy, Rick, and Beamer

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<u>3/14/2010</u>	<u>301</u>			<u>W</u>	<u>34° 21.418'</u>	<u>77° 38.537'</u>	<u>Topsail Beach - Crossing our Wake</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>

03-14-10 Crossing Our Wake!

Betsy speaks: We attended our church in Topsail Beach this morning, and were surprised to be greeted at the door by our former (retired) pastor from Sneads Ferry Presbyterian. He lives nearby and knew we would be at Topsail's Emma Anderson Chapel today, so he and his wife decided to show up to welcome us home. What a wonderful surprise (although Rick knew ahead of time that they might be there). After church we loaded the boat up and took off for our final slip in Sneads Ferry, where we would cross our wake, indicating that we had completed the Great Loop. My brother John and his wife Pat were there to see us off. On that final stretch between Topsail Beach and Sneads Ferry, about 24 very familiar miles, we reminisced about what a wonderful trip we had had. We are both so glad we did this thing that on the surface seems so far-fetched.

Along the way, we passed the "pepto-pink" house that many loopers have included in their blogs because it is such a standout along this stretch. When we left the pink was so faded it might not have warranted a picture, but it looks like they painted it just for our return because it is as bright as we've ever seen it!

We thought there might be a few people waiting for us at our slip as we had publicized on the blog our expected arrival time of 2PM. Sure enough as we rounded the final bend we saw quite a gathering waiting for us. The amazing thing was that as I pulled into the slip I started hearing bagpipes! Howard Orr, a member of our church family, used to be a piper but I'd never heard him play. Last I heard his pipes were not playable and beyond repair. So I'm looking around trying to figure out where this bagpipe sound is coming from, thinking it must be a recording or something. Then the people on shore pointed at Howard on the opposite shore, and sure enough we were escorted in with live bagpipes proudly playing Scotland the Brave! Since we left, Howard has joined a pipe band and gotten some new pipes.

In addition to the bagpipes, we were greeted with hugs and mimosas. The gathering consisted of New River Sail and Power Squadron friends and several members of our Sneads Ferry Presbyterian Church family. Most of these had been reading the blog regularly, and several said they feared they would suffer from blog withdrawal now that we are back. I think we counted 22 people in all.

We were proud to finally hoist the AGLCA Gold Burgee, which we estimated cost us something upwards of \$30,000. But it was worth every dime, and now I will strive for a Platinum Burgee (multiple loops) as soon as we recuperate from this trip.

Here's one final sunset picture, taken yesterday from our home in Topsail Beach. With sunsets like these right here, you might wonder why we ever want to leave this beautiful place! Even gorgeous sunsets can't inhibit the wanderlust of a born Gypsy!

Be sure to tune in tomorrow for what we think will be our final blog, in which we will talk about the special people that made this trip so memorable. Also, if you are statistically oriented, we have updated the "Trip Log" which is found on a tab on the left of our home page, [www.betsyrick.com](http://www.betsyrick.com).

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<u>3/13/2010</u>	<u>300</u>			<u>W</u>	<u>34° 21.418'</u>	<u>77° 38.537'</u>	<u>Topsail Beach - Favorites</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>

03-13-10 Animal Encounters and Best/Worst Days

We hoped we would see lots of wildlife along the way, and indeed we did. We are both animal lovers, and one of the highlights of the trip was visiting several wonderful aquariums including the National Aquarium in Baltimore, the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago, and the Tennessee Aquarium in Chattanooga. We also went to a much smaller rescue aquarium facility in Clearwater.

In the wild, we saw more dolphins than anything, yet still we stop nearly every time we see them just to watch them closely. It seems they always want to follow you into or out of ports. We missed them all through Canada and down the rivers, but as soon as we neared the bottom of Mobile Bay they escorted us into the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway. It seems that the dolphins in Florida are more likely to actually jump out of the water and surf the boat's wake than those we see here in North Carolina, and we never stopped trying to get that great picture of one all the way out of the water. Here's our best shot\_\_\_\_\_.

Of course, coming down the Illinois River we ran into the issue about the Asian Carp, and we saw plenty of those once we were south of the electronic barrier at Joliet, ILL. You can read about that by looking at the blog entries for \_\_\_\_\_

We saw our first Bald Eagles while on the Tennessee River, and then saw a couple more near Lake Okeechobee. We were disappointed not to have seen more eagles.\_\_\_\_\_

We were also disappointed not to see more alligators. We saw a couple on the rim of Lake Okeechobee, and then a few in the ditches along side the road at the Kennedy Space Center. I think the bitter cold weather was the reason we didn't see more.

I think I also expected to see more Manatees, and again I think it was because of the cold weather that we didn't see them. We did see one or two on the Okeechobee rim; one dove right in front of us within seconds after we got our warning for not obeying the Slow Manatee Zone sign that we didn't see near Lantana, FL. Then we saw a couple in Fort Pierce outside the Manatee Museum.

But we did have two unique and incredible animal encounters. The first was in Port St. Joe where we saw the manatee rescue (12/07). The other was just before reaching Punta Gorda, where we spent several hours guarding an injured sea turtle while we waited for help to come (01/11).

Moving on, we've had a really hard time coming up with our "best days" and "worst days" on the water. This does not include our favorite or least favorite stops we talked about them yesterday. This is our cruising experience. I (Betsy) personally loved every day we were on the water. even a bad day was a learning experience. Rick, who suffers from a slight case mal-de-mer, wasn't so crazy about the bad days!

Under Best Days we have to put:

Cruising into New York Harbor and past the Statute of Liberty. probably tops on any looper's list! I'm sorry we didn't wait a day or two to have sun instead of the misty fog we encountered. (6/15)

Cruising from Alexandria Bay, NY to Kingston, Ontario..the scenery was the prettiest we had seen to date and some of the prettiest we saw on the entire trip (07/03).

Transiting the much anticipated Peterborough (07/09) and Big Chute (07/19) Locks in Canada.

Cruising in beautiful Collins Inlet as we neared Killarney, Ontario (07/29).

A perfectly gorgeous cruising day on Lake Michigan cruising from Charlevoix to Frankfurt past the magnificent sand dunes and the Pointe Betsie

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Light (08/12).

Crossing Lake Michigan from Muskegon to Chicago, leaving at sunrise and cruising under autopilot most of the way, 117 miles on a beautiful clear day, seeing the Chicago skyline from 40 miles out (08/19).

Everything on the Tennessee River! (Month of October)

All of our good days have one thing in common: beautiful weather and smooth seas! Wish we had seen more of that!

Along with the good comes the bad, and we did have a few "worst" days:

Transiting the canal to Point Pleasant, NJ, very narrow with tremendous current and turbulence but you had to go at idle speed. We had trouble finding a place to stay; once we did find a place we had to back into a tiny slip (it was the only time we had to back in on the entire trip). Then Rick lost a lens out of the brand new glasses he had just purchased in Atlantic City (06/14)

Going out Manasquan Inlet in New Jersey. This is the one time you have to go outside into the ocean on the entire trip and we did not do it on a good day. We were nearly swamped by the huge wake of a very large and very fast boat that cut right in front of us on our way out and our entire boat was literally underwater twice (06/15).

Going out of Gore Bay, deciding it was too rough and turned around to go back. We almost lost the bikes off the bow (8/05).

Arriving back in the United States at Drummond Island. The trip started out in smooth seas, but in the final few miles we encountered the roughest water we had on the entire trip, with no way to get out of it. The water was like a mixing bowl as the huge waves bounced off the surrounding rocks. To the helmsman (Betsy) this was our worst day (09/06).

On the Ohio River floating around with eight other boats in the very confined quarters of a lock, finally breaking a throttle that had been giving us trouble since day one (09/17).

Crossing the Gulf of Mexico from Apalachicola to Clearwater in pea soup fog the entire way (12/14).

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<u>3/12/2010</u>	<u>299</u>			<u>W</u>	<u>34° 21.418'</u>	<u>77° 38.537'</u>	<u>Topsail Beach - Towns and Marinas</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>

There are certain towns and marinas that absolutely everyone that does the loop has to see or visit. We've listed those here mostly as a reminder of some of the famous things we saw. Following that, we've listed smaller towns that we really thought were special that the average person might never visit, especially if you were travelling by car rather than by boat.

BIG CITIES THAT WE ENJOYED: Annapolis; Baltimore; Atlantic City; New York; Kingston, Ontario; Chicago; Chattanooga; Clearwater; Sarasota; Fort Myers; St. Augustine; Savannah; Charleston (which we bypassed this time because we'd been there several times before by boat). All of these towns are boater friendly and have nearby museums, aquariums and other attractions. Although there are exceptions, most have very nice marinas. Most are very biker friendly, and it was in these large cities that we really used the bikes.

SMALLER TOWNS ALONG THE WAY: The things that made small towns attractive were mainly that the marina would be right in the heart of town. The towns would offer good re-provisioning opportunities, good shops, good restaurants nearby, historic areas or small local museums that were within walking distance, great parks, etc. Listed below are some of our favorites, most with the date of our visit in parenthesis. You can refer back to that date in the blog to see why we liked each of these places. We tried to narrow the list down, but just couldn't leave out any of these places. They are more or less in chronological order.

North Carolina: Beaufort and Oriental

Virginia: Yorktown, as well as many other small towns in the Chesapeake, but we sort of skipped by them this trip because we had been there before.

New York: Sylvan Beach (6/27); Alexandria Bay (7/2). I will note that Alexandria Bay was not part of our plan but became a necessary side trip that turned out to be one of the most beautiful areas we saw on the entire trip.

Ontario, Canada: Peterborough (7/9 and 7/12) where we traversed the famous Peterborough Lift Lock; Bobcaygeon (7/13) where on the way we encountered the canoes in the lock; Orillia (7/17 and 7/18) where we happened upon a Scottish Festival; Little Current (8/1 and 8/2) where we happened upon the Haweater Festival.

Michigan: St. Ignace (8/7 and 8/8); Petoskey (8/10)

Illinois: Grafton (9/4)

Alabama: Everything and every town along the gorgeous Tennessee River! (Entire month of October). Particularly Florence, Guntersville, Scottsboro, and Chattanooga.

Florida: Port St. Joe (12/5); Sanibel Island (1/13 and 1/14, 2010); Melbourne (1/30)

South Carolina: Beaufort, one of our all-time favorites (2/25 through 2/28).

All along the way we sort of "rated" marinas as to how they suited our needs. The main criterion for a great marina is clean restrooms and showers since we are so dependent on them, unlike loopers on larger boats. A great marina would also have wi-fi; cable tv hookup; courtesy car unless they were right downtown; floating docks and a personable staff. Eating facilities nearby is a plus.

There are a couple of marinas that you MUST stop at whether you want to or not because of their remote locations. These would include Hoppies on the Mississippi River. You absolutely must stop here to top off your tank (very expensive) prior to the 250 miles before the next marina. Hoppies consists of three barges lashed together, almost non-existent restroom facilities, no showers. There is a small town within walking distance with several restaurants and shops. Fern Hopkins sits down with boaters late each afternoon to warn them of what they will face as they travel on down the mighty Mississippi and to let them know of any impending hazards she has heard about. (See blog 9/15).

The other MUST stop is Bobby's Fish Camp on the Tenn-Tom. This is the last stop before a very long stretch to Mobile Bay (see blog 11/27).

Now for our FAVORITE marinas, based on the criteria listed above:

Dowry Creek Marina in Belhaven, NC (5/21, we've stayed here many times before)

Harbor View Marina in Ludington, MI (8/16) excellent facilities with friendly people, thanks Sid and Carol for your hospitality!

Heritage Harbor in Ottawa, IL (9/4 - 9/7) Absolutely superb facilities with lots of loopers for camaraderie. Thanks Capt. Moe! Great staff with lots

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of activities.

Beardstown, KY (9/10).(This isn't really a marina, but it was a great experience! Since the town dock was closed we ended up tying up to a barge for the night).

Alton City Marina in Alton, IL (9/13) Absolutely the best shower/bathroom facilities we ever encountered!

Pebble Isle Marina in Johnsonville, TN (9/23) where there were many other loopers, free food, great hospitality. It was here that we met Harbor Hosts Patsy and Ray Whitney for the first time.they were here touting the benefits of stopping at Port St. Joe (see below)

Grand Harbor Marina in luka, MS (9/25 - 9/27) at the head of the Tenn-Tom. Great docks, courtesy car, great staff!

Goose Pond Marina in Scottsboro, AL (10/5 - 10/15) The most peaceful place we stayed.we just happened upon it and then couldn't bring it upon ourselves to leave! Not that the facilities were that great, we just loved this location and this town! It is definitely off the beaten path, but since Harbor Hosts Ray and Patsy Whitney are getting ready to move here from Port St. Joe (see below) it will soon become a favorite of all loopers!

Port St. Joe Marina in Port St. Joe, FL (12/5). Off the beaten path but worth the side trip..wonderful Harbor Hosts Patsy and Ray Whitney.

OK, so what is a "Harbor Host?" you might ask! This is a new program sponsored by the AGLCA, wherein cruisers that live in or near looper friendly towns make themselves available to loopers that pass through. Rick and I will probably become Harbor Hosts for the Topsail/Sneads Ferry area once we get settled in after our trip. Harbor Hosts can do as much or as little as they want, but in general they make themselves available to help other loopers that pass through.

Patsy and Ray take this a step farther, becoming ambassadors, for their home port. They travel in their boat up and down the waterways touting their home port, which at the time we met them was Port St. Joe. PSJ is not on the regular beaten path for loopers.you must go several miles out of your way to get there. But Patsy and Ray convince you it is worthwhile to do this. Then when it is the right time of year for loopers to be in their area, they are there with welcoming arms. I'm sure that when they move to Scottsboro later this spring, our favorite off the beaten path marina Goose Pond will double its looper business as a result of their ambassadorship.

Some Harbor Hosts, like Tom and Patsy Conrad, make their home dock near Pensacola available on a first come first served basis.we certainly took advantage of them. Others just offer a home cooked meal. We had our first home cooked meal on the trip at the home of Jim and Sue Starke, Harbor Hosts in Bay Hill, AL, who came to our boat and introduced themselves and invited us to dinner at their home nearby. Others may just offer the use of a vehicle.

Well, now I've digressed into something we weren't going to talk about today, so I guess I'm rambling and it's time to close. Tune in tomorrow for more favorites!

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<u>3/11/2010</u>	<u>298</u>			<u>W</u>	<u>34° 21.418'</u>	<u>77° 38.537'</u>	<u>Topsail Beach - Still waiting</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
<p>03-11-10 Topsail Beach - Still resting up for the finale!</p> <p>Betsy speaks: Well, it's nearing bedtime and Rick says we need to blog, and suggests we pick our five favorite parts of the loop as our blog material for tonight. I say I can't come up with my favorites without going back to day one blog and reminding myself about parts of the trip. I started to do that, and became so overwhelmed with what we had done and how hard it is to choose "favorites" that I'm thinking we need to put this off `til tomorrow. Maybe I'll sit down then and start making a list. So be patient, and we'll work up something when we it's not so near bed time.</p> <p>[Rick] Actually, Betsy is correct. It is very difficult to come up with your favorite or even your top five favorites after a 10 month trip. So, I, too, will think about it and we will decide soon. Later.</p>									

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<u>3/10/2010</u>	<u>297</u>			<u>W</u>	<u>34° 21.418'</u>	<u>77° 38.537'</u>	<u>Topsail Beach - Coast Gusrd Stop</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
03-10-10 Topsail Beach III									

[Rick] Since we are at Topsail beach rejuvenating ourselves until we "officially" cross our wake in Sneads Ferry on Sunday, I thought I would take the next couple of nights to write about some of the questions, favorites, funny things that happened, etc.

Here is a very funny story that we have not shared before.

As we approached Annapolis, Betsy was at the helm navigating very slowly through the mooring field, we were approached by a small Coast Guard boat that turned on his blue light. We knew we were doing nothing wrong. They just wanted to board for a safety inspection. I immediately put Beamer in the front cabin and closed the door. Two men boarded the boat, one was very young. The elder of the two wanted the registration, which I retrieved from the closed cabin. He began to complete the paperwork. The younger pulled out a 3X5 card containing a list of items he needed to see. flares, fire extinguishers, notices, etc. Almost everything he asked, I had to retrieve from the cabin, and each time I went in and came out I carefully closed the door behind me to keep the dog inside. Of course Beamer, the Psycho Dog, was going berserk. After we had gone through the entire list, and I had been in the cabin 4-5 times, the young officer nodded to the closed door and said "I guess it would be too much trouble to see your engine room." At which point, I pointed to the stern of the boat and said "We have outboards." Yes, there was a small grimace on his face. The older of the two rolled his eyes, and Betsy and I both stifled a laugh. I often wondered what kind of harassment the young man received once back on the Coast Guard boat.

One question we get often is in regard to the size of our boat. We are only 26 feet, but we have all of the necessary, not excessive, creature comforts. We took this boat on the loop because it is the boat we own. If we had a 50 foot boat, we would have done the loop in it. There is no perfect boat. On the loop, we saw a 21ft Ranger Tug, a 25 ft Ranger Tug with two adults and two big dogs, a pontoon boat with a tarp draped over a rope for a shelter. We also saw a 56ft Hampton and a 61ft Hampton. And, we saw everything in between. Generally, the loop boats are 30-40 feet, mostly trawlers. Most have the ability to anchor out for days at a time. Some, like us, never anchor out. Our shower facilities are very limited and we prefer to take showers in marinas. Thus, we spend most nights in marinas. Our boat would be too small for most couples. You cannot be the "needy" type or "high maintenance" type to do the loop on our boat because there is no "me" time. You are always in sight and sound of the other person. You will recall that we had two rules on the boat. 1) No guns or knives aboard, and 2) If it ain't fatal, get over it...

However, regardless of the size of the boat or its amenities, all loopers have some things in common: A sense of adventure; an enjoyment of meeting other people; and a sense of doing something most people will never do, thereby gaining a sense of accomplishment.

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<u>3/9/2010</u>	<u>296</u>			<u>W</u>	<u>34° 21.418'</u>	<u>77° 38.537'</u>	<u>Topsail Beach - Toad and Dauna</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
	03-09-10 Topsail Beach II								

[Rick] Our first full day in Topsail Beach was relaxed and easy. We performed a few maintenance items on the rental house. We spent some time catching up with Betsy's brother, Steve. Around 1300, Power Squadron friends Toad and Dauna Gable arrived to take us to lunch. Since there is nothing open in Topsail Beach at this time, we went to Mollie's in Surf City. The lunch specials were delicious. I had chicken and pastry and it was as good as I have ever had. After lunch, the Gables took us to Sneads Ferry where we turned on the water at our townhouse, picked up the mail that has accumulated since our trip home in November, and retrieved a vehicle which we drove back to Topsail. Right now Betsy is enjoying going through the Christmas cards!

Several times as we did our loop we shared photos of beautiful sunsets. None were as pretty as we have right here at Topsail Beach.

<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>
<u>3/8/2010</u>	<u>295</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>4.00</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>34° 21.418'</u>	<u>77° 38.537'</u>	<u>Topsail Beach - No Good Deed</u>		
03-08-10 Topsail Beach - No Good Deed Goes Unpunished!									

Betsy Speaks: Our goal for today was to pull into our home at Topsail Beach at approximately 2:00, and we had mentioned that on the blog a few days ago. That post prompted an e-mail from someone who has been following our blog right from the very beginning. "Bam" is a person we've never met, but he is a friend of a friend. Our mutual friend had told him of our trip early on and he has been a virtual crewmate ever since. Bam and his wife Ann keep their boat in a marina not far from our Topsail Beach destination. Upon seeing that we were heading for Topsail before officially crossing our wake in Sneads Ferry next Sunday, Bam e-mailed us and wanted to meet us on the water today, take us to lunch at Wrightsville Beach, and then sort of escort us on to Topsail. Well, those of you that know us know we never pass up a free meal, so we agreed to meet Bam and Ann just south of Wrightsville Beach, an area we are all very familiar with, and go to The Dockside Restaurant for lunch before heading on to Topsail. Bam and Ann actually took off work today to do this for us.

We left Southport right on schedule this morning, about 10AM with the wind behind us and the current in the Cape Fear River at just about zero. This was to be our final body of water that we knew could get very rough, and we were glad we picked the perfect day to make this crossing, as the water was virtually flat. We estimate the wave height to be 2.54 millimeters.

We met up with Bam just before reaching Wrightsville Beach and cruised on in to The Dockside. Rick and I docked and tied up, then Bam came in after us. Rick ambled over to the slip they were heading for to help with the lines. Then disaster struck! Bam sort of veered away as he was approaching the dock. There was another boat next to where Bam was docking and Rick, afraid that Bam was going to hit that other boat, leaned out and grabbed his bow rail. I was right behind Rick and I could see exactly what was going to happen and it was sort of like slow motion. Ann tossed a line from the stern, but it hit the dock just a second too late. As the bow drifted away from the dock, Rick held on until he was nearly horizontal and couldn't stand back up. Needless to say, he ended up in the water, but fortunately still had both hands on the bow rail. He calmly said "I'm holding on, just get me to the dock. By then I had him by the wrist, and a couple of guys ran down the dock and we immediately got Rick out of the water. All I could say was "6,000 miles and this is the first time either of us has hit the water!"

We considered not mentioning this mishap because it is sort of embarrassing. But those of you reading this know that after all we've been through, we are experienced boaters, so there is no way this was our fault! We blamed Bam completely for doing such a terrible job of docking the boat, and he was more than happy to take the blame! Fortunately, we had plenty of clothes on the boat so Rick just went and dried off and changed clothes and we went to lunch and were more than happy for Bam to pay!!

Now we have to look on the bright side. Not only do we have someone other than ourselves to blame this on, but Rick did not have either his wallet or his cell phone in his pocket. I had them both in my hand ready to give him when this occurred. Also, Rick had already taken off his inflatable life jacket, which both of us always wear when underway and during our docking process. Since he didn't drown, in retrospect we were glad he had already taken it off because it meant we didn't have to replace the cartridge. {Rick interjects: Thank goodness there are no pictures of this incident.}

Once dry, we had a delightful lunch, filling in Bam and Ann on some of the details of the trip. After lunch we pulled away from the dock first, we wanted to get out of there before they even started their motors because we know they are dangerous! (Just kidding). We cruised on toward Topsail a little slower than usual just savoring the almost final leg of our wonderful trip. We knew we were close to home when we passed the familiar sandbar with the plastic palm tree and the parking meter just north of Wrightsville Beach. Bam and Ann followed us down the waterway and through Topsail Creek and into Topsail Sound. Now here's a little something else about Bam and his boating. I mention Topsail Creek, as that is what we locals call it. It is on the chart as Howard's Creek. But Bam refers to it as "that little squiggly creek!" Anyway, they continued on when we made the turn into our little cove behind a sandbar that could have meant trouble for them since they were unfamiliar with this very shallow area.

<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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Even though this is not the official end of our trip we did have a small group at the dock waiting for us. One of my brothers had come from Raleigh to greet us, and a couple of neighbors were there as well. Champagne was available and we toasted our return to this place. Next Sunday when we officially cross our wake and pull in to Sneads Ferry we'll probably celebrate some more, but for today this was very special.

Over the past couple of days I've choked up a few times thinking that this adventure is almost over. I'd thought of what I'd say in future blogs, especially in the days we have to kill between now and next Sunday. We want to keep blogging so people will keep reading until the very end. One of the blogs I'd written in my head was going to be that we went 6,000 miles and neither of us had ever fallen in the water, and Beamer the Psycho Dog only went in the water once (on the Tennessee River as she squirmed while being lifted back onto the boat. Getting her on and off the boat was often one of the most challenging things we had to do). But Bam blew that blog! We've met so many wonderful people along the way and made some wonderful new friends. Then today we met Bam! Is this really going to be the last person I meet on this trip?! I just can't let it end this way. I'll just have to do it again!

And guess what! Bam and Ann are going to come out again on Sunday, along with more friends in their boat, and escort us on up to Sneads Ferry! Stay tuned to see if we have any more exciting adventures on that final leg. You can believe we'll have our life jackets on for that final docking!

<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>
<u>3/7/2010</u>	<u>294</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>4.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>33° 55.100'</u>	<u>78° 1.729'</u>	<u>Southport, NC</u>	<u>\$49.50</u>	
	03-07-10	Southport, NC							

[Rick] We moved on from Dock Holiday's Marina and headed for Southport, a trip of 40 miles. The weather was very nice with the temperature in the mid 60's. There was very little wind. We arrived at the Sunset Beach pontoon bridge and were very surprised at the progress of the new fixed high-rise bridge. Only two of the sections are missing and we were told that the bridge should be finished in 4-6 months. The old pontoon bridge is a one lane bridge with controlling traffic lights at each end telling the traffic when to go. We know that there is some controversy about the bridge among the residents of Sunset Beach, but for our part, as a boater, the new bridge cannot open too soon. With a vertical height of only 4 feet, the old pontoon is only the second bridge we have had to wait for and request an opening since the beginning of the 6000 mile loop trip. A real problem is that at very low tide, the bridge cannot open, and that really backs up the boaters. We had to wait only about 15 minutes. We knew ahead of time that the bridge only opens on the hour, so had arranged to be there in plenty of time, but not too soon.

You will recall that Dolli visited us yesterday. Upon returning to Lumberton, she called Darrell Evans, another BB&T retiree, who just happens to live on the Intracoastal Waterway and told him that we were on the way. We received an email from Darrell extending an invitation to stop at his dock and visit a while. He gave explicit directions to his dock. So, when we reached Oak Island, we pulled over and tied up. Darrell and his wife, Johanna, welcomed us and gave us a tour of their home. This is a house they had built over 20 years ago, and now that they are retired and living here full time they are doubling the size of it. We had a wonderful time, but, as always, we had to move on.

We arrived at the Southport Marina and called on the radio to find where we were to dock. As we pulled in, we saw someone waving frantically at us from a fishing boat tied up getting fuel. The boat, "Speckled Trout", is captained by Jerry Elliot, one of the members of our captain's class a couple of years ago. He is a commercial fisherman and a great guy. What a great surprise to see him. We know we're getting close to home. Most importantly, he was wearing Sneads Ferry Sneakers.

The marina is very nice. The management has spent a "boatload" of money in the past three years on the facilities. The floating docks are very nice and they have all the "required" amenities: wifi, cable, and great restrooms/showers. In addition, we know that Southport is a charming place to visit and spend some time.

We will leave here tomorrow about 1000 so as to take advantage of the current as we traverse the Cape Fear River. While the distance across the river, from Southport to Snow's Cut, is only 14 miles, the river can be choppy and downright uncomfortable when the wind and current are in opposition. We intend to be in Wrightsville Beach around noon and arriving at Topsail Beach around 1400-1430.

<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>
<u>3/6/2010</u>	<u>293</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>33° 50.507'</u>	<u>78° 40.077'</u>	<u>Myrtle Beach-Dock Holidays</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
03-06-10 Myrtle Beach - Dock Holidays Marina									

[Rick] Loyal readers will note there was no blog yesterday. That is because we did absolutely nothing. Betsy read her book (it is amazing how much she is reading since she got her eyes fixed). I played on the computer and did a little cleaning up. (Betsy inserts: I've read 34 books on the trip. Finished all John Grisham's, most of Lisa Scottoline, lots of Dorothea B. Frank, Anne R. Siddons, Richard Paul Evans, and most recently several by Wendy Corsi Staub. Many books are picked up and left behind at marina book exchanges. I seldom buy anything!).

What a difference a day makes. Today we had a great day. Finally, the temperature was in the 60's, 63 to be exact. The sun was shining and the wind was a non-factor. I was finally able to walk around without a warm coat. In fact, for most of the day, I was in short sleeves.

Around 1400, our friends, Dolli and Jimmy Adams, from Lumberton, NC came to see us and take us to lunch. Dolli was my supervisor for several years at BB&T before she retired. They picked us up and carried us to "Sticky Fingers" for a wonderful meal. We caught up on all the gossip, everyone's health, especially cataract surgery which both of them and Betsy had, and how to fix the economy and end the recession. On the way back to the boat, we took advantage of their hospitality and had them stop at the Food Lion where we stocked up for the rest of the trip. All in all, a great day.

We continue to be amazed at the number of people reading our blog and sending us e-mails. If you are reading or following the trip, please be sure to sign the guest book on our homepage. If you comment on the blog, please use your name or something to let us know who you are. We have several postings from people we do not know, and in some cases they just used initials that we do not recognize. We really do want to know who is on this trip with us, so, if you communicate with us, please make sure we know exactly who you are. Our webpage has over 9,700 hits and people walk up to us in marinas and tell us that they are following our trip. Amazing.

<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>
<u>3/4/2010</u>	<u>291</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>0.33</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>33° 50.507'</u>	<u>78° 40.077'</u>	<u>Myrtle Beach-Dock Holidays</u>	<u>\$100.00</u>	

03-04-10 Myrtle Beach - Dock Holidays

Betsy Speaks: We really have nothing to say today, but since I did get an e-mail from a friend saying he was already fearing withdrawal when our postings stopped in a couple of weeks, we decided we'd at least do a short post. We did travel today, a total of 5.35 miles from Barefoot Landing to Dock Holidays. Barefoot Landing has no showers and no pumpout, and we needed both so a move was necessary.

Prior to leaving Barefoot Landing we at lunch at T-Bonz right on the water, and saw two looper boats go by just as we were finishing up. These were the first two loopers we'd seen since the west coast of Florida. We've really missed the camaraderie we shared with other loopers along the way. We were able to speak to one of them that docked right across the water at Barefoot Resort, but the other one moved on without us having a chance to catch up to them. The one we did speak to actually left out of Wilmington, but headed to the Bahamas and is now back and just starting the loop. Wow, do I wish I were on that boat!

We seem to have finally really found the recession that we've been hearing about for the past year. Myrtle Beach almost seems like a ghost town. Many of my favorite stores at Barefoot Landing are closed for good. That was a shock, and disappointing because I was looking forward to some shopping!

We had already heard that Barefoot Resort, directly opposite Barefoot Landing on the waterway, had gone out of business, but we'd also heard that they had re-opened under new management. But when we tried to call them to stay there last night we got no answer on the phone, and when we finally found a number that had an answering machine we left a message and were never called back. As we rode by yesterday there was a "closed" sign on the door of the dock house and no answer as we called them on the VHF, so we docked across the water at Barefoot Landing instead. Today we crossed back over to Barefoot Resort and there was someone there to give us the pumpout we needed, but he said their showers, laundry, restaurant, etc. are all closed because they have no electricity on shore. They are doing minimal business as a marina, but will pick back up and completely re-open the first of April. We are certainly hoping that is the case, because the Looper spring rendezvous is being held there at the end of April, at our suggestion!

So now we are at Dock Holidays where we can shower. We have cable TV, and have several restaurants and a grocery store nearby. We've stayed here several times before so we feel right at home. We will be here until Sunday, when we will head to Southport for one night before tackling the Cape Fear. We hope to arrive home at Topsail Beach on Monday mid-afternoon assuming a good crossing of the Cape Fear River that morning. We already find ourselves talking more and more about what our "favorites" were on the trip. best marina, best meal, best town, etc. So once we finish the loop and finally cross our wake as we dock in Sneads Ferry on March 14, there will still be some blogging to do as we sort those things out, share statistics, etc.

Things are starting to fall apart so it's time to get home. we've had some computer problems over the past few days and fear some sort of virus is attacking so if the blogs stop suddenly before we get home that's why. The boat is absolutely filthy, not having been out of the water since Alabama in November. It is impossible to scrub the insides of the sponsons while it is in the water so they are absolutely black. It has been too cold to take the carpets out and hose them off as we did routinely when the weather was warmer, so they are disgusting. My makeshift mattress finally wore out, so we are sleeping in sleeping bags instead of under real sheets which rules out good snuggling. My arthritic hands are getting stiffer and sorer every day from driving and handling the throttles. Rick is down to only one pair of pants that don't have holey pockets, and all of our socks are full of holes. Rick's shoes have developed such a squeak when he walks that he couldn't sneak up on a deaf man, and it nearly drives me crazy. Beamer is in bad need of a good grooming. So yes, it's time to get home for a while.

<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>
<u>3/3/2010</u>	<u>290</u>	<u>105</u>	<u>6.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>33° 48.088'</u>	<u>78° 44.860'</u>	<u>Myrtle Beach-Barefoot Landing</u>	<u>\$39.00</u>	

[Rick] Yesterday, while at the Isle of Palms Marina, we spent the day in the boat. It rained most of the day and the temperature was about 50. So, it was a perfectly miserable day. We did take this cute picture. The people along here are intense about wake damage. I wonder why they purchase property on the waterway and then do not want any boats to go by.

Today, we decide to make our way north and prepare to leave. Just before we left, we had visitors. Sue, the daughter of one of our Topsail Beach neighbors, along with her husband Gary, paid us a visit on the boat. Sue and Gary had rented a cottage at Isle of Palms and her mother, Del, who reads our blog daily, told her that we were here and so they came to see us. It was quite a nice visit. They stayed about 30 minutes and we caught up on the children and grandchildren. If they had showed up three minutes later we would have been gone!

We left at 1030 heading for Georgetown, about 65 miles away. The weather was very nice, little wind and not too cold. Due to the desolate nature of the terrain, we made very good time averaging 17.2 mph. In fact, as we approached Georgetown, we decided to keep going to Myrtle Beach. Just before Georgetown you must cross the rather large Winyah Bay. With winds forecast at 15 MPH the bay could have been quite rough, but as it happened it was smooth today so the crossing was no problem. Once past that obstacle, our goal was now Osprey Marina, about 20 miles south of Myrtle Beach. As we neared Osprey Marina, we were making such good time that we went on to Barefoot landing. We had intended to stay at Barefoot Resort, but they were closed when we arrived. So, we just went across the waterway to Barefoot Landing. The rate there is only \$1.50 including electric. They have good Wifi. However, they have no showers, so we will be moving on tomorrow to another place in Myrtle Beach. In total, we went 105 miles today in 6 hours. It was a great day to be on the water.

Along the way, we saw a dock with a goat. Something you do not see everyday.

<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>
<u>3/1/2010</u>	<u>288</u>	<u>78</u>	<u>5.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>32 48.331</u>	<u>79 45.575</u>	<u>Isle of Palms, SC</u>	<u>\$118.00</u>	

[Rick] Before leaving Beaufort, there are a couple of things to mention. Firstly, we have determined that the tide difference from high to low is about 9 feet. Now, the moon is full, so that makes some difference, but we measured it this morning at 9 feet.

Secondly, I need to remind you Beaufort is the portrait of the SC Low country. So, when you want to make a movie about the Low Country, Beaufort and the surrounding area is the place. Over 20 movies have been made here. You have heard of many of them. The Prince of Tides, The Big Chill, The Great Santini, and many portions of the favorite Forrest Gump. In fact, Forrest Gump bought his box 03-01-10 Isle of Palms, SC

of chocolates in Beaufort. Here is a picture of the house on the Intracoastal Waterway where The Big Chill was filmed.

The trip today was 78 miles in great weather. The route was full of turns and we had to stay on our toes to keep in the correct channel. Most of the day was best described as beautifully boring. Along the way, we entered Charleston Harbor. The houses along the waterway are spectacular. We passed the "MegaDock" at the City Dock, a dock that is about .25 miles long. We had decided to bypass going ashore in Charleston because we have been there many times so we went a little further to the Isle of Palms Marina. Our experience has shown that marinas in Charleston are not boater friendly. They are far away from the historic areas one wants to visit, and the walk from the boat to the shore is very, very, very long because of the extreme tides.

From Charleston to Isle of Palms, we were in the Intracoastal and it was dead low tide. The boats on the lifts are about 9 feet up in the air. The Isle of Palms Marina is a very nice marina. It has all the amenities we look for and the showers are extra nice. The snack bar/convenience store is very well stocked.

It is supposed to rain all day tomorrow, so we will not move. Therefore, tomorrow will be a day of reading and catching up on things.

<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>
<u>2/28/2010</u>	<u>287</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>32 25.789</u>	<u>80 40.462</u>	<u>Beaufort SC - Presbyterian Church</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
<p>02-28-10 Beaufort SC and the Presbyterian Church  [Rick] We decided to attend the First Presbyterian Church of Beaufort at the 1100 service. This is a very traditional church and I think I was the only one without a coat and tie. It turns out that they have had an interim minister for the past 15 months and today was his last day. They did not announce it, but I get the feeling that the search committee is about ready to name a permanent pastor. The interim pastor, Dr Louis Lunardini, is a veteran pastor with over 40 years experience. His message was very appropriate and he told a story about one of his classmates in seminary, Fred Rogers. After the service, the church had a wonderful reception for Dr. Lou with a full layout of food and drink. After church, we retraced our tour from yesterday to take a better look at the historical homes and attractions of Beaufort. This is a very old and historic town. In the 1700's it was a site of great wealth owing to the production of indigo, cotton, and rice. There are many large mansions and antebellum homes. Slavery was a way of life here before the "War of Northern Aggression" and President Lincoln personally ordered the taking of Beaufort. Many of the mansions were used as hospitals, livery stables, barracks, and officer quarters. The mansions were ordered sold by Lincoln to non-southerners and slaves. Many homes were purchased by slaves who were left behind in the "Great Skedaddle" as the Northern army took over the town in the early part of the war. One of the traditions in Beaufort is the painting of the underside of the porches. They are painted either light blue (sky), black (night), or green (grass). It is said that these colors will keep the wasps and hornets from building nests on the porch. It sounds crazy, but the painted homes do not have nests and the unpainted ones do have the insects. Go figure... The live oak trees in the town are spectacular. Many are over 800 years old. Our guide pointed out the one that was used to hang pirates and Blackbeard was supposed to be hung from this tree. He escaped prior to the event, was captured later and hung in Charleston, SC. Most of the residential part of town is in a historic district and is very controlled by the historic board. One street, called Rainbow Row, contains homes of bright colors and to make any changes requires a FEDERAL waiver. The green house in this picture was orange until last week. It took federal review and a waiver to change the color. Then again, the homes are over 200 years old. We passed the grave yard at the Tabernacle Baptist Church and thought this tombstone had a very interesting name and inscription. Tomorrow, we leave for Isle of Palms SC. We will bypass Charleston as we have been there several times.</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>
<u>2/27/2010</u>	<u>286</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>32 25.789</u>	<u>80 40.462</u>	<u>Beaufort SC - Carriage Ride</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
02-27-10 Beaufort, SC, Carriage Ride and Visitor									

This morning we took a horse drawn carriage ride around beautiful Beaufort, SC. We had done this last time we were here in 2003 and I had always looked forward to doing it again. For those that don't know, in SC the town is pronounced "Bewfort" as in "bewtiful" as opposed to the similarly lovely seaport town in NC that is spelled the same but is pronounced "Bo-fort."

Our horse was named Old Dock, a beautiful half-Belgian/half-Clydesdale with two blue eyes. According to our driver, he is one of only 10 horses in the country with two blue eyes. He was very gentle and did his job well. Anyone who comes to Beaufort should take this carriage tour. It is slow and relaxing (even though it was cold and we were bundled up in blankets) and extremely informative. There are many, many antebellum homes. Lots of movies were filmed here and of course those homes are pointed out.

One story we both remembered from before, and they are still telling it: Barbra Streisand lived here while filming one film and complained about the noise of the military planes that fly overhead while on maneuvers from nearby Parris Island Marine Boot Camp. The commanding officer ordered the planes to fly even lower and closer and more often by the house she was staying in. He said he wanted to make sure she knew "the sound of freedom." All the tour guides say she was despised by the locals, treating everyone as if they were inferior.

We just love this Beaufort waterfront. They have spent millions on the wonderful park that has swings, walkways, a covered pavilion, etc. It is a delightful park setting. Most places we have stayed have signs saying dogs must be on a leash, and so even though Beamer is under perfect voice control at all times we do keep her on a leash. Here there are no such signs, so I took the rare opportunity to give her a good run in the park. She loves to play Frisbee, so even though it was too cold for me I gave in and tossed the Frisbee for her this afternoon.

Later in the afternoon we had a real treat when a person formally from Sneads Ferry stopped by for a visit. We are continually surprised by the number of people that read this blog regularly, many of whom we do not know. Every now and then someone will leave a comment on the blog, and a couple of days ago we had a comment from Kim Volek. Kim and her family had gone to the same church we go to in Sneads Ferry, and even though we don't remember ever actually meeting each other, Kim had been reading our blog daily. They had moved away from Sneads Ferry after we left on the trip and now live in Beaufort, so she had sent us a note asking if she could do anything for us while we were here. How nice! We e-mailed her and told her we would love for her to just drop by and visit so we could put a face with the name. So she came by this afternoon and we had a delightful visit.

Tomorrow we will attend the 1st Presbyterian Church right up the street, and hope it will be warm enough tomorrow afternoon to walk around town and get a better look at some of the homes we rode by on the carriage today.

One final comment, it was COLD again today! Forecast had called for it to warm up some, but then the sun didn't come out as expected so it was still nearly 20 degrees below normal. Our tour guide told us this was the coldest February they've ever had in South Carolina. My response was "Well, Duhhhuh!" Still we did have a beautiful sunset.

<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>
<u>2/26/2010</u>	<u>285</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>32 25.789</u>	<u>80 40.462</u>	<u>Beaufort SC - Right Whales</u>		
<p>02-26-10 Beaufort SC - Right Whales</p> <p>[Rick] The Beaufort SC marina is located on the front street of the city, making access to restaurants and shops very easy. Keep in mind that there is a built-in tourist economy in Beaufort since there is a graduation of 300 Marines from Parris Island every Saturday. Starting Wednesday of each week, parents and friends of graduates flock to town to see the graduation. Then, next week, it happens all again. So, the city is very friendly to tourists. There are bus, walking, and carriage ride tours of the city. Tomorrow, we will be taking one of the tours. We were here in 2003 and took the tour. We remember Beaufort as an old, well maintained, happening town. One of the nicest things is the huge waterfront park, complete with benches, monuments, and walking opportunities. The park is adjacent to the marina.</p> <p>One of the interesting things here is the tide difference. All along this stretch of the waterway, the tide has a 5-7 feet difference from high to low. This means that all the docks are floating docks. Here are a couple of pictures to show the tide difference. It is a struggle to get up the ramp at low tide, especially for Beamer.</p> <p>We have overheard some radio chatter from the Coast Guard regarding the Right Whales. The breeding ground for these endangered whales is a stretch about 150 miles in length just out into the ocean from Beaufort south to St Augustine. We have even heard helicopter pilots, hovering over a pod of whales, talking to boats and warning them to stay at least 500 yards away from the whales.</p> <p>We continue to receive emails and notes from people following us on the trip. (We call these folks virtual crew.) Today, we received an email from the Volek family. They lived in Sneads Ferry when we left and have since moved to Beaufort, SC. They let us know that they are available to give us a ride if we need one. We hope that they will visit us before we leave. We really like to receive notes and we are constantly amazed at the number of people following us on this great adventure. Our website has over 9,000 hits, which is mindboggling to us.</p>									

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<u>2/25/2010</u>	<u>284</u>	<u>48</u>	<u>3.75</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>32 25.789</u>	<u>80 40.462</u>	<u>Beaufort SC</u>	<u>\$202.00</u>	

02-25-10 Beaufort, SC

[Rick] As much as we liked Savannah, we had decided to leave Savannah because we were getting beaten up at the face dock. As we left, we measured the current between 4 and 5 miles per hour. The real problem was that every passing boat, of any size, waked us and really rolled us. As we left, the wind was about 20 mph and the temperature was in the low 40's. But, the sun was shining and we are fully enclosed, so it is not too bad. The trip to Beaufort is only 48 miles.

We passed Hilton Head and the Hilton Head Lighthouse. This is a very affluent island and the size of the houses indicates this fact. The marinas are full of huge yachts. Many loopers stop at Hilton Head, but we decided to bypass it this trip because we're trying to outrun the awful weather conditions.

After passing Hilton Head, we entered Port Royal Sound. What should have been an easy ride was not comfortable today since by now the wind was gusting up to 30 MPH. Choppy waves were 3 to 4 feet and either right behind us or on our beam, making for a rocky-rolly ride. In other words, Port Royal Sound was Port Royal Pain today.

We finally arrived at the Beaufort Downtown Marina. The wind was fierce and made it hard to dock. With the wind and the 50 degree temperature, the chill factor was about very cold. We pumped out and filled up with gas, charging another \$550 to the credit card. The attendant gave us a choice of slips and indicated that if we took one of two near the outside of the dock, we could have cable TV, whereas the ones a little closer to land had no cable. Sounded like a no brainer to us since we'll be here for several days and Survivor is on tonight. Also, the wifi repeater is about 30 feet away and we have a great signal. As soon as we got tied up, we took the courtesy car to the grocery store. It appears that we will be here for 2-4 days.

We visited Beaufort on our small ship intracoastal cruise back in 2003 and have looked forward to coming back here ever since. Betsy said we will stay until the weather gets warm. We then saw the weather forecast that calls for unusually cold weather for the next 10 days. I think she is re-thinking her time period. At this point, we still plan to be in Topsail Beach on March 12th or 13th, and in Sneads Ferry on Sunday, March 14, 2010 around 1400.

<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>	
<u>2/24/2010</u>	<u>283</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>4.918</u>	<u>81 5.472</u>	<u>Savannah, GA</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
02-24-10 Touring Savannah, the Garden of Good and Evil										

Betsy speaks: Although we are happy to be right in the heart of downtown Savannah, the current of this river is terrific, and we are rocking and rolling on the boat. We actually have 3 extra lines to keep us in place. This is a very busy port with huge container ships coming by many times a day, and each time we are rocked some more. Last night we were both awakened several times by the turbulence, and we can hear the water rushing by the boat right next to our heads in the cabin.

Today we were very lucky weatherwise. The forecast called for rain all day, but the rain did not start until late this afternoon. Temps were in the mid-50s. We started the day by signing up for another hop on and off "trolley" tour.

About 8 years ago we visited Savannah and did a walking tour where we heard about the book "Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil" by John Berendt. I'd never heard of the book before, and didn't understand its significance as the tour guide mentioned it over and over. Later, I read the book and absolutely loved it. Knowing we were coming back to Savannah, I re-read it just a few days ago. It is a true story and involves debutantes, drag queens, murder, homosexuality, and voodoo. It gives a lot of the history of Savannah, especially the preservation of the historic district, as the main character was a very rich socialite preservationist accused of murdering his gay lover, then tried and convicted 3 times before finally being cleared in a fourth trial after many appeals. I was anxious to revisit the historic homes and public squares and the cemetery that are all so important in the book.

So about mid-way through the trolley tour I left Rick on his own and I went off on another tour that concentrated on the book. Jim Williams, the main character, preserved and lived in a house called the Mercer House, now known as the Mercer-Williams House. The songwriter Johnny Mercer, of Moon River fame but also the author of hundreds of other songs, was related to the family that had once lived here, although he himself never lived here. It was in this house that the murder took place. Although finally being freed after four trials, Jim Williams died not long after that of natural causes. The house is now occupied by his sister and is open for tours, but I did not go in. The rest of "The Book Tour" took me by many of the homes mentioned in the book, as well as the nightclubs, restaurants, etc. that were a part of the story.

Also prominent in the story was a voodoo lady named Minerva, who cast spells on the jurors, etc. Minerva spent lots of time in graveyards. The Bonaventure Cemetery just outside Savannah wasn't really important in the book, but the photograph on the cover was taken in that cemetery so it was part of our tour. As a person very interested in genealogy, I am a lover of cemeteries, and this is one of the most beautiful cemeteries I've ever been in. There are many beautiful carved monuments, and the Spanish moss hanging on the live oaks is thick and mysterious. Unfortunately, the monument used on the cover became such a tourist attraction that it had to be removed, and is now in the Telfair Museum in town.

One of the most intriguing characters in the books is "The Lady Chablis," a transvestite who still performs in Savannah a couple of times a month. I know all of this sounds strange, but it really is a great book, and the tour companies all say their business has greatly increased as a result. I think the overall resurgence of interest in historic preservation in combination with the book's publication have had a huge impact on tourism in Savannah. Of course, the subsequent movie directed by Clint Eastwood and starring Kevin Spacey helped as well.

Once "the Book" tour was over I stopped in at "The Book" gift shop/museum. I was greeted by the president of "the book" fan club, who is clearly a believer in ghosts! She told me about personally meeting Minerva, the voodoo priestess in the book. She also made it clear to me that her shop is haunted and she herself has seen ghosts in it on several occasions. Her shop has all kinds of book memorabilia including autographed

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books for sale. Most intriguing, though, was the displays of photos and newspaper articles about the people that had been characters in the book, most specifically Minerva, The Lady Chablis, and Jim Williams himself.

I then picked up the other tour where I had left off. The rain was just beginning as I neared the boat. Rick had finished the original tour and was waiting for me on the boat. I gave him a call, and he told me to be sure to go by the Waving Girl Statue and take a picture. This statue is right on the riverfront near where we are docked, and commemorates Florence Martus, who for 45 years waved at every passing ship. The story is that she found the man she loved, he left on a ship promising to come back, and she was looking for his return. He never returned.

Nearby is also the caldron that held the Olympic Flame in Savannah when the 1996 Olympics were held in Atlanta and the yachting venues were here on the Wilmington River just outside Savannah, and area we passed through yesterday on our way here.

Savannah is a fascinating city with tons of history. We'd love to spend more time here, walking the downtown district, visiting the inviting squares, touring the historic homes. But all of that involves being outdoors, and tomorrow the high is predicted to be in the 40s. So we'll move on and look forward to coming back here sometime when the weather is warmer.

Another boat just came by, and the Rick `n Roll is rollin' again! No wonder we're the only pleasure boat docked here on this beautiful waterfront!

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<u>2/23/2010</u>	<u>282</u>	<u>110</u>	<u>6.75</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>4.918</u>	<u>81</u>	<u>5.472</u>	<u>Savannah, GA</u>	<u>\$104.00</u>

02-23-10 Savannah, GA

[Rick] We left Jekyll Island for Savannah. It was a very nice ride as the weather was perfect for a 110 mile trip. Most of this section is deserted. Some people say that this is the least enjoyable part of the loop. The landscape is mostly marsh grass and reeds. There are thousands of creeks, lakes, bays, bayous. There is little wildlife, mostly cormorants.

For those loopers that are behind us and have not travelled this section, here is a warning. Make sure to watch your charts and watch the buoys. There are many turns and small channels to navigate and it is easy to miss the correct channel. Many places have markers in all directions. At marker 198, you actually make a 140 degree turn to port. We were travelling at 90 degrees and when the turn was finished we were travelling 320 degrees. At marker 92, where you make a sharp 90 degree turn to port, the red marker 92 is missing. I guess those that have the waterway line on their chart will have it easier, but we do not have the line and found we had to be on our toes.

As you approach the Isle of Palms Marina, you will enter one of 4 very long No Wake zones. These will pass beside marinas and towns. Be careful, as we saw law enforcement out patrolling. The NO WAKE signs also mention that the aquatic sports of the 1996 Atlanta Olympics took place in this area.

Also, here the scenery picks up with beautiful homes. These homes are large, but surrounded by live oaks, and much prettier than the large homes in Florida we saw near Boca Raton. I much prefer Old Money.

As usual, we saw dolphins all day.

As we passed the junction of the Moon River, Betsy was on the bow, took out her harmonica and played "Moon River".

Checking ahead we had found that the marinas in Savannah were very expensive. One was \$4.00 per foot plus electricity. The other was \$3.00 but we have the Marinalife discount bring the cost down to \$2.60 per foot. Both seemed high and we found the Thunderbolt Marina, 8 miles from downtown, to be just \$1.75. The guide book indicated a bus would take you to downtown. So, we decided to stay at Thunderbolt. Just before turning in, we called them to verify that the bus was still running and a viable ride. They told us that the bus no longer ran and the only way to town was a taxi, \$17 one way, plus a tip for a total of about \$20. We figured for our boat, \$40 per day for taxi was about \$1.50 per foot so we would be better off going downtown to the more expensive place, where we would be within easy walking distance of everything. We decided on the Hyatt Hotel, a fine hotel in the center of the old historic district. The other choice was the Westin across the river which would require a water taxi ride every time we wanted to go to town. So, we went the 8 miles past Thunderbolt and 3 miles off the waterway to the Savannah River and docked at the Hyatt. We are the only boat here. Docking here entitles us to use all of the hotel's facilities, bar, health club, etc and it is really convenient to the old Savannah downtown. One pleasant surprise was that the dock master let us have a rate of \$2.00 per foot including electricity. They said they had cable TV, but we could not find a hookup that worked. Maybe that is why the discount. The restrooms and showers are located in the Health Club. The bad news is that there is no FREE internet (they want you to pay 9.95 per day) and since this is a face dock and no breakwater, there is considerable rolling as tugs and large ships pass. However, after dark, it settled down and is not really a problem.

Tomorrow, we tour Savannah.

<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>	
<u>2/22/2010</u>	<u>281</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>31°</u>	<u>2.780'</u>	<u>81° 25.358'</u>	<u>Jekyll Island - Historic District</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
<p>02-22-10 Jekyll Island Historic District</p> <p>[Rick] This morning we borrowed the marina courtesy car and went to the "Historic District" of Jekyll Island. This consists of a museum and a large section of town with old homes. However, these are not just homes, but the homes of some of the richest people in American History. People like Goodyear, Rockefeller, Crane, McCormick to name just a few. These people built what they called "cottages" but were more like mini-mansions. Many with 6-10 bedrooms, indoor plumbing (this was 1890), servants quarters. The central attraction of this area is the Jekyll Island Club. Surrounding the club was an infirmary, post office, chapel, and about 15 of the "cottages". Historical note: These people were building winter quarters here at the same time that Flagler was developing St. Augustine in Florida. Same principle, just give the rich a place to get out of the northern climate in the winter. The grounds are beautiful.</p> <p>The museum offers a 90 minute tour on a trolley, if one has time to take it. Sadly for us, it started raining very hard as we toured the district. After getting wet, we had to return to the boat and spend the afternoon on the boat waiting for the rain to stop. It finally stopped about 1700.</p> <p>We plan to leave tomorrow but we would recommend Jekyll Island to anyone for a stopover, and to see the whole place, 2-3 days will be required.</p>										

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<u>2/21/2010</u>	<u>280</u>	<u>61</u>	<u>4.50</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>31°</u>	<u>2.780'</u>	<u>81° 25.358'</u>	<u>Jekyll Island</u>	<u>\$99.00</u>
<p>02-21-10 Jekyll Island, GA  [Rick] We left Isle of Palms, FL and crossing the Cumberland Sound we entered Georgia and made our way to Jekyll Island, GA. We have been in Florida since December 3, 2009. It has been a very interesting state, with us seeing the shuttle launch, rescuing a Leatherback Turtle, watched a Manatee rescue, and experienced some of the coldest and windiest weather of the trip.  The marina, Jekyll Harbor Resort, is very nice. We are on a face dock, just off the waterway. They have all amenities including cable TV, WIFI, and a loaner car.  Shortly after arrival, we took the car and made a complete circle around the island, stopping at a park to let Betsy put her foot into the Atlantic Ocean in the state of Georgia. The beach was wide and the dunes were very wide. This is important to us as we are continually fighting in North Carolina to get beach re-nourishment and dune restoration.  We were impressed that the beach has a recycling barrel right next to the trash can. We do not understand why more recycling is not done on the loop.   Returning to the marina, we did a couple of loads of wash. We ate in the on-site restaurant. It was quite good and reasonable. I had the Low Country Shrimp Boil. This meal consists of shrimp, sausage, red potatoes, corn on the cob, slaw, bread, and banana pudding.  We learned that this island was once the winter home of some of the wealthiest people in the US. However, with the advances in air travel, the rich tended to scatter more and the island is much more affordable and more family oriented than in the past. By law, 65% of the island must remain undeveloped. In fact, to access the island, one must have a resident permit or pay a toll.  As usual, the sunset was spectacular.</p>									

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<u>2/20/2010</u>	<u>279</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>30° 17.415'</u>	<u>81° 25.906'</u>	<u>Jacksonville, FL</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>

02-20-10 Jacksonville FL - Isle of Palms

[Rick] We are about 15 miles from downtown Jacksonville FL and technically in the town of Isle of Palms. There is little to checkout in this area without a car. I contacted one of my college classmates but he had to work and could not meet us for dinner. So, we spent the day reading and watching the Olympics and going to Publix for some groceries.

The marina, Palm Cove, is a busy one. They have a large dry stack and they spent the day loading and unloading boats for their clients. Of course, they use a huge forklift and I often wonder just how many boats they have dropped in the past. But, the process looks very safe and simple.

While I have some spare space, let me tell you one of the funny stories from our trip.

We were in Oswego, NY and were discussing our passage to Clayton with one of the other boats. We were hunched over a set of charts planning the route. Another man, who we did not know from a 40 ft boat came over and was watching us. Finally he said to us, "What is the deal with all these maps?". We looked at him kind of funny and he indicated that he did not have any charts. "How do you navigate?" I asked. He replied that he has a placemat from a restaurant that has a drawing of Lake Ontario on it. Sure enough, the next morning, he was headed out to go across Lake Ontario. Sure made my captain's license look like overkill.

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<u>2/19/2010</u>	<u>278</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>2.50</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>30° 17.415'</u>	<u>81° 25.906'</u>	<u>Jacksonville, FL</u>	<u>\$105.90</u>	

[Rick] We finally left St Augustine. We had a wonderful visit there and have placed the city on our list of places to return and visit again. We motored to Jacksonville, 31 miles up the ICW and are staying at Palm Cove Marina. They have a very nice marina with laundry and a very nice boater's lounge.

We took no pictures today and Betsy spent the afternoon riding her bike to Wal-mart, about a mile away. I caught up on some housekeeping chores and took a spectacular nap. On the third Friday of the month, the marina sponsors a get-together for all of the people in the marina. Since we happened to be here, they invited us to attend. They had Chili and brownies and various types of drinks including wine, beer, and soft drinks. It was very nice and we met several residents of the marina.

On the way up this morning, we noticed about 1100 that there were no boats or people on the waterway. We passed Ponte Vedra FL at that time and realized that all eyes in the area were on Tiger Woods and his press conference, held just a few miles from us at PGA headquarters just a few miles away. We caught the highlights on the evening news.

Since there is so little to report, perhaps a small history lesson is appropriate.

Most people, if asked, will say that America was started when the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is true that the first ENGLISH PERMANENT colony was settled by the Pilgrims. Here is the actual chronology of settlements:  
 1559 - Pensacola is settled by Spaniards. However, a hurricane wiped it out after a few years and it was not rebuilt for 100 years. Thus, it is not the oldest PERMANENT settlement.

1565-St Augustine is settled by Menendez of Spain. St Augustine is the oldest PERMANENT settlement of Europeans in the US.

1583-Sir Walter Raleigh settles on Roanoke Island. After 3 years with no provisions, the colony disappears and is forever named the Lost Colony. Virginia Dare is the first ENGLISH child born in America.

1607-Jamestown Virginia is settled by the English.

1620-The Pilgrims arrive at Plymouth Rock.

The reason you never hear about St Augustine is that the winners write the history books and England, after defeating the mighty Spanish Armada, had Florida ceded to England via the Treaty of Paris. Thus the history books teach that England settled America. As Ripley says, "Believe it or Not"...

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<u>2/18/2010</u>	<u>277</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>29° 53.527'</u>	<u>81° 18.562'</u>	<u>St Augustine, FL- Lighthouse</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
02-18-10 St Augustine FL - Lighthouse									

[Rick] We continue our tour of St Augustine today. We have seen the Oldest House, The Old Jail, The Old School, The Oldest Fort, The Fountain of Youth, The Oldest Church in America, The Old Wall, and the Oldest Putt-Putt Golf Course in Florida (-:-). The best news is that all of this can be seen very easily reached from the marina. One can walk to each of these places and many others. St Augustine is easily navigated on foot or bike. We suggest that one take the \$17 tour trolley that stops in 22 different locations. Hop on and off. The tour is good for 3 days, so you have a great chance to see everything. But, if you do miss something, walk back and take it in. St Augustine is a must stop on the loop and one cannot ask for a better location than the marina to be in the middle of it all.

Today, we hopped on the trolley and went to the stop to shuttle over to the lighthouse. Along the way, we passed "The Old Senator". This tree is over 600 years old and was here when Ponce de Leon arrived in Florida in 1513.

Ponce De Leon was looking for the mythical Fountain of Youth. He did not find it, but it is now located in St Augustine! Tourists flock by the busload to visit the grounds and taste the water. It is just down the street from Ripley's Believe it or Not. Believe it or Not. Betsy and I don't believe it because we visited the fountain last time we were here about 8 years ago, and we've definitely aged since then!

We passed under the canopy of Live Oaks on Magnolia Street. Once, these trees were Magnolias, but were killed off by frost. The city replanted with Live Oaks as they are heartier.

While waiting for the shuttle, we ambled across the way to an Old Drugstore Museum. It was filled with really unique stuff, medically speaking, from the 17-20th century. It was like stepping back in time.

We finally caught the shuttle and went to the St Augustine Light Station, which contains the lighthouse, the caretaker's home and other necessary buildings. The station was completed in 1884 and was finally automated in 1968. We trudged up the 219 steps to the top and looked around. It was very windy, gusts to 30mph, and cold. We did not stay long, but it was a very clear day and the view was spectacular. The lighthouse has a red cap with black and white stripes on the tower. The light signature is one long every 30 seconds. The lighthouse houses an Order 6 (the largest) Fresnel Lens, invented in 1822 by a Frenchman, Augustin-jean Fresnel (the "s" is silent so the pronunciation is "Fruhnel").

We spent the afternoon revisiting some of our favorite places, like the Old House and Flagler College. Remember, Flagler College was once the Ponce De Leon Hotel and has the largest collection of Tiffany Stained Glass in the world, a priceless collection. Ironically, the collection surrounds the college dining hall.

Just a word about Ponce De Leon. He sailed with Christopher Columbus on his voyage to the new world in 1492. He then came back and landed in Florida in 1513. While he did not discover the Fountain of Youth, he found something more important, if that is possible. He found and documented "The Gulf Stream". A Ship could leave Cuba, ride the Gulf Stream, and get back to Spain in record time. This was a big help in bringing the New World treasures to Spain and the King. De Leon was the largest member of his ship and he was 4 feet 11 inches tall.

As I said before, we highly recommend St Augustine to all boaters and one day is not enough. Plan to spend at least 4 days and maybe more.

<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>
<u>2/17/2010</u>	<u>276</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>29° 53.527'</u>	<u>81° 18.562'</u>	<u>St Augustine, FL-Ash Wednesday</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>

02-17-10 St. Augustine, Ash Wednesday

Betsy speaks: Well, it really should be Rick doing the blog tonight because he's a lot better with history than I am, but he's up in the boater's lounge watching a ball game or something and it's getting late, so I'll go ahead and do it!

We started the day off by going to what is known as "The Oldest House." Built about 1702, it was originally a one story Spanish style house, built of coquina stone which is very popular here. Over the years it had a second story added and served as a tavern for a period of time. Archaeological study has shown that this property has been continuously occupied by Europeans since the early 1600s. The period furnishings were very interesting, but no photography was allowed inside. One family owned the house for over 90 years during the 1800s.

Leaving that site, we walked to Flagler Memorial Presbyterian Church. Built by Henry Flagler as a memorial to his daughter Jennie who died tragically in 1889, the church is patterned somewhat after St. Mark's Cathedral in Venice. In addition to his daughter and granddaughter, Flagler himself is buried here along with the first of his three wives. There is a vault for his third wife, but it is empty as her family wanted her buried in her hometown of Kenansville, NC, not far from where we live.

As with many churches, the most striking thing is the stained glass windows. A series of windows depict the Apostle's Creed and they are truly breathtaking. Also striking are the beautiful hand carved mahogany pews and the chandeliers in the shape of crosses.

We were there not only to tour the church but also to hear an Ash Wednesday organ concert. The church sponsors a concert each Wednesday during lent beginning today, with a different organist each time. This week the organist was from nearby Trinity Episcopal Church, and he did a wonderful job. One thing I really liked was that they had a projector set up so that you could actually see his hands on the organ. It was set up so you could see the top of the organist's head, his hands and the full keyboard, all the stops on each side and part of the foot pedals.

After the concert we had a bite to eat and a quick check on Beamer on the boat. Then we went to the Castillo de San Marcos, a well preserved example of a coquina built fort that is over 400 years old. This is the oldest structure in town. For more on its history you can look it up on the internet! It is still the place to go during hurricanes if you are looking for protection! We got there just in time for a live presentation by a park ranger dressed in authentic Spanish costume of the 16th century.

Rick then went back to the boat for his afternoon nap while I browsed the shops. St. Augustine is just a great town to stroll around in. I began by walking through the City Gates, then down a nicely restored street full of pubs, shops and historic homes.

Tonight at 6:15 we went back to Flagler Memorial Presbyterian for an Ash Wednesday service. It seems Ash Wednesday is being recognized more and more in recent years, and today starting at about noon we saw many people with ashes on their foreheads. In addition to the imposition of ashes there was Holy Communion by intinction. Overall, we enjoyed the service very much.

<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>
<u>2/16/2010</u>	<u>275</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>29° 53.527'</u>	<u>81° 18.562'</u>	<u>St Augustine, FL-Cousin Scott</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>

Betsy speaks: We are at the St. Augustine, FL, Municipal Marina, right next to the historic Bridge of Lions. I'm not sure if it's the weather, the economy, or the fact that there is lots of construction at the bridge, but we are practically the only boat in this very nice marina. The Bridge of Lions, which crosses the Intracoastal Waterway, is nearing the end of a five year, multi-million dollar renovation. Actually, the bridge has been almost completely redone with new material, but will look exactly the same as the old bridge once work is complete. Right now the famous lions are in storage somewhere. The bridge is completely closed to traffic, and a temporary bridge was erected right next to it to handle traffic while the renovation is ongoing. Once the renovation is complete, that temporary bridge will be torn down and the material that was used for it will be put out to sea as a fish haven. As the renovation nears completion, the waterway was scheduled to be closed this week and we originally thought that might affect our travel plans. As it happens, they are a couple of weeks behind schedule so the closure hasn't happened yet. We found out once we got here that we might not have been affected anyway because the shallow draft and low clearance of our boat would have allowed us to go under the bridge outside the main channel that would be closed.

This morning we purchased tickets to do one of the trolley tours around town. These tickets are good for 3 days for us to hop on and off at the many historic locations around town. It is still very cold, mid 50s, and the trolleys are open, so our initial tour was cold! Our plan was to ride all the way around once, then go back to the places we were most interested in seeing up close. We did hop off about half way through when the trolley stopped near a Walgreens. We needed a couple of grocery items, and figured we could get them there since there is not a grocery store near the marina that we've found yet. We also ended up getting the H1N1 flu shot! Then we hopped back on the trolley and returned to our starting point right in front of the marina.

We unloaded the groceries and had a quick bite to eat on the boat. We decided we wanted to take the 2pm tour of Flagler College, which is an easy walk from the marina. Industrialist Henry Flagler had decided that St. Augustine should become the "Newport of the South" for rich Yankees to come during the winter months. He built three magnificent hotels, the first and grandest of which was the Ponce de Leon Hotel, completed in 1888. It was built in only 18 months, which is unbelievable when you see its grandeur! The dining hall has the largest collection of Tiffany stained glass windows in the world, worth many millions of dollars. The walls have hand painted murals by George W. Maynard that are absolutely breathtaking. The rotunda is a four story dome with gold accents. This luxury hotel was the first public building in Florida to have electricity, and it was personally designed and installed by Edison. The building launched the careers of architects John Carrere and Thomas Hastings who are noted most for the New York Public Library and the House and Senate Office Buildings adjacent to the Capitol in Washington, D.C. It is the first major poured-in-place concrete building in the US.

In 1968 one of Flagler's heirs founded Flagler College, and the girl's dorm and the dining hall are what is now located in the old hotel. Begun as a four year liberal arts women's college, it became co-ed by 1971. Over 43 million dollars have been spent on renovations and the addition of new buildings. Daily tours of the historic hotel portion of the college are now offered by students. The building is truly beautiful and we thoroughly enjoyed our tour by junior business major Alyssa.

After our tour we returned to the boat to rest up for a much anticipated visit from my cousin Scott Makepeace. Scott and his wife Pat live in Jacksonville, Florida, but come to St. Augustine frequently because their two daughters live here. I hadn't seen Scott in several years and the only change I noticed was that his once blond hair is now a beautiful white. He took us to dinner at a restaurant on the other side of the waterway called Osteen's, and what a treat it was. Osteen's is very small, I'd say less than 20 tables total. We arrived shortly after 4PM and there was already a line to get in. it is very popular and with good reason.

Once we were seated, Scott told the waitress we all wanted shrimp! He had asked ahead of time if we liked seafood and we said yes, but we

<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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were surprised that he just ordered for us! Then he did give us a chance to say we would prefer something else and I must say I did hesitate when I heard they had Mahi. But he convinced us we should stick with shrimp, and I'm glad we did. I must say it was the best fried shrimp I've ever eaten! I seldom eat fried food, but this was truly superb! This restaurant has been in the same family for many years and they refuse to expand it. They do not take reservations, and they do not take credit cards. Apparently they have SRO crowds every night. When you arrive you give your name, then wait in the parking lot or in your car until your table is ready. They serve no alcohol, but there is a bar a couple of doors down. You can wait at the bar and they will call you there when your table is ready! They have a brisk takeout business as well. The service was excellent.

Tomorrow we will do more of the hop on hop off tour. We hope to be at Flagler Memorial Presbyterian Church for an organ recital at 12:15, which is the first in a series of organ recitals there during lent. I stopped in there today looking to see if they had an Ash Wednesday service and found out about the recitals, so that sounded like a special treat.

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<u>2/15/2010</u>	<u>274</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>3.50</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>29° 53.527'</u>	<u>81° 18.562'</u>	<u>St Augustine, FL</u>	<u>\$120.20</u>	

02-15-10 St Augustine, FL  
[Rick] Since it looked like a good day to move, the sun was shining and it was about 60 degrees, we decided to leave Daytona and go to St Augustine FL. Since we got here late, there is little to talk about. Tomorrow, we will take the trolley tour and see the city. We have relatives coming for supper. We will have a lot more to discuss then. Come back then...

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<u>2/14/2010</u>	<u>273</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>29° 12.347'</u>	<u>81° 0.770'</u>	<u>Daytona Beach, FL</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>

Happy Valentine's Day!!

[Betsy] We usually try to go to a nearby church on Sunday morning, but we didn't get here in time to check out the neighborhood yesterday so were going to forego church this morning. However, I stepped off the boat mid-morning and heard hymn singing in the distance. I was getting ready to take a bike ride to the beach, which would take me by where it sounded like the music was.

Passing by Jackie Robinson Ballpark across the street from the marina, I saw the congregation seated around the picnic tables in the concourse of the stadium. I quietly slipped in and sat down just in time to hear the sermon from the beginning. Later I talked to the preacher and learned that this was put on by Christ Community Church. They have a large congregation and a large church building near the Daytona Speedway. Every year on race weekend they hold their service here at the ballpark rather than fight the crowds near the speedway. It being Valentine's Day, the sermon was about love, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. The rest of the congregation stayed after the service for hotdogs and fellowship at the ballpark, but I opted not to stay for that.

Instead, I hopped back on the bike and rode the mile or so across a bridge over the intracoastal waterway and to the beach. Yes, they are still having record lows here in Florida, but the sun was bright today, and there was little wind. So, bundled up and wearing a hat, I was not too cold. Of course Daytona Beach is famous for allowing any and all vehicles to ride on the beach, which is very hard packed sand. So I took the bike right out onto the beach and rode up and down. It was a beautiful day and a fun experience. Rick had not joined me on this jaunt, so I had fun taking my own picture using the timer on the camera and setting it on top of traffic signs on the beach! Passing a hotel, I saw that some people weren't as bundled up as I was.

Rick spent the afternoon making minor repairs on the boat and in the marina lounge watching the race. We also walked the docks a little bit trying to enjoy the relative warmth and sunshine. Today is supposed to be the warmest day we have for a while.

There is a very nice and reasonably priced restaurant here at the marina, as well as a full service West Marine store. One thing I really like about the restaurant is the menus that light up when you open them, making them so easy to read!

We may head on up to St. Augustine tomorrow or we may stay over here another day. We'll decide in the morning. We have decided that we're fed up with the weather and we just give up on it getting any better. So we're going to skip the St. John's River side trip and head straight for home, planning to arrive at Topsail Beach about March 12 or 13, and complete our loop by crossing our wake in Sneads Ferry on Sunday, March 14.

<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>
<u>2/13/2010</u>	<u>272</u>	<u>49</u>	<u>4.50</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>29° 12.347'</u>	<u>81° 0.770'</u>	<u>Daytona Beach, FL</u>	<u>\$121.41</u>	

02-13-10 Daytona Beach FL

[Rick] The rain finally quit and the winds subsided a bit, so we decided to leave Titusville after 10 nights and go to Daytona Beach, FL. We called ahead to make sure they had room as this is Race Week in Daytona and the Daytona 500 is to be run tomorrow.

Along the 45 mile journey, we must have seen over 100 dolphins. They seemed to be everywhere and were very active, feeding and jumping.

We passed the Ponce De Leon lighthouse near New Smyrna Beach.

As we sped along, we noticed how much the landscape looks like the North Carolina Waterway. The houses are smaller with a lot of boats and boat lifts. There is a lot of vegetation. We were in a "No Wake, Manatee Zone" about a third of the way, which means we saved gas but not time. Along the way, our odometer indicated 11111 miles.

Nearing Daytona, we had no problem figuring out where the speedway is located. The Goodyear Blimp was overhead and 6 airplanes were towing banners behind advertising insurance, cars, and what-not.

The whole area arriving at Daytona is filled with condos. Here are a few of them.

The marina, Halifax Harbor Marina, is very nice with floating docks. It is a huge marina with 550 slips. They have cable TV for \$4 per day, so we're getting by with our digital antenna which gives us the major networks. They were the East Coast Marina of the Year in 2001, but they have NO wifi, either free or by subscription. Unbelievable. Fortunately we're able to get the wifi signal from the West Marine that is just across the street. This time, our wifi signal booster came in handy. We plan to be here at least two days before going to St Augustine, FL.

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<u>2/12/2010</u>	<u>271</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>28° 37.199'</u>	<u>80° 48.526'</u>	<u>Titusville, FL - Final Day?03-14-10 Cros</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
02-12-10 Titusville FL - The final day(?????)									

[Rick] Imagine that you are in a distant city, you know no one, and you do not have a car to go anywhere. You are in a typical hotel room and are told that you must go into a room the size of a bathroom and wait for the next 12 hours. You are allowed to take a book or a bunch of Sudoku puzzles, a peanut butter sandwich, and several cold beverages. You would probably not have an exciting day, no matter how creative you are.

Well, that is exactly how we spent the day. We were not in a bathroom, but trapped on our boat. The temperature was low 50's, winds about 20kts, and it rained all day, about 2 inches worth. We were captives on the boat. We at least have the back den so that one of us can "get away" from the other for a few minutes, but it was cold. We used the little ceramic heater in the den and the boat heater for the main cabin. Trying to find a something good in this situation, we are lucky that we are not in the panhandle. They got SNOW today while we just got rain.

Thus, we spent the day reading and working puzzles. In addition, this marina does not have free wifi. We determined that due to our watching so much video about the space shuttle, we have used about 80% of our monthly allowance of use on our air card in only 8 days. Thus, since we need to save bandwidth, we cannot surf the web as a means of distraction. Bummer. I read one of the Spenser novels by Robert Parker. Betsy is enthralled by a thriller by Wendy Corsi Staub.

We had planned to move today. But, the weather where we were going was worse than the weather here, and we elected to stay here. We were going to New Smyrna Beach and on to Daytona. We have now decided to leave tomorrow and go straight to Daytona. The Daytona 500 is this weekend, but we have reservations and shouldn't be affected, even though Sarah Palin is in town! The ride to Daytona is about 45 miles.

<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>
<u>2/11/2010</u>	<u>270</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>28° 37.199'</u>	<u>80° 48.526'</u>	<u>Titusville, FL - Satellite launch II</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>

[Rick] We awoke this morning to a chilly day. The temperature was in the mid 30's and the wind chill was 28 degrees. Tomorrow, snow is expected in the panhandle. What a weird weather pattern.

We took the rental car back to Enterprise and the nice person behind the counter agreed to let us keep the car a couple of hours longer so that we could use it to watch the missile launch. This is the launch that was scrubbed yesterday. It is a Saturn 5 rocket taking an exploratory satellite into space to study the sun for the next 10 years.

We did not go all the way back to Cape Canaveral, a distance of about 15 miles. Instead, we went to a park in Titusville that is across the waterway from the launch site. The launch took off right on schedule. It was about 8 miles away and the day was very bright. So, we saw the fire from the rocket but could barely see the actual rocket. Like the shuttle, the sound from the launch took about 75 seconds to reach us. It was very loud. The missile disappeared into the clouds.

We returned the car and spent the rest of the day lolling around the boat. I did get a haircut. My hair is now the length of Anderson Cooper.

We plan to leave tomorrow for North Smyrna Beach. However, it is suppose to be raining tomorrow and we may have to spend another day here. We will make a decision tomorrow morning.

<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>
<u>2/10/2010</u>	<u>269</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>28° 37.199'</u>	<u>80° 48.526'</u>	<u>Titusville, FL - Satellite launch I</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
<p>02-10-10 Titusville, FL Satellite Launch (Not)</p> <p>[Rick] We got up this morning and rushed over to Cape Canaveral to watch an Atlas 5 missile take off carrying a government satellite into orbit. This satellite is aimed at the sun and will spend the next 10 years sending data back to earth regarding the sun and changes of the sun. We went to a park at the jetty and inlet that separates the town and beach from Canaveral Air force Base. This is the same inlet that cruise ships like the Disney Line use to access the Atlantic. The ships dock at the Port of Canaveral and within a few minutes can be into the ocean heading for the Caribbean.</p> <p>There were hundreds and maybe thousands of people on the beach and walkway to see the launch. Too bad. The wind was above 20 kts and it was cold. (If you are a regular reader of this blog, I did not have to tell you that.) NASA has a 1 hour launch window on this type of flight. The launch was "NO GO" at 1026, the expected time. After a 30 minute wait, they announced that they would wait 30 more minutes. However, at the end of the hour, the wind was just too hard and the mission was scrubbed for today. There is a 1 hour window each day for the next week. The city of Canaveral has built a viewing stand out over the beach. The jetty is build of huge rocks. I spent the waiting time behind the large rocks to block the wind. It was still cold.</p> <p>We picked up Betsy's bike from the shop complete with a new rear wheel.</p> <p>We took advantage of having a car and stocked up on groceries.</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>
<u>2/9/2010</u>	<u>268</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>28° 37.199'</u>	<u>80° 48.526'</u>	<u>Titusville, FL -Disney Wild Kingdom</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
02-09-10 Titusville, FL, and Animal Kingdom									

Betsy speaks: After recuperating from the early morning Shuttle Launch Monday morning, we loaded up the car and headed to Orlando to visit my cousin Ben Newlin and his wife Rose. Unfortunately we relied on our trusty GPS to get us to their house instead of discussing it with Ben or checking a map first. Problem is the GPS isn't so trusty when a few days ago I had told it to avoid highways because I was going someplace on the bicycle! So what should have been less than an hour's drive on a major toll highway ended up being a two hour tour of Florida swamp land on back county roads! We knew we were wrong, but just never stopped to figure out how to get back on the right track, and didn't realize that the GPS setting was wrong until we were almost there. Still, we managed to arrive in time for Ben to take us all out to a relatively new restaurant for a wonderful seafood dinner.

After dinner, Ben pulled out his guitar and a harmonica and I pulled out my cache of harmonicas and we had a short jam session. Ben is very musically talented and plays a wonderful guitar as well as writes songs and sings. We had a great evening getting caught up and getting to know them both better.

After retiring from a 30 year career with the Coast Guard, Ben went to work for Disney Cruise Lines as a top executive for 10 years. Now retired from Disney, one of his perks is free passes to all the Disney parks. So this morning we went to Animal Kingdom. The day started out as overcast and showers were forecast for this afternoon. We managed to make it through the safari ride before the rains came. What fun we had seeing the African animals in a near natural habitat, with a rhino crossing the road right in front of our jeep!

The 4 of us in front of "The Tree of Life"

Close encounter with a Rhino!

And a Gorilla

As we were heading for the tiger exhibit in the Asian section it started to rain, so we decided to go to an indoor event instead. So we never did see the real tigers, but saw the Lion King production instead, complete with tumblers, stilt walkers, acrobats and musicians. It was a colorful and energetic show and very enjoyable.

As we left that it was still raining, even harder now. So we went to another inside exhibit called It's Hard to be a Bug. This was one of the most

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enjoyable 3d movies we'd ever been to...lots of fun with special effects like bugs spitting at you, chairs shaking, etc. The 3d effects were some of the best we'd ever seen.

Our next stop was at the popcorn vendor as Rose had free tickets for popcorn and drinks.

It was still pouring rain so we decided to head for home. We felt like we had seen the highlights. Ben has said over and over that he's just never seen weather like this in Florida: day after day of clouds and cold. Those of you that have been reading our blog regularly know that by now we take full responsibility for the bad weather as it has followed us since day one of the trip!

The rain was relentless once it started.

Back at the house, Ben was kind enough to relieve his tree of two bags full of beautiful pink grapefruit for us to bring back to the boat. Rose cooked a delicious dinner of lasagna. We talked a little politics, and then it was time for us to head back to the boat. Our trip home on the toll road was less than an hour!

Nothing like FRESH Grapefruit!

Cousin Ben and Rose were perfect hosts!

With the exception of our trip home in November, this was our first and only night in a real bed since we left home last May!

Personal note to our friend Toad...this one's for 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>
<u>2/7/2010</u>	<u>266</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>28° 37.199'</u>	<u>80° 48.526'</u>	<u>Titusville, FL-Shuttle launch for real</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
	02-07-10	Titusville, FL	Shuttle Launch (for real)						

[Rick] After going to bed at 0600, we finally got up around 1000. Basically we lolled around all day with Betsy taking the car to Sears and other places for window shopping.

Around 1700, Gregg Addams and his lovely wife Linda paid us a visit on the boat. Gregg works in Change Management for BB&T and he and his wife had driven down to see the shuttle. Since he is following our blog, he knew we were at the Titusville Municipal Marina. It was great to talk to someone from the past and catch up on BB&T in Wilson. Here is a picture of Rick and Gregg.

I watched the Super Bowl while Betsy napped. I thought the game was one of the best ever. Congratulations to the NFC South Super Bowl Champs, The New Orleans Saints. On on their first Super Bowl try, no less.

Around Midnight, we went over to the viewing area again for the next try of launching the shuttle. There were many less people there tonight. Just one side of the road was used. As before, people milled around, slept, set up cameras and waited for the news. An hour before liftoff, the chance of a "GO" was only 50%. Weather conditions in Titusville were fine, but there was some concern about the 3 abort sites. At least one of them has to have acceptable weather in order for the launch to happen. So we were on edge right up until the final minute.

Then the magic time arrived...0414. Suddenly on pad 39A, a huge fireball filled the night horizon. The Endeavour Spaceship, carrying 6 brave souls lifted into the night. Even though they were rising, it was perfectly silent. As the spacecraft lifted, approximately 15 seconds after liftoff, an enormous roar filled the air. It was exactly like the roar on the simulator we experienced two days ago. The flight lifted to the Northeast, entered some clouds and continued into its planned orbit. Below are the pictures in the sequence we saw the flight.

Once it was out of sight, we got in the car and had a much quicker exit than the night before when the crowds had been so thick. We were in bed by 0500, and slept in this morning.

<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>
<u>2/6/2010</u>	<u>265</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>28° 37.199'</u>	<u>80° 48.526'</u>	<u>Titusville, FL-Shuttle launch First</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>

Saturday, February 06, 2010  
02-06-10 Titusville, FL - Shuttle Launch Attempt 1  
[Rick] We began the day at the Astronaut Hall of Fame. This building and exhibit recalls man's journey into space by way of astronaut personal items, memorabilia, exhibits, and personal stories. The exhibits cover the entire span of American Space Exploration from Mercury to Genesis to Apollo to The Shuttle. The building and entrance is impressive. Just inside the main door is a statue of Rear Admiral Alan B. Shepard, the first American in space and one of the famous Mercury 7 Astronauts. Many of the exhibits are personal. Things like photos, diaries, and personal correspondence of the brave men and women in space.

Betsy did her best to help the space program by operating one of the consoles that was used in the Mercury program. This is not a replica, it is one of the original consoles from Houston. Many of the exhibits are the "real deal"

One of the most striking exhibits is this one from the Apollo program. These words are prophetic as the three astronauts Grissom, White, and Chaffee perished in an on board fire as they prepared to launch in Apollo 1 in 1967.

"If we die, we want people to accept it.  
We are in a risky business.  
The conquest of Space is worth the risk of life."  
Gus Grisson, 1967

In the Shuttle section, there are memorials to the fallen heroes of that program. These include my friend, Captain Mike Smith, USN and pilot of STS 51-L, the ill-fated Challenger Mission. Mike and the rest of the crew perished on January 28, 1986. Most people remember this Challenger flight as the "First Teacher in Space" flight as teacher Christa McAuliffe was aboard. They tend to forget that another woman, Judy Resnick, was also aboard. Resnick had already been into space several years earlier serving as mission specialist.

All in all, this huge exhibit is well worth a half day of the visitors' time and we recommend it to everyone, The entrance fee is included as part of the entrance fee at the Kennedy Space Center.

On the way back to the boat, we checked out the spot where we were going to view the shuttle launch. At 1400, some people were already staking a claim to a space for the 0439 launch the next morning. Along the road, in every park or space, people were setting up RVs and claiming their space. We did notice some people in RVs setting up the day before. Seeing all of this "claiming" going on, we decided to get to our spot early.

We had dinner with our sister-in-law Tina from Zephrhills. She and her friend, Brian, came over to eat with us and to watch the liftoff. They could only get accommodations in Cocoa, about 20 miles away. We all agreed that the road would be too crowded for them to come back to watch with us, so they are going to watch in Cocoa.

We packed up the rental car and arrived at "our spot" at 2039, 8 hours before the scheduled launch. The place we had chosen was a residential street bordering the water and looking straight over the waterway to the launch pad, about 8 miles away. The pad was well lit and we had a

<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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perfect view. At this time, there were about 20 other cars on the street. The sky was clear, the air was nippy with temps at 50 degrees. We set up the tripod, the chairs, reclined the seats back in the car and slept for a while.

By 0100, Sunday morning, the street was full on the water side, no place to park. The clouds began to roll in and by 0200, all of the beautiful stars were gone, replaced by billowing clouds.

By 0300, both sides of the street were filled with parked cars. The street was a parking lot. People began to mill around, quiet, reserved, and chatting among themselves. There was one man there in shorts, a short sleeved shirt, driving a convertible with the top down. Another visitor, a photographer, from Los Angeles, had come to photograph the launch. He had come the last time when it had been delayed and he had to go back home. He also told us that last time this same spot had 2 cars. We suspect that the reason for the large crowd is a combination of:

1. Launch on a weekend,
2. Last nighttime launch,
3. Only 5 more launches to go,
4. Some people were on the way to the Super Bowl and stopped over.

By 0407, NASA issued a statement that they were trying to get a waiver from Houston to "go" in spite of the low clouds.

At 0422, NASA announced a "NO GO" and rescheduled the lift off for Monday morning at 0414.

We packed up our things and made our way back to the boat. Due to the traffic, it took us an hour to get "home," normally a 5 minute drive. By 0600, we were sleeping soundly on the boat, resting up to do it all again tonight! We both slept in until after 1030 this morning.

<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>
<u>2/5/2010</u>	<u>264</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>28° 37.199'</u>	<u>80° 48.526'</u>	<u>Titusville, FL-Space Museum 2</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
02-05-10 Kennedy Space Center day 2									

Once again we saw a boat's name that we thought was unique and worth a picture.

We spent a second day at the Kennedy Space Center. Our first stop was at the Astronaut's Memorial, which has special significance to us because Rick was a high school classmate of Michael Smith, the Pilot of the ill-fated Challenger. After pausing for a moment of silent prayer, we reverently admired the memorial. It is a very large slate with the names of astronauts that have been killed in various space disasters chiseled out, lighted from behind.

Opposite the wall are several pictures and plaques telling of the lost missions and astronauts:

We then went into an area where we watched a live discussion about the upcoming launch that we are here to see. As of right now all systems are go, and there is an 80% chance that the launch will not be held up because of high winds that are expected early Sunday morning. That is up from 70% yesterday, so things are looking good! We learned that there is only a five minute window for the launch, so if it doesn't happen by 4:45AM we can give up and go to bed. Also, if for some reason it does not happen on Sunday night, Monday is definitely out because bad weather is predicted at every abort site. Tuesday may be a possibility, but really it sounds like if it doesn't go on Sunday as planned we'll be out of luck.

We also learned that there is a scheduled daytime launch on Tuesday morning of an Atlas Rocket. Since we're already here and have no definite schedule past the launch Sunday night, we will probably stay for that as well. The speaker said that would not be nearly as spectacular as a space shuttle launch, but would certainly be worth watching if we'd never seen one before.

The rest of the day was spent browsing the many exhibits, including a fascinating exhibit of the Hubble Telescope. We also saw a second IMAX 3D movie, having seen one yesterday as well. We both love Imax movies, and these were included with the price of admission.

Another highlight of the day was sitting in the space shuttle simulator. You are shaken and turned and blasted with noise that is supposed to be very much like the shuttle take-off. It was so much fun we did it a second time. This might be a good time to mention how few people have been here over the past couple of days, which I guess is a sign of the poor economy. We've never had to wait for anything, even though they are set up for long lines. Some of the snack bars are closed due to lack of crowds. The movie theaters have been only about half full, and being able to go right back onto the simulator a second time without having to wait are all indications of tough times.

There are several ponds in the complex, and they have many alligators, not only in the ponds but also all along the highway leading here in the ditches along the side.

We ended the day in the Center for Space Education, which has classrooms and labs for visiting students. This building also houses the offices of the Astronauts Memorial Foundation, and the walls were lined with more memorials to the astronauts killed in disasters. One of the most beautiful things was this quilt made in memory of the Challenger. There were also books holding poems and letters of condolence from school

<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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children...very moving.

Today was a very blustery day with strong storms predicted for late this afternoon. Sure enough, as we left the Space Center and headed for our car the rain started and by the time we made it out to the highway it was pouring. I don't think I've ever seen the sky so black! As we slowed down and made our way back to the marina, we noticed many RVs parked alongside the road, already staking out their position for the Sunday morning launch. Needless to say, the excitement level is high!

<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>
<u>2/4/2010</u>	<u>263</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>28° 37.199'</u>	<u>80° 48.526'</u>	<u>Titusville, FL-space museum 1</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>

02-04-10 Titusville, FL - Kennedy Space Center

Rick] The first thing this morning we arranged for Enterprise Rent-a-Car to pick us up and we rented a Ford Focus for a week. We decided to go ahead over to Cape Canaveral and the Kennedy Space Center. This is where the Space Shuttle is to be launched on Sunday Morning. We had already heard that this is a two day tour. Upon arriving, we decided to take the bus tour of three attractions. The hop on/off tour takes 3-4 hours.

The first stop on the tour was the Gantry Stop. This is a three story metal structure that overlooks the launch pad. The shuttle, STS 130, is already on the pad, having been moved there last month. From the gantry, one can see the tower, but the shuttle is on the back side and is barely visible. There are several signs that explain what you can see and what all of the features are.

On the way to the second stop of the tour, we passed very close to the shuttle mover. This is a huge platform that moves the module from the Vehicle Assembly Building to the pad. The top speed is 1 mile per hour and it usually takes about 8 hours to move the shuttle to the pad. There are 8 treads of 57 units on each tread.

We once again pass the Vehicle Assembly Building. This building, 535 feet tall and one story, is the second largest one story building in the world, by volume. It is so large that without the proper ventilation, the building will create its own weather pattern, and in fact rain inside. Another example of the size of the building is that the new Yankee Stadium would fit on the roof with 10 acres left over.

The Vehicle Assembly Building

The second stop on the tour is the Saturn/Apollo building. This, via displays and movies, tells the historic story of the Apollo program, the moon landing missions. There is a moon rock that you can touch and the actual Apollo 14 command capsule. The length of the building is comprised of an actual Saturn rocket. This rocket is 565 feet long and comprised of 4 stages. The solid rocket fuel for one launch creates enough energy to light New York City for 2 hours.

Apollo Capsule

Moon Rock

Scene from the Moon

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The original control room for Apollo 8-17.

The third stop consists of the International Space Station Building. Here we saw some of the modules that NASA is transporting to the International Space Station. Since there are only 5 shuttle launches to go, this and several operations are shutting down.

From here, we returned to the visitor center. We watched a 45 minute IMAX film about the International Space Station and the cooperation among the 16 nations that are participating in the project. These include Canada, India, Russia, France, and China and the USA.

The launch is scheduled for 4:39AM Sunday morning. Anyone on the east coast might want to hop out of bed and try to see it, especially if you are on the ocean. It will launch in a northeasterly direction, and on a clear night should be visible as far north as New Jersey.

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<u>2/3/2010</u>	<u>262</u>	<u>43</u>	<u>3.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>28° 37.199'</u>	<u>80° 48.526'</u>	<u>Titusville, FL</u>	<u>\$372.52</u>	

02-03-10 Titusville, FL

[Rick] We left Melbourne FL today and headed for Titusville, FL. It had rained all day on Monday, and yesterday was chilly and overcast. Today it was windy with highs in the 60s and a little overcast. The wind caused our ride to Titusville to be a choppy one, but we only had a little over 30 miles to go and our boat is made for chop so it wasn't a bad ride.

We really liked the town of Melbourne. The marina is very adequate with all the required services. The town is very close to the marina, only about 3 blocks away. The main street is quaint, with several antique shops and several specialty shops. There are about 15 eating places. We would highly recommend it to other loopers.

The reason we are in Titusville is to watch a space shuttle launch. We have planned on this stop since the very beginning of the journey. We have never seen a launch in person and we have always been interested in the shuttle program. A little known fact is that Mike Smith, the pilot of the ill-fated Challenger in 1986, was in my Beaufort High School Class of 1963. We checked ahead and several people told us that we can see the launch just across the waterway. The actual launch is this Sunday Morning, February 7 at 0439. As a nighttime launch it should be spectacular. Here is a picture of the NASA Assembly Building that we took while on the waterway. It was a little foggy and the building is about 2 miles away.

The Titusville Marina does not have cable or free wifi, so the week here will be a little less entertaining. On the other hand, we plan to rent a car tomorrow and go to the Space Museum and go to Orlando to visit with Ben Newlin and Disney's Wild Kingdom. The car will come in handy.

<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>
<u>1/30/2010</u>	<u>258</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>28° 4.683'</u>	<u>80° 35.373'</u>	<u>Melbourne, Fl - Ben Newlin</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
01-30-10- Melbourne, FL Ben Newlin									

Betsy speaks: No blog yesterday, as there wasn't much to say! I rode my bike nearly 4 miles to the Best Buy store looking for a new camera. After much research and consideration, I ended up purchasing the identical camera to the one that was lost a week or so ago. Best Buy is my favorite store, and since this was the first time I'd been in one in many, many months I had a great time just wandering around. I'm sure the people at the camera counter thought I was going to shop lift a camera because I spent so much time there!

Directly across the street was a huge shopping mall with 5 huge anchor stores. Needless to say I spent several hours there as well. I figured since I had pedaled four miles I was going to do some shopping. Of course, I can't buy much because I'm on a bike! AND we have only limited space on the boat. So shopping means mostly just looking. I did buy four Auntie Anne's pretzels to take back to the boat for our next meal.

The bike ride was very enjoyable since there were sidewalks the entire way. Neither of us like riding our bikes in the street, especially one that has a lot of traffic. I've really learned to appreciate the value of bike paths and sidewalks.

Today, Saturday, we were treated to a visit from my cousin Ben Newlin who lives in Orlando. We plan to spend more time with Ben and his wife Rose while we are in Titusville, when we plan to rent a car and drive to Orlando. But Ben, being a retired Coast Guardsman, wanted to see the boat that we've survived on for the past eight months so he drove an hour and a half today to spend some time with us on board. It had been years since I'd seen him so it was great to get caught up.

After retiring from the Coast Guard, Ben spent ten years working with the Disney Corporation. He and four others were responsible for starting Disney's cruise line from the ground floor. Ben travelled to Italy several times, where the Disney ships were built, and brought them back to the US. It was interesting to hear him talk of getting a cruise ship up and running from day one, and dealing with all aspects of the operation from food prep to entertainment to crew.

We took advantage of Ben's visit and got him to take us to the grocery store for some provisioning. Rick was out of Pepsis, and they are hard to carry on the bikes! So we stocked up while we had Ben here with his car. Right now the plan is for us to drive to Orlando after the shuttle launch next week and spend a couple of days with Ben and Rose and probably take him up on his offer to go to one of the theme parks for free. We've never been to Animal Kingdom, so that's probably where we'll go.

Right now we're planning to spend at least two more nights here in Melbourne before heading to Titusville. Looks like there will be a lot of rain next week, but that shouldn't hold us up. We're just glad we're not in the snow storms that are hitting the east coast not too far north of us! The weather here this week has been delightfully sunny and warm.

<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>
<u>1/28/2010</u>	<u>256</u>	<u>49</u>	<u>6.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>28° 4.683'</u>	<u>80° 35.373'</u>	<u>Melbourne, Fl - Mel Fisher Museum</u>	<u>\$363.90</u>	
01-28-10 Melbourne, FL - Mel Fisher Museum									

[Rick] Today we left Ft Pierce FL and headed for Melbourne, FL. Most everyone has heard of Indian River Grapefruit and citrus. This stretch of the ICW is actually the Indian River. It is fairly wide, very shallow out of the channel, and has many small islands along the way. Along the way, we found a marina that wants our cash and crap, but not us.

We decided to stop in the town of Sebastian Fl and go to the Mel Fisher Museum. On the way to the museum, we passed a most unusual driftwood fence. It was very different and allowed one to look out over the waterway.

You may not recognize the name Mel Fisher, but you probably wish you could have been him in 1985. Mel, his wife, and a team of underwater treasure hunters found the wreck of the Atocha, a Spanish Galleon that perished in a storm in 1622 off the coast of Florida and near the town of Sebastian. The treasure that they found was unbelievable and very valuable. The find included tons of Spanish coins, 900 Silver bars that weighed 80 pounds each, gold ingots, and jewelry made of the finest gold and silver. Probably as important, they found a piece of maritime history and how the ship was made, its supplies, and a lot about the living condition of the hands. Mel and his team also found the sister ship of the Atocha, the Santa Margarita, and an English ship, the Henrietta Marie. Needless to say, these discoveries made Mel and his backers very rich people. They continue to bring items to the surface and continue to excavate the scene for more historical items. There is a film in the museum detailing the expedition and aftermath.

An interesting legal note about the find. Prior to Mel finding the Atocha, the state of Florida was assessing a tax of 25% on sunken treasure found off Florida, even though it was found out of territorial waters. Mel, a student of the Constitution, decided this tax was not right and fought this tax. He won at every level. The state of Florida continued to appeal, spent over 3 million dollars, and eventually lost in the Supreme Court of the United States.

The gift shop at the museum sells the normal hats and t-shirts. But it also sells part of the treasure, including Spanish Pieces of Eight. They have pieces from a few dollars to hundreds of thousands of dollars. One small, 3 by 4 inches, filigree piece is \$375,000.00.

Mel died in 1995, but his children and grandchildren carry on his tradition. They are treasure hunters and actively involved in the family business.

We arrived late at the Melbourne Harbor Marina. We plan to be here 3-4 days and then make our way north. We are within striking distance of Sneads Ferry. Sneads Ferry is approximately mile 245, so we are about 700 miles from home.

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<u>1/27/2010</u>	<u>255</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>27° 27.054'</u>	<u>80° 19.339'</u>	<u>Ft Pierce Marina - Ft Pierce FL</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
01-27-10 Fort Pierce, FL and Manatee Museum									

We spent the day in Fort Pierce, having arrived yesterday afternoon. On our way yesterday we saw the DirectTV Blimp, probably heading to Miami for the Superbowl.earlier in the week while near Boca we had seen the Goodyear Blimp overhead.

This morning we walked to the Manatee Learning Center right next to the marina. They had just let a group of school kids in so we were told we would need to come back later if we wanted to watch the movie about manatees. The admission fee is only \$1.00, and as usual, you get what you pay for! There really wasn't much there.a few aquariums with small fish, starfish, a seahorse, etc. The displays were definitely geared toward small children.

The center is right next to a canal that used to handle discharge from a power plant. Manatees tend to congregate near power plants during cold weather because the water is warmer there. Unfortunately for the learning center, this power plant has been moved, so the huge mammals are no longer here in the large numbers they used to have. But it seems some of the manatees still come here looking for where the warmer water used to be, and we did see a couple today. They only come up for a few seconds at a time, so it is very hard to get a good picture of them, but here are our best attempts.

We left the manatee center for a few hours, then went back this afternoon to see the movie, which was made in 1983 and was so outdated it was pathetic! As I said before, we got our dollars worth and no more! But upon leaving the center and walking along the canal right next to it we did see another manatee, or maybe the same one we had seen before still just hanging around.

We walked next door to where the Chamber of Commerce/Tourist Information Center is, but were dismayed to find it is closed.apparently for good. I had wanted to ask about public transportation to the beach or to a shopping center.we're trying to replace the lost camera. Through the window we could see racks of brochures that might have been helpful but we couldn't get to them! Other people had actually left notes on the door expressing their disappointment that this facility was closed during the high tourist season.

As we walked away, I was able to flag down a city employee in a car that indicated he was with public works. He called someone to inquire about public transportation, saying that hard economic times had caused the closure of the tourist info center. He did say they had had so many complaints that they were trying very hard to come up with funds to reopen it. I never was able to find transportation to the beach or to shopping, so we just hung around this beautiful marina and enjoyed the beautiful day.

I'm disappointed that we've been on the east coast of Florida for over a week and we haven't seen the beach yet! We did get a brief glimpse of the ocean when our nephew drove us to dinner in Boca Raton, but we've not had the opportunity to walk the beaches of Florida that I hear are beautiful! It is unfortunate that all the marinas we've seen so far have been on the west side of the waterway, with no visible transient dockage on the east side so that we could walk or bike to the beach.

Fort Pierce has so much potential with its beautiful waterfront parks, the manatee center, a library right next to the marina, and many nearby restaurants. But how nice it would be to have a trolley or bus to the beach or shopping. Even though we are right downtown, my quick ride through town on the bike when we first got here showed very little in the way of shopping opportunities.just lots of lawyers and banks!

So tomorrow we will move on to Melbourne, probably our final stop before going to Titusville for the shuttle launch on February 7.

<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>
<u>1/26/2010</u>	<u>254</u>	<u>49</u>	<u>4.25</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>27° 27.054'</u>	<u>80° 19.339'</u>	<u>Ft Pierce Marina - Ft Pierce FL</u>	<u>\$93.72</u>	

01-26-10 Ft Pierce Marina - Ft Pierce, FL

[Rick] Just a short note to tell everyone that we have very little "bloggable" material today. We went from North Palm Beach to Ft Pierce a distance of 48 miles. Half of the journey was retracing the route from Stuart FL to North Palm Beach and the other half was no wake. We took no pictures. So, tomorrow, we will have "all of the news that is fit to print" about Ft Pierce.

<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>
<u>1/25/2010</u>	<u>253</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>5.50</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>26° 49.676'</u>	<u>80° 3.557'</u>	<u>North Palm Beach Marina - Peanut Island</u>	<u>\$54.72</u>	
01-25-10 North Palm Beach Marina and Peanut Island									

[Rick] After 3 days in Lighthouse Point, a suburb of Boca Raton and seeing our nephew and friends, we decided to head north and return to North Palm Beach Marina in North Palm Beach. It was a pleasant ride, with several NO WAKE zones so we just took our time. About \_ of the way, just as we approached the Flagler Memorial Bridge in Palm Beach, the rain came in torrents. We circled around and did not go under the bridge until the wind died down. The rain did not last long as it was associated with a fast-moving cold front.

Then we approached Peanut Island. This island is a public park that has been created to preserve a stand of Mangroves and to offer a camping place for anyone that wants to go there. They removed the invasive Australian Pines and have replanted the whole island as a botanical park. There is a floating day dock and a set of stationary docks for boaters. The campground allows you to stay for up to three nights. There are several restroom facilities with showers. One of the more interesting features is a dock and lagoon for snorkeling.

On the north end of the island is an old Coast Guard station, an underground bunker from the cold war and a replica of the HMS Bounty. These are available for touring on Thursdays thru Sunday, so were closed to us today. The brick paved path encircles the whole island and makes for a great walking trail though the lush plantings.

We arrived at the marina about 1600, reclaiming the same slip that we had before.

<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>
<u>1/24/2010</u>	<u>252</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>26° 16.027'</u>	<u>80° 4.991'</u>	<u>Lighthouse Point Marina - Church</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
01-24-10 Lighthouse Point - The Pink Church									

[Rick] Well, today is Sunday and that means finding a church to attend. Yesterday, while riding her bike in town, Betsy saw The First Presbyterian Church or "The Pink Church" as it is known. This is as close to a mega-church as we have attended. They have a Casual, Contemporary, and a Traditional service and the church holds about 1500 people. The pulpit is in the shape of the bow of a boat. Over the past 8 months, we have attended about every ceremony or special occasion that is performed in a church. We have baptized babies, admitted new members, installed elders, taken communion, lit 4 Advent candles, and had homecoming. Today, at The Pink Church, was "Scottish Heritage Day". This is special for Betsy and me as we attended St Andrews Presbyterian College which has a terrific Scottish heritage including an award winning Scottish pipe and drum corps. The service today had a bagpiper, a presentation of the Scottish Clan Flags, and a special poem by Scottish poet Robert Burns. Tartan and plaid was in abundance throughout the church. The minister, Rev. Jack Noble, has been at this church for 15 years and was animated. In the afternoon, we received a call from Joe Giuliano of Ft Lauderdale. He is the owner of a Glacier Bay Cat and called to let us know that if we need any assistance, shopping, etc, he was available. He has been reading our blog since the beginning and read that we were in the area. Since we had just gone to the store and stocked up, we declined his offer, but we certainly appreciate the thought and offer. Thanks, Joe. We have decided not to go further south. We have seen all the huge yachts and houses we need, so tomorrow, we begin to head north and our rendezvous with shuttle launch in Titusville, FL on Feb 7.

<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>
<u>1/23/2010</u>	<u>251</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>26° 16.027'</u>	<u>80° 4.991'</u>	<u>Lighthouse Point Marina - Visitors</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>

01-23-10 Lighthouse Point and Visitors

[Rick] Today was a very special day for us. In addition to the Goodyear Blimp hovering over us for most of the day, we had 3 visitors. We thoroughly enjoyed each one of them and hope they had a good time visiting our boat and getting the 2 minute tour.

Our first guest was David Bremer. David and his wife own a Glacier Bay 22 foot boat that they use for fishing and diving around the Boca Raton area. I had placed a note on the Glacier Bay Owners Forum at the beginning of the trip telling these owners about the trip and inviting them to follow along with the blog. David has been following along with us from the beginning. Early on he e-mailed me to say that if we get to this area, he would be happy to assist us and even has a dock to tie to. He came over this morning and after a tour of the boat, we talked about aspects of the trip and answered his questions. He gave us some insight into the local boating, inlets, etc. He and his wife are not old enough for retirement so a loop trip is some time away. But, they have something to look forward to doing one of these days. We regret that we did not get a photo of David for the blog.

Our second visitor was Bonnie. She is the ex-wife of my brother Carl and we have not seen her in many, many years. She also got the 2 minute tour and we chatted for about 2 hours. She lives here in Boca Raton. It was wonderful to see her after these many years and we had a great time catching up and just being friends.

Our third visitor was Ryan, the son of Bonnie and Carl. We have not seen him in several years. Ryan is a biology major at Florida Atlantic University and is trying to decide between being a Pharmacist or a Physician's Assistant. He seems to be a wonderful young man, level headed, and a sense of what he wants to in the future. Using Ryan's truck, we accompanied him to a local restaurant that he recommended. The food was delicious and the company even better. We both hope that it is not years before we see him again as we really enjoyed our time with him.

<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>
<u>1/22/2010</u>	<u>250</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>4.50</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>26° 16.027'</u>	<u>80° 4.991'</u>	<u>Lighthouse Point Marina - Lighthouse Poi</u>	<u>\$216.03</u>	

01-22-10 Boca Raton

Betsy speaks. We left North Palm Beach this morning heading to just south of Boca Raton. It was another beautiful day, sunny and hot. The scenery was much like what we had seen yesterday: mega-mansions and mega-yachts. The size of these houses is just unimaginable! And they're still building them, as evidenced by these two under construction side by side.

At least the owner of this house has good taste in boats. that's a Glacier Bay docked in front, same make and length as ours.

But if you can't afford a mega mansion or yacht, why not just put a pup tent on top of your boat and anchor out? Seems to work for this guy!

Or buy an old sailboat to live on, and just dock near the rich guys!

We also see many, many highrise condos, some elegant, especially those in the West Palm Beach area, and some more modest that appear to be older and probably more affordable.

We pass through many Manatee Zones, and are really trying to follow the rules to the letter. But OOPS! We missed one sign. There are several different kinds of zones. some are idle speed no wake, some are slow speed minimum wake, some are manatee zones east or west of Intracoastal Waterway channel but OK to do 25 mph in the channel, so you really have to pay attention to the signs. We were in the town of Lantana, between two bridges in what looked to be pretty open water. There were no other boats around, and the shore was fairly distant on both sides of the channel. I was at the wheel. We both heard a siren, Rick looked behind us and yelled for me to stop, there was a blue light coming on us fast! Sure enough, we were doing about 19MPH in a slow speed Manatee Zone. The officer was very nice and seeing that we were from North Carolina and obviously not familiar with the area he just gave us a warning. We were sincerely apologetic. Now we'll just have to be even more careful until we're out of Florida!

Up until today we'd only seen two manatees: the one that we saw rescued up in Port St. Joe, and one other one that took a quick dive off to the side of the channel. After our discussion with the officer that stopped us we moved slowly forward toward the next bridge, which is where this particular zone ended. We wondered aloud how the manatees knew where the zones were. how do they know not to go under that bridge?! Just about then, not two minutes after the officer drove off and not 200 feet from the bridge where the zone ended a large manatee came up and immediately dove down right smack in front of the boat! So I'm glad we didn't hit him, and we continue to wonder how they know to stay inside those zone signs!

One interesting thing we passed today was a 39 foot Silverton being towed by Towboat US. This Silverton is the exact model that we've fallen in love with and hope to buy one once we get home to do the loop next time. Later in the day, we saw the Towboat US boat pull into the marina where we are, so Rick talked to him about why the boat was being towed (overheated engine). Not enough to scare me off of the boat I've fallen in love with!

Today we passed through the towns of Lake Worth, Palm Beach and West Palm Beach, Delray Beach, Highland Beach, and Boca Raton. This weekend we will visit with Rick's nephew Ryan who lives in Boca Raton. Ryan is a college student, studying to be a pharmacist.

We've decided to make this our southernmost stop. We had thought we might go to Fort Lauderdale, but after talking to some of the locals we learn that the scenery from here to there is much more of the same: MONEY, MONEY, MONEY. And since it's not our money we've decided

<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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we've seen enough of it, so we've contacted a couple of friends in Fort Lauderdale and told them if they want to see us they'll have to come here. probably less than 20 miles. The marinas get more and more expensive as you go south. I don't think you want to try to outrun the Customs/Immigraton guys here. their 900 horsepower would be able to catch most boats! We saw them cruising out of the marina this afternoon.

Personal note to my buddy Bill: at your suggestion, we've changed our reservations for the space shuttle launch to the Titusville Municipal Marina! Thanks!

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<u>1/21/2010</u>	<u>249</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>3.75</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>26° 49.675'</u>	<u>80° 3.560'</u>	<u>North Palm Beach Marina</u>	<u>\$54.72</u>	
01-21-10 Show Me the Money...									

[Rick] We left the marina at Stuart, Fl and made our way 35 miles South to North Palm Beach and the marina there. The North Palm Beach Marina is a very nice one indeed. The cost is reasonable (1.75 per foot plus electric), has wonderful bathroom/shower suites, laundry, cable, free wifi and a decent ships store. One of the marinas we looked at to stay charged \$5.35 per foot, plus \$10 for electric plus 12.5% tax. We quickly dismissed that marina. The marina we are scheduled to stay tomorrow is \$2.25 plus Electric.

The weather was windy and the Intracoastal Waterway had some chop to it. It is great to finally have some great weather. We had the cold weather for so long, that we are appreciative of the great days we have had lately. Today the temperature was 80 with the overnight temp of 67. Best of all, the next week is to be just as good. The weatherman says it will be cooler next week with the temps falling to 72. My kind of weather guy.

Many of our readers have travelled by car to Florida via I-95. The Intracoastal Waterway runs parallel to I-95 and you have seen some of the houses along the highway. Some huge homes are built on the water. In the area that we travelled today, a 5000 sq ft home is considered servants quarters. At one point, Betsy said that she thought one house was a Country Club, only to realize that the next one was even larger and the next one even larger. It is incredible the size of these houses. In addition, in front of many of these homes is sitting a multi-million dollar yacht. On the down side, there are many homes for sale. There is a lot of debt in Florida.

We passed the lighthouse at Jupiter inlet, about the same time we saw the incredibly blue water that has come from the ocean into the inlet. We've been to the Caribbean and to the Bahamas, and neither of us had ever seen water this incredible color of blue. I'm sure the pictures don't do it justice.

As usual, we are the smallest boat in the marina..

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<u>1/20/2010</u>	<u>248</u>	<u>58</u>	<u>6.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>27° 12.250'</u>	<u>80° 15.842'</u>	<u>Waterway Marina - Stuart Fl</u>	<u>\$52.00</u>	<u>2</u>
	01-20-10	Stuart Fl							

[Rick] Today's post may ramble a bit, as it was a long day. It all started yesterday while we were biking around Clewiston. I had gone back to the boat, and somewhere in town, Betsy lost the camera. She knew exactly where she had taken the last picture, so backtracked no more than 5 blocks looking for the camera that must have fallen out of her pocket but with no luck. Luckily we had taken all the photos off the night before. That is why there was no blog yesterday. Before leaving today, we got some great shots, with our movie camera that takes stills, of some Ibis on the dock.

We left Clewiston and the Roland Martin Marina around 1000. Roland Martin is a famous bass fisherman and is featured on a ton of fishing shows, including his own. Apparently Lake Okeechobee is one of the bass capitals of the world with tournaments going on all the time. We entered Lake Okeechobee heading for Stuart, FL. The channel was well marked and we made good time.

Arriving at the far edge of the lake, we called the Port Mayaca lock and asked to be locked through. We were to be lowered to the level of the St. Lucie River/Canal. The lockmaster said come on in and go through. When we saw the chamber, we noticed that the doors were open at both ends. Since the lake is so low, there was no rise or fall and we just went through like driving through a canyon.

The next 20 or so miles were slow as there were no wake zones all along the way. It was also a ditch, peaceful, but not real pretty. We kept a sharp eye out for alligators but saw none. We did see two Bald Eagles soaring above us at one point. We also saw a boat that appeared to have been stranded in a flood. Although we've seen many Great Blue Herons along the way, today we also saw a Little Blue Heron.

Arriving at the St Lucie lock, we called ahead and had to wait for a few minutes. While there, some people with the slimmest boats put in and paddled away. The craft, which appeared to be some sort of kayak, were hardly 10 inches wide and they paddled on one leg as in the picture. We traversed the St Lucie lock, our 117th and last lock. Betsy had a lump in her throat knowing that she is getting close to home and does not want to get back there. (Betsy corrects: it is not that I don't want to get home, it's that I don't want this fabulous trip to end).

We arrived in Stuart, the eastern terminus of the Okeechobee waterway. Betsy saw a fabulous bird, first wading, then flying off. she identified it as a Wood Stork, but was not able to get a picture of it. However, we did find this picture on the internet that is exactly like what she saw. This bird was nearly 4 feet tall, with a huge wing span, pearly white with black border all the way around the wing.

We are back on the East Coast and for the rest of the trip will be in the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway, our home waters. As usual, the sunset was spectacular.

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<u>1/18/2010</u>	<u>246</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>7.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>26° 45.440'</u>	<u>80° 55.123'</u>	<u>Roland Martin Marina - Clewiston, FL</u>	<u>\$108.08</u>	<u>3</u>
01-18-10 Clewiston, FL									

Betsy speaks: After emptying the waste tank and filling the gas tank, we pulled away from Fort Myers Yacht Basin about 10 AM this morning, heading along the Caloosahatchee River toward Clewiston, FL, on Lake Okeechobee. It was a beautiful day, warm and sunny and not too windy. We were glad we didn't plan to travel yesterday when the wind was really whipping up waves on the wide expanse in front of the marina. The several trailer parks we past just east of Fort Myers were a strong contrast to the huge mansions we had passed as we approached Fort Myers last week. We are now entering what is considered "old Florida" where smaller homes and retirement communities of trailers are prevalent.

Not far along, we passed a power plant. There are many manatee zones, where you must go at slow speed, all along this waterway. We were especially careful as we passed in front of the power plant, because the water is warmer near power plants and the manatees tend to congregate there. This has been especially true over the past several weeks when the weather has been much colder than normal, so they congregate in huge numbers in the warm water near these plants. We've seen pictures on the news and on the front pages of newspapers of them huddled together by the 100s. However, we were not lucky enough to see any.

Later, as we approached our first lock of the three we went through today, we heard the lock master warning the boat that was coming toward us out of the lock that there was a manatee just off his starboard bow. So we carefully entered the lock keeping a close watch. Once secure in the lock, we asked the lock master if there was still a manatee in the lock, and he said yes and it was headed in the same direction we were, east. As we were locking up we caught one very quick glimpse of him, but were not quick enough to get a picture.

Shortly after leaving the lock we were passing some houses, still in a no wake zone, and we finally got a good look at a manatee swimming along and then taking a quick dive with a light tail slap. Again, it was too quick to get a picture, but at least we finally saw a manatee other than the sick one in Port St. Joe that we saw rescued several weeks ago.

We ate lunch on board while underway, and early this afternoon pulled off in the town of LaBelle to let Beamer off the boat for a few minutes. They had a nice little city dock and boat ramp.

As the day wore on we were on the lookout for more manatees and were hoping to see an alligator. Actually, we were both surprised at how built up it was along this stretch..we had both expected more of a nature cruise today rather than so many houses along the way. Nearly every house in Florida has a screened "cage" surrounding their swimming pool. This one was really huge!

We went through two more locks, for a total of three for the day and a total rise of only 18 feet. The locks were very easy compared to some we've been through.small and short rises. These are very much like the locks on the Erie Canal in that there are ropes hanging on the sides that you grab (wearing gloves), but were so much smaller and cleaner than the Erie locks, and the lock masters were very friendly here. There were spectators at each lock, as well, and Rick would always yell up to them as we exited that we charged a quarter for them to watch us! No one threw money at us.

Unlike the locks on the Erie, the Tennessee River and the Trent Severn Canals, these locks do not produce energy. They are strictly to step you up or down. There are no pumps involved. With these locks, they simply open the door slightly once you are inside and water rushes in through that opening and raises the water level in the lock. Once we are across the Okeechobee, we will be locking back down, so water will be released from the small opening in the door to lower us down. We got some great pictures of the water coming into the lock to raise us up today.

Leaving the final lock we are within spittin' distance of Lake Okeechobee but can't actually see it. There is sort of a levee between us and the lake. You come out of the lock and almost immediately come to a "T." There is a sign indicating that Clewiston (our goal for today) and Stuart (the end of this section of the waterway, on the east coast) are to the right. Once we make that turn, our vista takes a drastic change.now we are in the wilderness that we had expected today!

We are now in a narrow passage with virtually nothing on either side. To our right is the mainland but there is nothing there; to our left is Lake Okeechobee but we can't see it over the strip of marshland. Almost immediately we see our first alligator of the trip, slowly drifting along almost

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like a log. We got a couple of pictures before he dove.

We did see a couple of more gators along the shore, but by the time we slowed down, backed up and got the camera they had slid into the water. After a couple of false alarms mistaking Ospreys for Eagles from a distance we did clearly see two Bald Eagles high up in the trees right next to each other. How magnificent they are! We also saw many, many Blue Herons, Great White Herons and Snowy Egrets, as well as hundreds of cormorants. Our final wildlife thrill of the day was seeing an otter right on the dock shortly after we pulled into the marina.

Arriving at the town of Clewiston, we did go through one final lock, but it was open on both ends and we just went right through with no rise or fall. Actually, this is used more as a hurricane gate than a lock, to keep the town safe from any flooding of the Okeechobee in the event of a storm.

Once through that gate, we immediately tied up at the Rowland Martin Marina, right next to their Tiki Bar and Restaurant. We went up to pay the fee, and as we walked back to the boat a couple of guys asked if we wanted a free beer. Seems they had ordered more than they could drink, once they realized that one had to go home and baby sit and the other one didn't want to have another beer because he had to drive. Rick said he didn't drink, but I was right behind him and I said I'd gladly take a free beer. So thanks for the beer, Mikey! We admired you both for being responsible young men. We took a picture and told them they'd be on our blog tonight!

Today was a long day, about seven hours on the water. So tomorrow we'll stay here an extra day to rest up and do a little sightseeing before heading into Lake Okeechobee on Wednesday.

And a final, personal note. Today is celebrated as Martin Luther King Day, but in my family it is celebrated as June U. Gunter day. My father and Martin Luther King shared the same birthday, January 15, so we've always considered this a holiday in memory of my father, who like King was a man of gentleness, peace, and extraordinary wisdom. May they both rest in peace.

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<u>1/17/2010</u>	<u>245</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>26° 38.860'</u>	<u>81° 52.166'</u>	<u>Fort Myers Yacht Basin - Church</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>

01-17-10 Ft. Myers Sunday

Betsy Speaks: Prior to leaving the Edison/Ford summer homes site yesterday we asked one of the docents if there was a church nearby. She said if we wanted to go to an historic church there was one in the subdivision right next to the museum grounds. So we rode our bikes there to make sure we knew where it was and to see what time services were.

Today we went to that church, the Thomas A. Edison Congregational Church. When the lady yesterday first told us it was a Congregational Church Rick had some reservations, since that is not a common denomination where we live, but I assured him it was an OK denomination, as I have several Congregationalists in my ancestral background. Mrs. Edison wanted a church near their winter home, so she was instrumental in getting this church started. The Edisons donated two of the four lots on which the church sits. The church was chartered in 1925, and the first service was held there in November 1931, shortly after Thomas Edison died. Mina Edison lived many years after that and attended church here when she was in town. Originally named the Community Congregational Church, the congregation received permission from the Edison family to change the name to the Thomas A. Edison Congregational Church in 1964.

We arrived early and were greeted at the door by the pastor, Rev. Douglas Kelchner, who has only been here since December. The members we chatted with are very pleased with their new minister, as well they should be! We enjoyed him very much. Overall, I'd say this was as close to being like our home church, Sneads Ferry Presbyterian, as any church we've visited on this trip. One exception was that they didn't stand for several of the hymns. I like to stand when I sing! The choir sang a lot. Introit, solo, before and after the main prayer, and an anthem! And our favorite thing: fellowship with food following the service!

Leaving the church, we stopped at the Edison/Ford homesite again. Yesterday's ticket is good for three days, and we wanted to take the guided tour today that we didn't take yesterday. We were lucky to have a wonderful tour guide, a young man that was extremely animated and really knew his stuff. It was fun and educational listening to him, and I think we both picked up on several things we had missed yesterday when we just did the self tour with recorded info that you listen to with a speaker wand.

Mrs. Edison was a lover of flowers, and the grounds at the estate reflect that. Most impressive are the hundreds of orchids, most of which are growing on Mango Trees. The Mangos line the entire front of the estate grounds, and in each tree are several orchids. Too bad the cold weather recently has damaged the blooms on most of them, but those few that were still blooming were spectacular.

As mentioned yesterday, the trees on the estates are also breathtaking. The various kinds of Ficus trees, from the magnificent Banyan to the most interesting Mysore Fig, are truly amazing and the Mysore is worth another picture. The roots are mostly above ground in a very interesting formation. According to our guide today, only a few inches or root are below ground. Yet the massive trees have withstood hurricanes and tropical storms for nearly 100 years.

There are also many Staghorn Ferns scattered throughout the properties. Some are growing on trees, and several are huge hanging baskets, as the one pictured here which is about eight feet from top to bottom.

Rick mentioned yesterday that both homes now belong to the City of Fort Myers, but he didn't tell how that happened. The Edisons had built their summer home themselves in 1886, and it remained in their family until Mrs. Edison deeded it to the city for the sum of \$1.00 (yes, one dollar) in 1947. Henry Ford purchased the home next door for \$20,000 in 1916, then sold it to the Biggars family for \$20,000 in 1934. In 1988 the Biggars family sold it to the town of Fort Myers for \$1.2 million!

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Thomas Edison asked the town for permission to line MacGregor Boulevard in front of the homes with Royal Palms and they said OK. So the palms were planted by Edison and have been continuously cared for by the town. Subsequently Royal Palms were planted for miles along the Boulevard in both directions, thus lending the nickname "City of Palms" to Fort Myers. It is a stunning corridor. There are also corridors of Royal Palms leading from the homes to the water.

It was another beautiful and warm day, though very windy this afternoon. We did have a little rain storm last night. Tomorrow we will head east on the Caloosahatchee River/Intracoastal Waterway toward Lake Okeechobee.

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<u>1/16/2010</u>	<u>244</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>26° 38.860'</u>	<u>81° 52.166'</u>	<u>Fort Myers Yacht Basin - Edison-Ford Mus</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
<p>01-16-10 Edison/Ford Homes and Museum</p> <p>[Rick] Our day today was consumed by our visit to the Thomas Edison/Henry ford Homes and Museum. I am not going to try to describe all we saw, as that would be impossible. I do urge anyone in this area to visit this museum in Ft Myers. Betsy and I were there today for about 6 hours, did not see it all, and plan to return tomorrow for more.</p> <p>Edison had his home built in Maine and shipped in pieces to Ft Myers, where he had purchased 13 acres for \$2,750. The locals thought him nuts to have paid so much. He came here with his new wife, Mina Miller, in 1894 and used "Seminole Lodge" as his winter home until his death in 1931. Seminole Lodge is very nicely furnished, with original furnishings intact, but not gaudy or ostentatious in any manner. It is located on the banks of the Caloosahatchee River and is very functional regarding openness for breezes and enjoying the warm climate.</p> <p>Edison was named the American Man of the Millennium for the 20th century, and for good reason. He had 1,093 patents issued to him, a record to this day. He had a patent issued each year for 65 consecutive years, another record. He was absolutely prolific, inventing machinery, the phonograph, the electric light bulb, a movie camera and projector, a talking doll, owned a cement business and much, much more.</p> <p>Henry Ford worked in one of Edison's companies and they became very good friends, especially when Ford asked Edison to invent the necessary batteries and starting mechanism for his "Tin-Lizzie" Model A Ford. In 1916, Ford purchased the house and 5 acre property adjacent to Edison in Ft Myers for \$20,000. The house was called "The Mangoes" because of all the Mango trees on the property. The Edison and Fords would remain friends for the rest of their lives.</p> <p>Both of the homes have been purchased by the City of Ft Myers, renovated, and are open for tours and visitors each day from 0900 through 1730.</p> <p>I mentioned yesterday about the trips Ford, Edison, Firestone, and William Burroughs would take together. Often the President of the US would travel with them. Here is more detail on those trips.</p> <p>In his later years, Edison, Ford, and Firestone formed a company to try to make rubber from nature and alleviate the US dependence on foreign rubber, especially in times of war. This sounds familiar, doesn't? To this end, they planted an enormous number of trees and other plants to study the latex producing properties. They eventually found that a common weed, Goldenrod, was the best source and at one time had over 100,000 Goldenrod Plants.</p> <p>Another tree they planted was the Banyan tree. The one in the photo was planted by Edison 85 years ago, was 4 feet tall, and 2 inches in circumference. Today, the tree covers over 1 acre. The largest Banyan tree is in India and covers over 20 acres. The Banyan grows by sending down roots from the branches to the ground, where the roots become tree trunks. Everything you see in this picture is ONE tree. You will recall we saw these same trees at the Ringling Mansion in Sarasota. Actually, the Banyan tree is a type of Ficus Tree which is a common house plant. Another tree of the same Ficus genus is the Mysore Fig, and there was a stunning example of this on Ford's property near the river. This tree does not send out the hanging roots like the Banyan, but has an extraordinary root system at its base, above ground.</p> <p>Today was a special day at the museum. Some old car buffs had driven a collection of old cars to the site and they were on display. The Packard was spectacular as were the others.</p> <p>Tomorrow, if the predicted rain is not too bad, we will go to the Edison Congregational Church and then back to the museum.</p>									

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<u>1/15/2010</u>	<u>243</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>2.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>26° 38.860'</u>	<u>81° 52.166'</u>	<u>Fort Myers Yacht Basin - Fort Myers, FL</u>	<u>\$141.92</u>	

01-15-10 Ft Myers, FL

[Rick] We departed Sanibel Marina and made our way to Ft Myers Yacht Basin, a journey of just 20 miles. We are still on the Intracoastal Waterway and beginning our journey on the Okeechobee waterway, our ticket to the East Coast of Florida. For this part of the trip, we are on the Caloosahatchee River which turns into the Okeechobee River/Canal.

As we motor along, we see a weather station, in the water, with a sign on it that says "Obstruction". No joke. We also saw an island with a tiki hut, barbeque grills, a nice dock. However, the sign says "No Trespassing". Also on this stretch of river, the houses are huge.

We arrive at the Ft Myers Yacht Basin and have a great place to dock. We are very close to the restrooms/showers/laundry. The personnel were very friendly.

It turns out that the City of Ft Myers today is dedicating its "New" downtown. For the past 5 years, they have been replacing all the understreet utilities and replacing the asphalt streets with BRICKS. Palm trees line the streets and all of the traffic signals were removed creating numerous four way stops ( one of my pet peeves). Tonight, there are about 8 bands and groups in various locations around the downtown. Lucky for us, the weather was finally great. When the sun went down, it did not turn cold as it has for the last month.

As we rode our bikes to the Publix supermarket, we passed an interesting sculpture in one of the many parks in the city. The sculpture shows Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, and Harvey Firestone sitting around a camp fire. Edison is lighting the fire. An old story relates that Edison, Ford, Firestone, and whoever was the President of the United States at the time, would take road trips together. No bodyguards, no servants. They would visit parks such as the Everglades. Sometime the trips would be a month in length. They almost always camped out. These men were pioneers in the industrialization of the United States, and one can only wonder about the conversations between these industrial giants.

<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>
<u>1/14/2010</u>	<u>242</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>26° 27.025'</u>	<u>82° 1.872'</u>	<u>Sanibel Marina - Shell Museum</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>

01-14-10 Sanibel Island, Shell Museum

Betsy writes: We started the day with hot blueberry muffins and a local newspaper, both delivered to the boat compliments of Sanibel Marina. a nice touch!

Like many marinas, this marina has a yacht brokerage business. There are several brand new boats sitting around for sale, as well as several used boats. We thought it was interesting that they also have a sea plane for sale! One other comment on this marina...the slips are the narrowest of any we've seen. Fitting into our slip was a test in our maneuverability skills, and I'm glad we didn't have to do it on a windy day!

Then there was some excitement on the dock as a photo shoot for a pet supply catalog took place. Most of the people involved had come all the way from Plymouth, Massachusetts for this. The dogs and trainer I think were local. The dogs were modeling doggie life jackets, and they seemed pretty uncomfortable about it. They just refused to stay when they were supposed to, so it took all morning. They were working on a cover for an upcoming catalog.

It was a beautiful day with the warming trend still continuing. By lunch time the temps were up to about 70. We decided to take a bike ride into town. I wanted to visit the shell museum that I had heard about, a bike ride of just over 4 miles one way. There is a wonderful bike path throughout the town, with areas along the way for you to stop and rest or get water, all very flat. This is a very nice feature in any town! By the time we got to the museum Rick was ready to head back to the boat, so I went in by myself. He really just came along for the exercise, knowing I would want to window shop all the way back.

I really enjoyed the museum, which had exhibits not only of local shells but of shells from around the world. The first exhibit was of tiny shells, some no larger than a grain of sand, and this is as large as they ever get. It was pointed out that you are walking on these whenever you walk the beach and don't even realize it because they are just in with the sand. The most fascinating thing to me was the display of "Sailor's Valentines," beautiful shell art that was mistakenly attributed to sailors but was actually bought by sailors to take home to their wives, etc. These things were absolutely gorgeous, and I can't imagine the amount of work that must go in to them! Read the explanation in the picture below.

The museum also had a couple of 30 minute videos, one of which I watched and found very interesting. It showed how to identify tracks,, how conchs and whelks capture and eat food, where to dig to find undersand treasures based on things you see on the surface, etc. I didn't have time to watch the second video, so I'll have to come back again on our next trip!

As you leave the museum you pass an exhibit of a county fair where all the people and animals are made from shells. It reminded me a little of the wonderful miniature circus we had seen just last week at the Ringling Museum, although it was not nearly as intricate.

I had a very leisurely bike ride back, stopping in shops all along the way. I've decided Sanibel is one of my favorite stops of the trip, a perfectly beautiful island with a lot to offer vacationers.

<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>
<u>1/13/2010</u>	<u>241</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>2.50</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>26° 27.025'</u>	<u>82° 1.872'</u>	<u>Sanibel Marina - Sanibel Island, FL</u>	<u>\$126.24</u>	

[Rick] We decided to leave Ron and Marji's house in Punta Gorda and proceeded to Sanibel Island and the Sanibel Marina. Ron and Marji have been perfect hosts. They arranged for us to dock our boat next door with a neighbor as their boat, Meander, is docked at their house. They have a beautiful home on a canal in Punta Gorda. Before leaving, Betsy took more pictures of the endangered Burrowing Owls. Remember, the person that owns the vacant lot cannot do anything with the lot as long as the owls are on the property.

We had a perfect day for boat travel. As we headed out of Charlotte Harbor, we passed Jack and Pia, who had left about 30 minutes before us. They plan to anchor out tonight, and may join us here in Sanibel Marina tomorrow. The seas today were glassy smooth and the temperatures are getting a little warmer every day. Tomorrow we expect to see low 70s at last.

We travelled about 45 miles today, down Charlotte Harbor back into the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, which is much like our Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway. We arrived at Sanibel Marina on the south end of Sanibel Island early this afternoon. We checked in and got the bikes off the boat for a trek to the lighthouse. This light house, opened in 1884, has been fully restored. The lighthouse is on a beautiful beach that adjoins the Gulf of Mexico. While on the beach, Betsy had to put her foot into the Gulf. She figured this would be her last chance as when we leave here we will be heading inland and leaving the Gulf behind. She always likes to put her feet in the water at least once wherever we are!

<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>
<u>1/12/2010</u>	<u>240</u>			<u>W</u>	<u>26° 54.321'</u>	<u>82° 5.074'</u>	<u>Ron and Marji - Punta Gorda, FL</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
	01-12-10	Punta Gorda							

Betsy speaks: First I want to make a couple of comments about our experience with the sea turtle yesterday. I was astonished at how hard it was to find the right agency to come and get the turtle! One number we called had a recording saying that if you see an injured turtle you must not try to catch it or put it in your boat, even if it is dead. Then we called a couple of other places, and two places we called asked if we could possibly get the turtle into our boat ourselves. I asked them what they suggested we do if we were able to get the turtle in our boat, and they had no good answer! I never thought it would be appropriate for us to try to get the turtle onto our boat. It took nearly an hour of phone calls before we even found someone who was willing to arrange for a boat to come to the rescue. I kept saying to Rick that I was sure if we were in North Carolina we wouldn't be having this problem! I hope I was right. I was so tempted to call Jean Beasley at "our" sea turtle hospital to see if she had any suggestions or contacts in Florida, but that just seemed too far fetched!

Then when the Florida Fish and Wildlife boat finally did come to the rescue I was even more disturbed/irate. They seemed totally unprepared to save this helpless creature. They had on board a rather small net, which I described as one step above a minnow net. The handle was barely long enough for the net to reach the water. They did not appear to have a rope or large net to capture the turtle. After making a couple of feeble attempts to get the turtle with the net, one of the officers started trying to grab him by hand, but kept jerking his hand back like he was afraid of being bitten. There was no swim platform on the boat, so the only way they could get the turtle was to somehow grab him from the rather high freeboard and pull him over the side of the boat. As we watched them making very little progress, going round and round him to the point I was afraid they were going to run over him, I said to Rick "Let's just leave now and not watch anymore." I was afraid that in another minute they would just give up and leave, and after guarding this thing for over two hours I couldn't have stood that. So I wanted to just leave and not know what the outcome was and hope for the best rather than know the worst. As we turned and started heading away, they got the net out again, and with what I think may have been their last ditch effort they did manage to get the turtle into the net and onto the boat. Fortunately this was a relatively small turtle. If it had been any larger they would never have managed to get it on the boat they brought. How different this was from the manatee rescue we had seen a couple of weeks ago where they had a boat that was specially adapted for wildlife rescue from the water.

We went over and asked them where they were going to take him, and they said they were talking to a marine biologist on the phone and he would tell them where to go with it. So all we could do was thank them for their efforts and hope the turtle was taken somewhere that could help it. When we first saw the turtle he was not very active. In fact we thought it might be dead. But then we did see some movement, and after a while as the day warmed up the turtle became much more active. I really think that with the right treatment it can be saved. There was a propeller injury on its back that appeared to be an old injury. So I'm hoping the turtle was just cold stunned and will be fine once it gets some food and some warmth.

One other thing that was interesting about the sea turtle experience was that as we were waiting for help to arrive we were several times surrounded by dolphins. I've heard of dolphins surrounding injured wildlife before, and I guess that's what was happening here. There were several large groups of dolphins nearby. I can't say they ever really came right up to the turtle, but they did seem to hover around like they were interested in what was going on.

Today I got to see yet another endangered species one I've never heard of before. Not far from Ron and Marji's house there are some Burrowing Owls. These owls are nesting in a vacant lot, in a little area of brush right near the side of the road. The unfortunate thing is that this is a waterfront lot, probably valued at \$500,000 or more, yet the owner can't build on the lot or disturb it in any way as long as these owls are here!

<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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Punta Gorda is a community where probably 90% of the homes are waterfront, thanks to the maze of canals that were dug back in the 1950s. The canals have a concrete sea wall which is the responsibility of the town of Punta Gorda. Each property owner can build a lift or dock next to the sea wall, but the wall itself belongs to the town. A visitor to the area (us) can get totally lost in the canals! The homes along the canals are beautiful. Most are one story, nearly all have a swimming pool surrounded by a large screened "cage" attached to the house. In Ron and Marji's house, the whole wall of their living room is glass that retracts into the wall, like a pocket door, so that the pool area almost becomes part of the living room. It is a beautiful concept and creates a beautiful, open, airy home.

We are thoroughly enjoying our stay here, sharing boat hunting tales with Pia and Jack who are also in the market for a bigger boat. All three couples have agreed we want to do the loop again, probably in 2012. Pia and Jack spent quite some time this afternoon on a neighbor's boat that they are considering purchasing. Pia is an interior designer and is interested in buying a "fixer upper" boat and completely redoing the inside. She is also helping Marji with some interior design ideas for her house, which I think is already a showplace!

We plan to leave here tomorrow and head on south. The weather today was finally beautifully sunny and WARM! And it is supposed to continue to warm up as the week wears on. Hopefully by Friday I'll be working on a winter tan!

One more thing from yesterday's blog. Rick failed to mention the size of the hermit crab. he just said it was the largest one we'd ever seen. My estimation is that the conch shell this crab was in was a foot long! That's a BIG hermit crab!

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<u>1/11/2010</u>	<u>239</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>4.25</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>26° 54.321'</u>	<u>82° 5.074'</u>	<u>Ron and Marji - Punta Gorda, FL</u>		
01-11-10 Punta Gorda, FL Sea Turtle Rescue									

[Rick] Today started out like many other days. We got up. Showered, ate breakfast, cast off the lines, and left the marina for the next stop of the trip. In fact, Palm Island Marina was like many other marinas on the trip. We left for Punta Gorda, FL and a meeting with our loop friends Ron and Marji Cyr and Jack and Pia Griffin. Ron and Marji are residents of Punta Gorda and have a house on a canal in the city. We had been traveling about 45 minutes when we heard a call on the VHF radio about a Loggerhead Turtle floating on the surface between markers 4 and 5. We were not sure where this was, as the markers reset between the bridges and it could be in front of us or behind us. This interested us as we are big supporters of the Karen Beasley Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Hospital in Topsail Beach, NC. We have seen the doctors and volunteers work mini-miracles with injured turtles. Knowing that injured or sick turtles usually float near the surface, we wanted to be on the lookout.

When we came to the next set of markers 4 and 5, we slowed down to see if there was a stunned turtle there and sure enough, there it was. The boat that had made the distress call did not wait for help to come, so the turtle was not being protected in any way, and we were just lucky to have heard the call and seen the turtle. It was a young turtle, about 36 inches long and 24 inches wide. It was floating on the surface. After a minute, we determined that the turtle was alive, having seen movement of the flippers and raising its head. It appeared to be a young loggerhead. We looked at the local area brochures we had on the boat and rounded up several numbers for wildlife, usually to be told they were not the right people and to call another number. Several times we got recordings and had to leave a message. We finally reported the turtle and its position to a state wildlife officer. He called back and said it would take an hour for him to arrive, so he was asking for someone closer to come. They should arrive in about 30 minutes. We stayed with the turtle, keeping passing boats from hitting it. Luckily, there was little boat traffic due to the cold weather.

The turtle continued to float, occasionally raising its head and spitting water into the air. After 30 minutes passed, we called to ask if they were on the way. We were told that the first boat would not start, but a second one was on the way. In fact, the wildlife boat did arrive about 10 minutes later. The boat was staffed with two officers. They made several passes by the turtle. They finally succeeded in getting it into the boat where they covered it with a blanket and called a marine biologist on the cell phone. At this point, we made the assumption that the turtle would be taken care of and we left to continue our trip. We had spent over two hours trying to get help and guarding the little guy, but it was well worth it. We are confident that with some heat and some food, this turtle will be released into the water again and live a long and healthy life.

We arrived in Punta Gorda and Ron and Marji came out to meet us in their dinghy, AirMail. As the led us through a maze of canals to their house we saw many birds, including several Black Crowned Night Herons that we mentioned in the blog several days ago. Also we saw many Pelicans nesting in the trees along an area commonly called Pelican Condos by the locals. Finally we arrived at Ron and Marji's beautiful home and tied up to the pier of the next door neighbor. He has graciously agreed to let us do so. Once tied up, we hugged Marji, Pia, and Jack. We gingerly shook Ron's hand, having been told by Marji yesterday that Ron was still in pain from an accident about three weeks ago. He had gone out to his boat to get something, and as he was getting off the boat the stepstool to the dock broke and he took a bad fall, breaking three ribs and putting knots on his head and hip.

We had a lovely pizza meal with them for supper. We got caught up on all the latest looper gossip, news, and happenings. We will be here until Wednesday morning, when Jack and Pia leave. We will be right behind them as we make our way to Ft Myers.

<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>
<u>1/10/2010</u>	<u>238</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>3.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>26° 52.239'</u>	<u>82° 18.639'</u>	<u>Cape Haze, FL Palm Harbor Marina</u>	<u>\$55.64</u>	
	01-10-10 Cape Haze, FL								

[Rick] Marina Jack Marina in Sarasota is a very nice marina, and it is not their fault that the weather is so COLD. The high yesterday was 48 with rain. We spent most of the day on the boat reading and watching the NFL wild card games. This morning the marina had covered up all of the plants due to the freezing temperatures. We never actually got to visit the dolphin statues across from the marina, but here is a picture. Based on the fact that it is to be cold for 3 more days, we decide to move on. After all, if we have to sit on the boat, we might as well be moving.

As we move southward on the Intracoastal Waterway, we pass many of the interesting houses and condos. They seem to represent the "old" Florida and the new" Florida. Most of the condo complexes have marinas and boats abound on lifts. The town of Venice has some murals that line the waterway. The murals are circus-themed since Venice was the winter home of the Ringling Brothers Circus. We passed under about 9 bridges, some very new and some ancient.

We were distressed to find hundreds of fish cold stunned, and in many cases, dead from the cold weather. The fish were floating on the surface and lined the shores as the tide went down. The buzzards will be well fed for several days. Some fishermen were just cruising along scooping up the stunned fish with hand nets. It was too easy.

So around 3:00, we arrive at Cape haze and the Palm Island marina. We will be here only one night and will move tomorrow to Punta Gorda to visit with our friends, Ron and Marji from Meander. They completed the loop a few weeks ago and have some dock space, maybe.

<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>
<u>1/8/2010</u>	<u>236</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>27° 19.951'</u>	<u>82° 32.750'</u>	<u>Marina Jacks - Sarasota, FL</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
01-08-10 Sarasota FL, Ringling Museum									

[Rick] Today was a very interesting day. Sarasota is the home of the Ringling Museum. It was founded by John Ringling and his wife, Mabel. The museum is located on the grounds of the Ringling home, Ca d'Zan. This means "House of John" in an old Venetian dialect. The Ringlings were smitten with Venice and Venetian architecture. So, in 1924, they commissioned a Venetian styled home that cost 1.5 million to build over a two year period. They furnished it with all of the art they could stuff into it. It contained all the latest conveniences, electricity, Kelvinator freezers and refrigerators, and hot water. The building has 55 rooms and sits on 22 acres. It is not as large as the Biltmore mansion in Asheville, NC, but is certainly as ornate and opulent. I cannot adequately describe the home, but I will say that if anyone is near Sarasota, I urge them to visit the Ringling Museum.

On the grounds is located the Ringling Circus Museum, the Ringling Art Museum, and a learning center. After our guided tour of the home, we headed for the Circus Museum. One building contains circus memorabilia from over 100 years of Ringling Brothers Circus. This included costumes, wagons, rail cars, posters, and personal items. It is difficult to convey the beauty and colors of the circus. The second building is filled with miniatures of the circus. Estimated at greater than 50,000 pieces, a full circus of over 1200 employees, tents, wagons, animals and the public is created on a scale of .5 inch per foot. It is in incredible detail. The miniatures are a 50 year effort by Howard Tibbals. One interesting note is that all of the miniatures have the name of Howard Brothers Circus on them. The Feld Corporation, current owners of the Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey Circus name, refused to let Mr. Tibbals use the name on his miniature creation. Quite a silly decision, in my opinion, in view of the free publicity that could be generated, to say nothing of the authenticity of the display.

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<u>1/7/2010</u>	<u>235</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>2.50</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>27° 19.951'</u>	<u>82° 32.750'</u>	<u>Marina Jacks - Sarasota, FL</u>	<u>\$192.60</u>	
01-07-10 Sarasota Fl									

[Rick] As promised yesterday, we left Gulfport, FL this morning and move on to Sarasota, FL. The town of Gulfport was vibrant, artsy, and quite nice. Before leaving, we did get to see some very impressive birds on the docks of the Gulfport Marina.

The trip to Sarasota is only about 37 miles but there are many no wake zones causing the trip to take 2 and one-half hours. Along the way, we were treated to several pods of dolphins. They rode in our wake, jumped in front of us, and generally put on a show. As we have said before, it is impossible not to watch them. We also saw white pelicans for the first time since the Illinois River. We also passed, but did not go under, the Skyway Bridge. It is several miles long and was built in the early 80's after a barge hit and removed a portion of the old bridge. Rather than repair the old bridge, the built a new one over the next two years. The old bridge has been turned into two fishing piers into Tampa Bay.

We got a shot of the carcass of an old boat that had gotten out of the channel. This trip required that we stay in the channel and it was very shallow just feet off the markers. On the other hand, it was well marked and looked like a runway at the airport.

We are at the nicest marina in Sarasota, Marina Jacks. We were treated to a marvelous sunset. Approaching the city we saw a building we have named "The Dolly Parton Complex". Tomorrow, we plan to ride the local bus to the Ringling Circus Museum. Should be fun.

<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>
<u>1/5/2010</u>	<u>233</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>27° 44.412'</u>	<u>82° 41.814'</u>	<u>Gulfport Municipal Marina</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
	01-05-10	Gulfport, FL							

Betsy speaks: We did go and take another look at the Chris Craft today. This time they had it out of the water so we could see the bottom. We also talked at length with the person that had done most of the restoration on the boat. However, we are not quite convinced that it is the right boat for us, so will probably not pursue it further right now. It does not have several things that we consider important, like radar, an inverter, and an enclosed back deck. There is a lot we like about the boat, but we aren't able to overcome some of our concerns.

This afternoon I took a bike ride into town just to look around. I agree with the boat broker's description of Gulfport as "eclectic." There are lots of artsy shops and interesting people. Tonight we ate at a pub that at first glance Rick thought might be a gay bar!

We cannot stress enough how awful the weather has been for loopers this year! We left our home in coastal North Carolina in mid-May when the weather should be almost balmy, yet it was a freezing cold, rainy day. We endured drenching rain in New York. We suffered through the coldest July on record in Canada. We had day after day of wind on Lake Michigan. And now we are in a deep freeze here in Florida. The weatherman on the local station tonight said this is the longest period of frigid cold weather they've had in 30 years! Daytime highs are in the low 50s, nights are low 30s, and the wind off the water makes it feel much colder. From what we hear, normal temps this time of year should be in the 70s!

And the long term forecast is not promising. They say it will be even colder this weekend, and there appears to be no end in sight! Boy am I glad I threw a couple of pairs of cuddle dud long johns into my bag when we were home in November! They sure feel good! And Rick swears by his "hot socks" that he sleeps in every night! They were a gift from his grandmother who died last year at age 102...she had extras that friends had given her. And it was Rick's idea to bring along the flannel sheets. sometimes I'm glad to have him around!

This marina does not offer cable TV, so we hooked up the digital antenna and are able to get more channels here than we've ever gotten with it before. We get all four major networks, as well as a lot of other miscellaneous channels, I guess thanks to the digital conversion. One is a channel that carries lots of oldies, and the past two nights we've watched "I Spy," one of my favorite shows from 1975 with Robert Culp and Bill Cosby. Tonight we also suffered through an episode of "Emergency" with Randolph Mantooth. Oh, how corny!

We may look at another boat tomorrow. Then we may or may not head on south to Sarasota. Our next outing will take us across the mouth of Tampa Bay, and we'd like a nice day to do that, so will stay here until the weather is right for that crossing.

<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>
<u>1/4/2010</u>	<u>232</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>2.50</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>27° 44.412'</u>	<u>82° 41.814'</u>	<u>Gulfport Municipal Marina</u>	<u>\$120.00</u>	
	01-04-10 Gulfport, FL								

[Rick] We finally could take the cold and the wind no longer and we decided to move south. Not that 20 miles would be very different, but it is the principle of the thing. We decided to go to St Pete so we could be closer to the Chris Craft boat that is in St Pete. We plan to take another look at the boat tomorrow and by moving, the broker will not have to come to Clearwater and pick us up and bring us back. In addition, we had just about seen everything within walking distance in Clearwater.

The real reason we needed to leave was that Clearwater has fixed docks. With the Blue Moon and the high/low tides, the boat was often 5 feet below the dock and we had great difficulty getting ourselves and Beamer off/on the boat. We later decided to go to Gulfport, as it was a lot closer without having to go around the St Peter peninsula and they have FLOATING docks.

One of the reasons we were staying in Clearwater was to get my bike fixed. The new wheel finally came in and when I called this morning to check out my options, they said it would be ready this morning. About 1100, they called and said it was ready. I borrowed the dock master's car (a nice Lexus sports car) and went to the bike shop and retrieved the bike. It was either borrow the car or ride the bus with several transfers hauling a bike. A new wheel, rear brake cable, and some oil on the seat adjuster cost \$58. But, we were ready to go.

We filled up with gas, \$3.35 per gallon, and left for Gulfport. The waterway is well marked and looks very much like the Atlantic waterway. Hugh houses line the waterway.

We arrived at the Gulfport Municipal Marina and were pleasantly surprised at how nice it is. Gulfport is a small town, floating docks, nice dock master office, decent restrooms/showers, and a very helpful attendant in the office. As usual, we are the smallest boat on the transient dock.

Our friend, Maurice, from St Pete rode the bus and his bike to have supper with us. We went to a local favorite, St Maddy's, and had very good food.

It is still cold, but we are at a floating dock, and all seems better. Tomorrow, we go back to look at the Chris Craft.

Note. For the past two weeks, we have had an interesting bird in the marina. It is always on a line between two boat and we only see it at night. It turns out that it is a Black Crown Night Heron. They are so smart, they only hunt and eat at night to avoid competing with the gulls and pelicans in the daytime.

<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>
<u>1/2/2010</u>	<u>230</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>27° 58.559'</u>	<u>82° 49.460'</u>	<u>Clearwater Municipal Marina</u>		
	01-02-10 Clearwater New Year								

[Rick] On January 1, 2010, the beginning of the new decade, our weather luck continued to be bad. We awoke to a hard rain which tapered off but continued most of the day. The afternoon was cold and windy, so we sat on the boat most of the day. Luckily, we have cable TV, so at least I could watch some of the bowl games. Betsy continues her voracious reading. I began reading the new Dan Brown book The Lost Symbol.

On January 2, 2010 the weather seemed better. It was cold, and the wind made it seem colder. But it was not raining. We decided to go to the Clearwater Aquarium and to the local Publix supermarket. Just before leaving, our niece from Zephyrhills, Trina, came by and in the course of conversation told us that she had checked on the shuttle launch date and it was not February 13, as we thought, but February 7. A quick search indicated she was correct. The good news is that the launch is now a nighttime launch, specifically 4:36 in the morning. The bad news is that we now have one less week to get there, but that should not be a problem. We have been pointing to the launch for the entire trip and it is one of the few things we scheduled. As we walked to the Jolley Trolley stop, we passed some pelicans waiting for the fishermen to clean their catch and discard the remains. There are thousands of pelicans in this marina.

We did go to the aquarium, which was very small compared to the three others we've been to on this trip. But here the emphasis here is Rescue, Rehab, and Return of the animals. They have sea turtles and take care of them much like the Karen Beasley Sea Turtle Hospital in Topsail Beach. They have several dolphins that have been injured in some way. One, a dolphin named Winter, was brought in with its tail missing, probably bitten off by a shark. The vets and local personnel fashioned a prosthetic tail and Winter swims quite nicely. Winter will never be released into the wild. They have otters, a small fish tank with two nurse sharks and many other local fish, and a sting ray tank where you can reach in and touch the rays. There are many volunteers and they give talks and feedings several times per day. All in all, a nice place to visit, but one has to understand its purpose or it will seem very small.

A note about the Sea Turtles. They have volunteers that watch and mark the nests of mother turtles on the beach. Once the nest is identified, they place a cage over the nest so the baby turtles cannot start their journey to the ocean until there are humans there to make sure they go to the water. There is so much ambient light in this area, the babies tend to go to the city. The volunteers pick the hatchlings up, count them, place them in a container and walk them to about 15 feet from the water. This assures that 100% of them make it to the water to begin the long journey of life. Only 1 in 1000 make it to adulthood, 2 years old. In about 5 years, they will return to this beach as adults and lay eggs starting the cycle again.

This is very different from the way nests are handled at Topsail Beach. At Topsail, there is as little human contact with the hatchlings as possible. It is thought that the long trek from the nest to the water is a vital part of the hatchling's development process, getting their lungs working as the trudge their way to the water.

<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>
<u>12/30/2009</u>	<u>227</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>27° 58.559'</u>	<u>82° 49.460'</u>	<u>Clearwater Municipal Marina, FL</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>

12-30-09 Clearwater yet again

[Rick] We finally got a decent day, weather-wise. A little chilly in the morning but the afternoon was very nice. We decided to untie the Rick `N Roll and go for a short ride to check out the gulf and look for dolphins. We went for about 15 miles up the west coast. We did see dolphins and got to see the beach from the gulf. You will recall that when we first arrived at Clearwater Beach the fog was so thick we couldn't enjoy the coastline. Today was beautiful and clear and we had a delightful ride. We saw several parasailers and tour boats. This weekend, Northwestern University and Auburn University will slug it out in the Outback Bowl. The teams, along with their cheerleaders and bands, had a beach day today. They played volley ball, created sand sculptures, tug-o-war, and had cheerleading contests. In general, a fun day, with the team fans on the beach to urge them on. This provided an informal way for the fans to see the team.

Because of the bowl game, the holidays, and the great weather today, the beach is very crowded. So are the restaurants! We've noticed in the last couple of days that there are long lines at most of the restaurants. Therefore, we went to dinner at 4:30 today to beat the crowd!

We returned to the marina, tied up, and walked to the beach and Pier 60. The pier and surrounding beach area is full of arts and crafts vendors and buskers. Because of the bowl game, the holidays, and the great weather today, the beach is very crowded. So are the restaurants! We've noticed in the last couple of days that there are long lines at most of the restaurants. Therefore, we went to dinner at 4:30 today to beat the crowd!

Walking back to the boat, we enjoyed a spectacular sunset.

Tomorrow, we go to look at another possible larger boat. Wish us luck.

<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>
<u>12/29/2009</u>	<u>226</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>27° 58.559'</u>	<u>82° 49.460'</u>	<u>Clearwater Municipal Marina, FL</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>

12-29-09 Clearwater, FL and the Christmas Holidays

If you are only interested in the Loop itself, you need read no further! We're still in Clearwater, Florida, so there's nothing new as far as cruising or adventure is concerned! So if you read further, you'll just be hearing about how we spent Christmas and about seldom seen family members.

We had a rental car for the week of Christmas. Wednesday night we drove over to Tampa and met our sister-in-law Tina and her daughters Trina and Tara at a restaurant.

Then on Christmas Eve we headed back to Zephyrhills to join in the Christmas Eve celebration with Tina's family. We left Clearwater early and spent a couple of hours at the Hard Rock Casino in Tampa on the way to Zephyrhills. I started out with a nice winning run at the 3 card poker table, then, had a great run at the blackjack table. Rick, who seldom gambles, watched a little 3 card poker, and when I offered to stake him a little of my winnings he played a few hands and also came away a winner. I hope I haven't created a monster!

Arriving in Zephyrhills, we joined Tina at her mom's house. We had celebrated Christmas Eve with them before several years ago so we'd met all of her family. Her mom already had a wonderful spread of turkey and all the trimmings ready for people to help themselves as they arrived. Their gathering is very informal, held in the back yard (you can get away with that in Florida!) The food is plentiful and delicious. We finally got to meet Billy, Trina's husband of three years.

Part of their tradition is to have a bonfire on Christmas Eve. Those of you that receive our Christmas card each year will recall that for the past several years we have been on the RiverBarge on the Mississippi River. A Cajun tradition is to build bonfires on the levee and light them on Christmas Eve so "Papa Noel" can find his way to their homes. Those bonfires, huge pyramidal structures filled with firecrackers and fireworks that can be seen and heard for miles, are truly spectacular and a thrill to behold. The bonfire this year didn't compare to that fabulous spectacle, but it was fun and we even enjoyed roasting marshmallows and making S'mores.

Christmas Day started out chilly and overcast. We had no real plans. We did exchange cards, and opened the one gift we had received last night "from Santa". 4 Florida Lottery tickets. Total winnings \$4.00. I had investigated going to a Christmas Day buffet, but at nearly \$30 per person we decided our money could be better spent elsewhere. So we had Christmas dinner at the local IHOP, which did have some Christmas specials: Rick had Pecan Pie Pancakes, and I had Gingerbread Pancakes with Christmas sprinkles!

By early afternoon the sun had come out and it had warmed up considerably. We decided to explore some of the little beach towns to the south, so we rode down the beach road for about 20 miles. At Madeira Beach we parked the car and walked out on the beach for a few minutes. Many people were out strolling. It would have been much warmer if the wind hadn't been blowing. The Gulf of Mexico looks just like the ocean on a windy day, with waves breaking at the shore. One thing we've noticed that we don't like is that dogs are never allowed on the beach. We had seen the signs in Clearwater indicating this, but it surprised me that it seems to be that way everywhere, even in the smaller beach towns. We are thankful that at Topsail Beach where we live dogs are welcome, though they do have to be leashed during the summer months.

We returned the rental car on Saturday morning, and since Rick's bike is still in the shop and the weather has really been too cold to do much outside, we've spent lots of time on the boat reading, etc. Sunday we were pleased to have Tina and her daughters Tara and Trina and Trina's

<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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husband Billy join us for lunch at Crabby Bill's restaurant right here at the marina. Then we all went for a short boat ride, the first time the boat's been away from the dock since we arrived here nearly two weeks ago.

We are still actively looking for a larger boat with the intent of doing the loop again in a few years, so we spent Monday with a boat broker and looked at three boats, one of which is a very good possibility. We have one more we're going to look at on Thursday. We had hoped to find something up on the Tennessee River, with the idea of buying it and leaving it there to spend several months a year on for the next several years as we cruised the river system some more, then do the loop again. We did make an offer on one boat but that fell through when the boat turned out to have a leaky gas tank. Then we looked at another boat on the Tennessee that is an excellent candidate, but since we aren't in a rush we decided to keep looking. If we decide to get a gas powered boat, that will probably be the one. But we'd really prefer diesel, so that's all we're looking at now.

Today we were joined for lunch by my cousin Lloyd "Skip" Bray, his wife Jane, their delightful daughter Jennie and her friend Bryan. Skip is my daddy's first cousin. He never lived nearby, so we had very little contact with him when I was growing up, but I've been in touch with him and have gotten together with him several times over the past 10 years or so. Skip and Jane live in nearby Tampa. Jennie recently moved back to Tampa after sowing her wild oats in New York City for several years. I think I'm one of only two people that still refer to my cousin as "Skip," but "Skippy" is what I always heard when I was growing up and old habits die hard.at least I've upgraded him to Skip from Skippy!

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<u>12/22/2009</u>	<u>219</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>27° 58.559'</u>	<u>82° 49.460'</u>	<u>Clearwater Municipal Marina, FL</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
12-22-09 Clearwater and Maurice McGough									

[Rick] Today was a very wonderful day, with one bump. We had talked to our looper friend, Maurice McGough, and agreed to have dinner with him at his club in St Petersburg. Maurice is the person that did the loop, by himself, in the 21 ft Ranger Tug called Quotidian. We were to meet him at 1800 in St Pete. We first met Maurice at the AGLCA rendezvous in Charleston in the spring. We then met him again as we entered Canada in early July. He is one of our favorite people from the loop.

Before leaving for St Pete, we went to the bike shop to retrieve my bike. I had taken it in for a flat tire. They were to also replace a brake cable and adjust the brakes. When we go to the shop, the tech indicated that he had change the tire, but now, the real wheel will not turn when the gear is engaged. It worked when I took it in, now it does not. Weird. After looking over the situation, we ordered a new wheel. The total cost will still be about \$50, but I will not have a three speed, I will have a one speed bike. Remember, we only paid \$50 for the bike, so I did not want to spend too much to repair it.

We got to St Pete about 1400, with the intent to "look around" before meeting Maurice for dinner. Maurice was at this boat, Quotidian, when we arrived so he walked around with us for a tour of the municipal marina. We looked at several boats, visited the ships store, etc. This is a huge marina, over 650 slips.

When we left Maurice to walk around by ourselves, we visited the famous St Pete Pier. This very old pier, dating back to 1926 in various incarnations, houses an aquarium, several bars, several restaurants, and some specialty shops. On the way in, we passed some pelicans on the sidewalk. They are so used to humans that they do not even run off when approached. Once in the Pier, we took some pictures of the skyline of the city.

At 1800, we met Maurice and walked to the St Petersburg Yacht Club for dinner. The building, huge and beautiful, was filled with at least 100 well decorated live Christmas trees. The meal was very good, and the prices were very competitive with any good restaurant. Since Maurice has just completed the loop, we reminisced about our time together in Canada and the other places we were together on the trip.

Members of the Club have burgees created for themselves and they are displayed all over the club. This one was very appropriate.

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<u>12/19/2009</u>	<u>216</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>27° 58.559'</u>	<u>82° 49.460'</u>	<u>Clearwater Municipal Marina, FL</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
12-19-09 Clearwater FL Weather and Tarpon Springs									

[Rick] Today's note is to catch you up on our last three days. The weather has been horrible. You will recall that while in the panhandle, it was cold. Here in Clearwater, it is windy and cold. Yesterday, the temperature did not get out of the fifties and the wind was 30 mph at times. This means that the waves on the Gulf are 7-10 feet high. Glad we are not out there. However, when the wind was from the East, we got the full brunt of it and the boat really rocked at our dock. The wind has moved to the West a bit, and it is not now so bad. Just to give an indication of how bad the weather has been, the huge party boat, about 150 ft long in 3 floors, has not gone out the past two nights. She is fully booked with Christmas parties, but she is tied to the dock. As I write this, the Starlight Majestic has just left for a cruise. The huge fishing boats have not gone out in 3 days. According to the weather guy, the temps should get to the 30s tomorrow night. Weather-wise, it has been a terrible year for the loop.

We can stand the weather, but the real problem for us is the tide. With the wind pushing the water into Clearwater bay, the tide is about 5 feet, normally 3 feet. This means that we have a huge difficulty getting on and off the boat with these fixed docks. An even bigger problem is getting Beamer off the boat three times a day. We have to get up in the night to adjust the lines so we can fall or rise enough and still keep the boat off the pier.

We rented a car for a week, beginning today, Saturday. Our first outing was to West Marine. Yesterday Betsy was lying down and I hopped off the boat. At the same time I hopped off, causing a little rock, one of the inflatable life jackets automatically inflated for some unknown reason. It had probably gotten damp we've had so much condensation in the boat. Anyway, it really made a racket when it inflated and nearly scared Betsy to death. She knew I had gotten off the boat because she felt the rock, then she heard the very loud hissing noise. It took us a minute to realize what had happened, so we went to West Marine to get a re-arming kit for the lifejacket.

Then we went to the bike shop to have some work done on my bike. Somehow, the back tire is shot and will not hold air, so I'm having it replaced.

This afternoon, we ventured 19 miles north to the town of Tarpon Springs. TS is the home of Sponge farming and gathering in the world. Back in the early 1900s, someone figured out that the Florida waters contained a gazillion sponges, and an industry was born. Today, over 200 boats go into the gulf, harvest the sponges, return to TS and sell them at the Sponge Clearinghouse in TS. One business, the Spongarama has a video that details the process of harvesting the sponges. They also have a Sponge Museum. The town is a Greek dominated society, as Greeks knew how to harvest the sponges and came here to do it. All of the restaurants and businesses have Greek names. Here are some pictures from our visit to Tarpon Springs.

Tomorrow, we visit some friends in Zephyrhills and go to church with them. Next Tuesday, we visit Maurice, the man who did the loop by himself in a 21 ft boat. He lives in nearby St Pete.

<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>
<u>12/14/2009</u>	<u>211</u>	<u>205</u>	<u>8.75</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>27° 58.559'</u>	<u>82° 49.460'</u>	<u>Clearwater Municipal Marina, FL</u>	<u>\$417.30</u>	
12-14-09 Clearwater FL and FOG									

[Rick] When we awoke this morning we found the fog to be as bad as we expected. You will recall that we are to cross the Gulf of Mexico today, as the winds are down and the seas are to be 1-2 feet. We have made arrangements to follow "Lady Liberty", a 40 ft Cruisers boat that has radar. Tomorrow is also a possibility before the next wave of wind and bad weather moves in.

We talk to Mr. Basset of Lady Liberty via phone and he seems inclined to wait for tomorrow. He talks to some local fishermen who can lead us through the Government Cut and once on the Gulf, the seas should be smooth. The fog, with visibility of less than 100 yards is supposed to dissipate around 1000. The rest of the day is to be sunny and the waves are to become less and less. With this information and assistance, we decide to go for it.

Off we go. The fog is awful. And it gets worse. Near 1000, it does let up for about 15 minutes. Just long enough for us to see dolphins JUMPING in the water. Spectacular. Then, the fog sets in and does not abate until we arrive in Clearwater. It is just awful. Click on this picture to see our view of the front boat that we looked at for 8 hours. We continue on using the autopilot to keep the same course as the other boat. It is here that we are glad for the autopilot. At least we could concentrate on just keeping the correct speed and keeping the other boat in view. Betsy drove the vast majority of the day. At the end of the day, we were both really tired and stressed. Right after supper, at 1930, Betsy went to bed. I believe it is the earliest she has ever gone to bed since we have been married. Did I mention that it was FOGGY ALL DAY!!!!

We were going to turn off about 40 miles earlier and go to Tarpon Springs. However the fog was so bad, we just followed the front boat to Clearwater. Once we got here, we learned that there are about 12 other loopers here. Five of them were at Port St Joe with us and made the overnight crossing, 22 hours, last night, in the fog.

The trip was 183 miles. We averaged 21.7 mph for the trip with the first hour and a half at 7 mph. At one point, according to the onboard computer, we did 30.68 mph.

We will stay here for several days. We have a lot of friends here on the docks and some in town. We have 2 months to get to Cape Canaveral for the Feb 13 launch of the shuttle, so we are in no rush. The marina has wifi, many restaurants, and cable, so life is good.

BTW, here is a picture of the leader boat as we enter Clearwater and the fog lifted for about 15 minutes. This would have been a much better view for the prior 8 hours.

<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>
<u>12/13/2009</u>	<u>210</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>29° 43.918'</u>	<u>84° 59.283'</u>	<u>Water Street Marina - Apalachicola FL</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
		12-13-09 Apalachicola							

[Betsy speaks] We woke up this morning to pea soup fog, and it stayed with us all day. How we hope it is not still here tomorrow when we hope to depart on the big crossing!

The Methodist Church had been recommended to us by a couple of people in town, and it was the closest church to our location, so we went there this morning. It is a very old and lovely church, built in 1901 after the original structure was burned. Rick was very impressed by the black cypress ceiling.

This was more of a "praise service" than we are used to, but it was nice, and the congregation was very welcoming. They did use a screen with words to the songs, etc., and the choir consisted of about 10 people with microphones. The keyboardist faced the congregation straight on and led the music with his hands and his voice. One girl sang a Christmas carol solo with the keyboardist playing and singing along with her on the chorus. They both had outstanding voices and it was absolutely beautiful.

We ate lunch downtown at the Magnolia Café. I had their special of the day which consisted of Spinach and Parmesan soup which was Christmas green in color and delicious, along with "Pot Pizza" which the waitress said was actually cooked in a flower pot. Well, I didn't actually see the flower pot, but the pizza was also delicious, though a funny shape! Rick had his usual chicken fingers.

We rode our bikes back to the boat in the still thick fog, and were just killing time when we heard someone on the dock call our names. We looked up and there were Patsy and Ray from Port St. Joe, along with the folks on "Cheryl Ann." They just decided to drive to Apalachicola, then on to Carrabelle to check on a couple of boats that had left Port St. Joe this morning in the fog. They didn't have anything better to do, they said, and wanted to make sure the two boats made it OK.

Once they left we rode bikes to the marina next door to chat with Jim and Carol Bassett on "Lady Liberty." We will be crossing the gulf with them tomorrow and just wanted to compare charts to make sure we were on the same straight line route from buoy here to buoy there! We hope the fog lifts and we plan to leave about 8AM. They have radar on their boat, so even in fog we can go and just stay close to them. Once we reach the sea buoy and set the autopilot the fog shouldn't be a problem in the open water. But it is predicted to lift early in the morning anyway. Waves are forecast to be less than 2 feet, and should be lessening as the day wears on. and the sun is supposed to come out as the day wears on.

We will travel along with "Lady Liberty" until we reach a point where we will turn off to go about 30 miles in to Tarpon Springs and they will continue on about another 40 miles south to Clearwater.

Immediately after leaving the Bassetts, we headed to a 4PM performance of Handel's Messiah at the Trinity Episcopal Church. I had seen a flyer for this on my brief downtown jaunt yesterday. The Episcopal Church is only a block from the Methodist Church that we went to this morning, and is equally old and historic, having been built from white pine cut in New York and shipped down around the Florida Keys to this location on the panhandle.

Inside the Episcopal Church are two massive organs, each with its own set of pipes. Only one was used for today's performance, and it only on a couple of pieces. Too bad it seemed dreadfully out of tune to me! Fortunately all music that accompanied the choir was played on the Grand Piano set up center stage. And wow, how talented the pianist was! An elderly man, his little fingers really flew over the keys! We were pleased

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that the tenor soloist was the same person that we had seen earlier in the day playing the keyboard and singing in the Methodist Church, and the contralto soloist was the same girl that had sung the beautiful solo this morning!

Using all local talent, I was stunned at what a beautiful performance this was! All the soloists were wonderful, as was the chorus. Apparently the mezzo-soprano soloist was ill at the last minute, so the conductor turned around and actually sung that solo and did a magnificent job!

After the performance we were treated to punch and cookies in the fellowship hall. We then returned to our boat to prepare for the big day tomorrow! Who can believe that day before yesterday we were freezing nearly to death! Today, in the fog and dampness, we are about to swelter! I'm looking to sweltering in the sunshine once we get to Tampa! Wish us luck, and look for a quick blog early tomorrow evening to let you know we made it!

Rick wants to add that ten years ago today, Dec. 13 1999, his mother passed away suddenly. He regrets to this day that we didn't get to say goodbye, and he still misses her every day. I remind him that there was never a time that they spoke either on the phone or in person that they didn't end the conversation with "I love you." What a valuable lesson that should be to those that take life for granted!

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<u>12/12/2009</u>	<u>209</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>2.50</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>29° 43.918'</u>	<u>84° 59.283'</u>	<u>Water Street Marina - Apalachicola FL</u>	<u>\$83.46</u>	
12-12-09 Port St. Joe to Apalachicola									

[Betsy speaks] Friday night the Harbor Hosts at Port St. Joe Marina arranged supper for those that wanted to go out to eat together again. This time there were only ten of us, but we still had fun. We were joined by Ann and Hank from "Queen Ann's Revenge" (pictured left.notice the Princeton sweatshirt. Like us they have a nephew who graduated from there) with whom we had eaten a couple of weeks ago when we stayed with our friends Tom and Patsy Conrad near Pensacola; Don and Cheryl from "Cheryl Ann" whom we had met very briefly in Demopolis; Nan and Jack from "Eschaton" with whom we had gone to church last Sunday, and of course Harbor Hosts Patsy and Ray. The New Zealanders are still here but they chose to stay in on this extremely cold night and eat on their boat.

Friday was a miserably dark, dreary, cold, windy, wet day. We are thankful for the nice ship's store/office at Port St. Joe that has several comfortable chairs, a computer work station, always a hot pot of coffee going, and most importantly on a day like this, warmth and friends!

Today, Saturday, we woke up to more pouring rain, but at least it wasn't quite so cold. The rain let up mid-morning to just a drizzle, so we decided to move on to Apalachicola. Originally, we had planned for our next stop to be Carrabelle, about 20 miles farther. Several boats had left Port St. Joe Thursday or Friday heading for Carrabelle and it was our intention to join them there. We are all still aiming for a crossing day on Monday. Several of us had gotten together earlier in the week to discuss crossing options. The slowest trawlers will leave Carrabelle in the afternoon, travel all night, and arrive in the Tampa/Clearwater area the following afternoon. We hoped not to have to do that. There was one boat at the meeting that wanted to do a daylight crossing to Cedar Key/Crystal River. But their max speed is about 11 MPH. We had tentatively said we would buddy with them if we didn't find a faster boat to go with.

Then yesterday afternoon one of that group called and said they had met a boat at Apalachicola that was fast like us and was looking for a buddy boat to make the full crossing during daylight hours. So we contacted that person and we will go with them. They were already in Apalachicola and wanted to leave from there, so we decided to just come there and not go to Carrabelle, which would have made the crossing only about 10-15 miles shorter.

So we hugged our friends at Port St. Joe goodbye this morning and headed out in the drizzle for the easy 25 mile run to Apalachicola, basically in a ditch/canal the entire way. Our New Zealander friends that we had been docked next to all week were there on the dock to bid us good bye. What a nice family they are, and how tolerant they must be to survive on that small one-room boat for such an extended period! They are staying at Port St. Joe a few more days because they have had several calls about their boat that is for sale.

Two pelicans escorted us then entire length of the canal that connects Port St. Joe to the ICW, a distance of about 5 miles. We were doing 21 MPH and they were keeping up with us and in some cases going faster than us with no problem and with very little wing action.just gliding over the water.

Along the way we passed this one time home that we dubbed "Paradise Lost!" Even in the cold and drizzle we passed several bass boats out fishing.

We arrived in Apalachicola, filled our gas tanks (\$413.00)so as to be ready to leave early Monday morning and pulled into our slip at Water Street Motel and Marina.basically a motel on the waterfront that has a few slips with power available for transients like us. I think we are the only transients here. After settling in I rode my bike the couple of blocks to town just to see what is here. Most of the stores were closing as it was

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nearing 5 o'clock. I did find my way to the closest church, a Methodist Church, and we will attend that tomorrow morning.

The boat that we will buddy with on Monday is at a full service marina right next door, and we did stop by there on our way to supper and introduced ourselves in person. Jim and Carol Bassett are on a 40 foot Cruisers Yacht named "Lady Liberty." They can cruise comfortably at 25 MPH or more, but will slow down a tad so that we can keep up with them at about 22 MPH at first. As we burn off fuel, we'll probably go a little faster. Fuel economy can't be an issue when you're trying to do 170 miles in daylight hours! As long as our fuel management system says we're getting 1.25 miles per gallon or better, we're going to go all out! We need to get 1.25 to make sure we don't run out of gas. We hold 190 gallons, but can't get to the last 20 gallons!

Apalachicola Bay is famous for its oysters, so tonight I ate oysters for dinner and they were delicious! I had never had smothered baked oysters before, but I'd gladly have them again! I had a dozen, and had them smothered in three different ways. Tonight was the last night the restaurant is open for this season, so I'm really lucky to have had this opportunity!

As we returned to our hotel/marina I took a picture of their Christmas Lights. Who can believe it's only a couple of weeks away!

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<u>12/10/2009</u>	<u>207</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>29° 48.901'</u>	<u>85° 18.583'</u>	<u>Port St Joe Marina</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>

12-10-09 Port St Joe VI

[Rick] Today's blog is about some maintenance issues and some maintenance performed on the boat. It may or may not appeal to everyone. If it does not appeal to you, come back tomorrow for a more normal dosage.

The day before yesterday, the boat next to us was having some work done on it. I was introduced to the repairman, Rudy, and was told he was very good, and best of all, very reasonable. He lives in a boat that he had built and could do plumbing, electrical, canvas, etc. Folks like him are few and far between. We have had a couple of nagging problems and so I asked him to take a look. Well, he spent two hours on Tuesday, made a list of necessary parts and told us he would be back today. Yesterday, he called and said he had all of the parts and would be here "mid-morning".

This morning at 0830, there is a knock on the door and it is Rudy.

First, we worked on the shower drain pump. Remember that since we are loaded down, the thru-hole for the drain and bilge are sometimes underwater. The problem was that since the floor of the shower and the pump are under water, when the pump was cycled on, a siphon was created and in many cases, we would get more water back in than we pumped out. So, Rudy cut the drain hose, installed an anti-siphon valve, and mounted it ABOVE the water line. Now, when it starts to siphon, the siphon action is broken by the valve as air is introduced into the line. Works like a champ.

Second, we installed a new bilge pump. Again, since the bilge thru-hole is under water, we sometime got water back into the bilge. In doing so, the pump ran too often and finally quit working. We installed a new pump with the float switch in one unit. The only real problem with the installation is that the pump is about 4 feet below the floor and there is an air conditioner in the same compartment, making it just a little tight. But, we got it in and it works great.

Third, the problem that we initially wanted to solve was addressed. The problem is that on occasion, we get a siphon of water back into the head, filling up the head. While this is not critical, we only have a 10 gallon holding tank, and if we flush a bunch of sea water into the tank, it fills up too fast, and we have to pump out too often. We were going to install a siphon break on the input line. But first, just to be safe, we called Glacier Bay and talked to Scott. He told us that there is a solenoid on the back of the head, and he is 99% sure it is not closing all of the time. It runs with the pump switch and is suppose to close the head intake, when the pump is off. It opens the head when the pump is on. He told us to order a new solenoid from GB and install it. So, we did nothing about the head problem. I will order the part and install it when we get back to NC.

The rest of the day, we cleaned up the mess we have made doing the two jobs. It was too cold to get out and explore, so we stayed in and read and continue our R&R. During the day, Betsy and the New Zealanders were interviewed by the local weekly paper about doing the loop.

We still plan to leave here on Saturday and go to Carrabelle. We discovered that the weekly rate here is a better deal than the daily rate and so that if you stay 7 days, you pay the rate for five. So, we cannot leave on Friday or Saturday as they are the free days. And we cannot turn down free dockage, especially in such a great marina.

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<u>12/9/2009</u>	<u>206</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>29° 48.901'</u>	<u>85° 18.583'</u>	<u>Port St Joe Marina</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
	12-09-09	Port St Joe Marina Part 5							

[Rick] It was a miserable rainy day today and we spent most of it catching up on emails and other correspondence. We also put up our Christmas decorations. Enjoy.

Around 1400, we went over to another looper boat, Aloha Friday, and began to make plans for the Gulf of Mexico crossing. The crossing is very weather dependant. You do not want to go into the Gulf when the winds are such to make the waves too high. Today, the waves in the Gulf were 5-7 feet, way too big for us in our 26 ft boat. We might get caught in large waves, but we will not go out in them.

The weather forecast from NOAA is calling for Monday to have waves 1-2 feet. Keep in mind that the crossing is 170 statute miles from Carrabelle FL to Tarpon Springs FL. Even with our speed, it will take 8-9 hours running at 20+ mph for the whole trip. Most of the loopers are trawlers and will take 20-24 hours to make the run. They leave one day, travel all night, and arrive during the daylight hours the next day. You never want to arrive at a new port in the dark. We are working with several boats to find the best way to do the trip. Ideally, we could find a fast boat to go with us. But that is unlikely, given the speed necessary. We have a possibility of going with a boat to Crystal River, a distance of about 120 miles. Averaging 10mph, we can do this in one day, leaving just before daylight. Remember, the days are shortest at this time of the year and there is barely 10 hours of daylight. The alternative to the 170 mile trip is to go along the rim of the big bend, stopping in several towns. This requires at least 3 good weather days or you are stuck in some little town. It is a crap shoot, either way.

At this time, we are not sure of the trip, or the day, but it looks like Monday, with someone. We will not do the trip alone. We will be far enough off shore that we will not have VHF radio or cell phone contact. No need to tempt fate.

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<u>12/8/2009</u>	<u>205</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>29° 48.901'</u>	<u>85° 18.583'</u>	<u>Port St Joe Marina</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>

12-08-09 Port St Joe Again

[Rick] We took a leisurely stroll around the docks this morning to look at the boats here. We saw several interesting ones, including this one with stained glass windows. The other interesting one is a 47 ft 2008 Grand Banks Trawler. It is beautiful. The broker says the asking price is 1.1 million, but is sure they will take \$750,000. I bet they will.

We then got on the bikes and toured the town of Port St Joe. It is quaint, small, but very nice. They have all of the regular places, McDonalds, Ace hardware, Piggly Wiggly. They also have a huge sporting goods store selling fishing, hunting and any type of sporting goods stuff.

For supper, our harbor hosts arranged a Mexican night at the close-by Mexican restaurant. There were 34 of us and it was a lot of fun. It turned out to be the birthday of Ray, one of the harbor hosts. Here are Patsy and Ray, whom we met earlier at Pebble Isle marina, the one that served hot cinnamon buns every morning. Patsy and Ray have been very nice to all loopers. They let us use their car, pick people up at the airport, deliver a paper to our boat each morning, and make arrangements for any looper that asks for anything. Their boat is docked right behind ours, and they spend several hours each day at the marina doing things for loopers. It is a real blessing to have them here.

The waiter in the Mexican restaurant was very good. One waiter, 34 people and he kept the process moving. Here he is delivering some plates.

One last thing. We have been featuring the New Zealanders, and did not have a picture of Phillipa, the mother. Well, here she is, with her husband, John.

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<u>12/7/2009</u>	<u>204</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>29° 48.901'</u>	<u>85° 18.583'</u>	<u>Port St Joe Marina</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
12-07-09 Port St. Joe Manatee Rescue!									

[Betsy speaks again:] First, here's another picture of "Pearl," the boat owned by the New Zealanders, followed by a picture of its owner John and the kids Alice and Lloyd. Sorry I don't have a photo of mom Phillippa yet. Too bad they had all gone to the library and missed the real excitement of the day: a manatee rescue.

When we first arrived, we saw a floating ball moving through the water. Rick took a closer look and realized it was a receiver of some sort. Being from Topsail Beach, naturally we think of sea turtles! Rick asked a dock hand if the receiver was attached to a sea turtle, and he said no, it was tethered to a manatee that had been under observation and was thought to be sick. We didn't think much more of it until today.

We saw a few people congregating on the dock opposite ours, so we went to see what was going on. There was a manatee rescue boat filled with volunteers in wet suits. They had come to trap the manatee and take him out of the water for observation and to move him to warmer waters. Like sea turtles, they can become cold stunned, and that is basically what was wrong with this guy. As we've mentioned, it has been unseasonably cold here for the past week or so.

Below is a series of photos of the rescue. First, they very slowly surrounded him and netted him with a large seine net. He seemed very lethargic (which I think is normal for manatees) until he came in contact with the net and then he gave a feeble fight, stirring up the water a bit. After a relatively short time, he gave up and they were able to lift him onto the back of the boat with much effort. A volunteer not involved in the physical rescue of this mammal was on the dock answering questions. She said this manatee weighed in at about 1000 pounds when they last had him captured, but it appears he has lost a substantial amount of weight since then (I'm not sure how long ago that was). He was rescued in the Bahamas where they found him to be sickly, and was transported to Florida because DNA tests showed that he belonged in Florida. He had been released, with transmitter tethered to his tail.

When he was seen in the protected basin here at Port St. Joe someone reported him as being here, and with the extreme cold weather he had become severely weakened. They will transport him to a treatment facility hopefully for just a few days, and then will re-release him farther south in Crystal River. If it is determined that he cannot be released into the wild again, he will take up residence at a zoo that is also a treatment facility.

The rescue effort took approximately 20 minutes from start to finish. As soon as they had the manatee on board a veterinarian was checking him with this stethoscope. At the same time, the volunteers were covering him with a protective foil blanket to hold in heat. All were very calm. There was no cheering. The observers were asked to please be quiet.

Take notice of how the boat has been adapted for rescue: the stern folds down flat so they can pull these massive animals on board without having to lift them over the gunwale. Once the animal is on board, it folds back up. The motor is near the front of the boat so as to be out of the way of the rescue effort.

We felt like this was a once in a lifetime experience. How lucky we were to be here to see this so closely!

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<u>12/6/2009</u>	<u>203</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>29° 48.901'</u>	<u>85° 18.583'</u>	<u>Port St Joe Marina</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
12-06-09 Port St. Joe, FL									

[Betsy Speaks] We had heard a lot about Port St. Joe Marina from our friends on Pookie II, as they stayed here for a month last January waiting for a good day to cross the gulf. I must say that if you have to spend a month waiting, this is a great place to do it. They really roll out the red carpet for you. We were met when we arrived yesterday not only by the dock master but by other boaters that are here long term. We immediately met up with some others that were going to church today, and we said we would like to join them at the Methodist Church. We were supplied a car by the local "harbor hosts" Patsy and Ray.

The Harbor Host program is a program encouraged by the AGLCA wherein local members contact boaters as they arrive in town and offer to assist them in various ways. Patsy and Ray immediately offered us the use of their car, as this marina does not have a courtesy car. They also arranged a shrimp boil for this afternoon for all the boaters here. Ray comes around every morning and supplies each boater with a local newspaper. Each Harbor Host offers whatever services they are comfortable with. You will recall that just a few days ago we stayed at the Conrad's dock for a couple of nights, and they fed us three meals a day while we were there, and invited us to stay in their home rather than on our boat if we wished. That is going above and beyond the duty of a Harbor Host. Rick and I will probably become Harbor Hosts for the Topsail/Sneads Ferry area when we return, offering local assistance, use of our car, transportation to church or restaurants. But those of you that know me know I don't cook for myself or Rick, I'm sure not going to cook for others!!

Anyway, we are very happy here at Port St. Joe. Last night we had a nice meal at the on-site restaurant. We are in a nice covered slip. The facilities are very nice and clean. There is a nice gift shop. We are only a couple of blocks away from a grocery store and a small strip mall that has lots to offer. The marina provides bicycles, and today I took a 3 wheeler with a large basket on the back to the grocery.

This morning we went with another loop couple to the Methodist Church. It was a beautiful church with a nice choir and all decked out for Christmas with one of the largest trees I've ever seen. The minister today was a guest minister who used to be the permanent pastor here. He reminded me of Santa Claus without the red suit, but he gave a wonderful sermon. His sermon ended with him singing a song about the importance of Joseph in the Christ story and it was truly moving. You could have heard a pin drop when it was over.

This afternoon Harbor Hosts Patsy and Ray hosted a shrimp boil for anyone at the marina. As usual, everyone brought a little something. loopers seldom go hungry! It was very cold outside, so we moved into the dry stack storage building and huddled around the grill to keep warm! As we were eating a boat came into the channel, and we looked out to see that it was "Pearl," the New Zealanders that we had met a couple of days ago in Fort Walton Beach. They quickly docked their boat and joined us. Rick mentioned in the blog a few days ago that their trip is nearing its end and their boat is for sale. We learned today that the asking price is \$18,000.anyone out there want to do the loop?!

As we finished eating and headed back to the boat we had to stop and admire another gorgeous sunset. We finally crossed back into the Eastern Time Zone yesterday just before arriving here, so darkness comes a little later in the day which is nice.

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<u>12/5/2009</u>	<u>202</u>	<u>51</u>	<u>3.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>29° 48.901'</u>	<u>85° 18.583'</u>	<u>Port St Joe Marina</u>	<u>\$139.10</u>	
12-05-09 Port St Joe Marina, Port St Joe, FL									

[Rick] It was a cold night. Temperature got down to about 38 degrees. We slept in (Rick until 0900) as we knew it would be cold and our trip today would not require us getting going very early. Bay Point Marina is very nice and has all of the amenities. It is the marina for a full development including houses, condos, a restaurant, golf course, etc. The grounds are beautiful. We got underway about 1230 and headed for Port St Joe Marina. The trip was in two distinct parts. The first thirty miles was on the large St Andrews bay. The second part was in a ditch, very narrow and mostly manmade. There are absolutely no navigation markers as the whole ditch is about 100 feet wide.

Since there are some houses built on the ditch, we saw many "No Wake" signs in front of various houses. At one point, I saw what appeared to be a bald eagle on a stump beside the bank. I immediately slowed down to get a better look. It turned out to be a statue of an eagle. This smart landowner had figured out a way to make people slow down without a "No Wake" sign. I am sure that everyone will slow down to see the eagle. We took pictures of the long away eagle and a close-up. Quite ingenious.

We finally arrived at Port St Joe. This is a very nice place. They have all of the amenities one could hope for except Cable TV. The Wi-fi is very good. We were able to use the Slingbox to catch up on Thursday night's showing of Survivor.

We have been running quite fast and long days. The boat is a mess. For this reason, we plan to stay here for several days and do some cleaning up and catching our breath. In addition, there are few crossing days for the Gulf of Mexico and we will stay here until the next good weather window to cross.

12-06-09 Port St. Joe, FL

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in Crystal River. If it is determined that he cannot be released into the wild again, he will take up residence at a zoo that is also a treatment facility.

The rescue effort took approximately 20 minutes from start to finish. As soon as they had the manatee on board a veterinarian was checking him with this stethoscope. At the same time, the volunteers were covering him with a protective foil blanket to hold in heat. All were very calm. There was no cheering. The observers were asked to please be quiet.

Take notice of how the boat has been adapted for rescue: the stern folds down flat so they can pull these massive animals on board without having to lift them over the gunwale. Once the animal is on board, it folds back up. The motor is near the front of the boat so as to be out of the way of the rescue effort.

We felt like this was a once in a lifetime experience. How lucky we were to be here to see this so closely!

12-08-09 Port St Joe Again

[Rick] We took a leisurely stroll around the docks this morning to look at the boats here. We saw several interesting ones, including this one with stained glass windows. The other interesting one is a 47 ft 2008 Grand Banks Trawler. It is beautiful. The broker says the asking price is 1.1 million, but is sure they will take \$750,000. I bet they will.

We then got on the bikes and toured the town of Port St Joe. It is quaint, small, but very nice. They have all of the regular places, McDonalds, Ace hardware, Piggly Wiggly. They also have a huge sporting goods store selling fishing, hunting and any type of sporting goods stuff.

For supper, our harbor hosts arranged a Mexican night at the close-by Mexican restaurant. There were 34 of us and it was a lot of fun. It turned out to be the birthday of Ray, one of the harbor hosts. Here are Patsy and Ray, whom we met earlier at Pebble Isle marina, the one that served hot cinnamon buns every morning. Patsy and Ray have been very nice to all loopers. They let us use their car, pick people up at the airport, deliver a paper to our boat each morning, and make arrangements for any looper that asks for anything. Their boat is docked right behind ours, and they spend several hours each day at the marina doing things for loopers. It is a real blessing to have them here.

The waiter in the Mexican restaurant was very good. One waiter, 34 people and he kept the process moving. Here he is delivering some plates.

One last thing. We have been featuring the New Zealanders, and did not have a picture of Phillipa, the mother. Well, here she is, with her husband, John.

12-09-09 Port St Joe Marina Part 5

[Rick] It was a miserable rainy day today and we spent most of it catching up on emails and other correspondence. We also put up our Christmas decorations. Enjoy.

Around 1400, we went over to another looper boat, Aloha Friday, and began to make plans for the Gulf of Mexico crossing. The crossing is very weather dependant. You do not want to go into the Gulf when the winds are such to make the waves too high. Today, the waves in the Gulf were

<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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5-7 feet, way too big for us in our 26 ft boat. We might get caught in large waves, but we will not go out in them.

The weather forecast from NOAA is calling for Monday to have waves 1-2 feet. Keep in mind that the crossing is 170 statute miles from Carrabelle FL to Tarpon Springs FL. Even with our speed, it will take 8-9 hours running at 20+ mph for the whole trip. Most of the loopers are trawlers and will take 20-24 hours to make the run. They leave one day, travel all night, and arrive during the daylight hours the next day. You never want to arrive at a new port in the dark. We are working with several boats to find the best way to do the trip. Ideally, we could find a fast boat to go with us. But that is unlikely, given the speed necessary. We have a possibility of going with a boat to Crystal River, a distance of about 120 miles. Averaging 10mph, we can do this in one day, leaving just before daylight. Remember, the days are shortest at this time of the year and there is barely 10 hours of daylight. The alternative to the 170 mile trip is to go along the rim of the big bend, stopping in several towns. This requires at least 3 good weather days or you are stuck in some little town. It is a crap shoot, either way.

At this time, we are not sure of the trip, or the day, but it looks like Monday, with someone. We will not do the trip alone. We will be far enough off shore that we will not have VHF radio or cell phone contact. No need to tempt fate.

12-10-09 Port St Joe VI

[Rick] Today's blog is about some maintenance issues and some maintenance performed on the boat. It may or may not appeal to everyone. If it does not appeal to you, come back tomorrow for a more normal dosage.

The day before yesterday, the boat next to us was having some work done on it. I was introduced to the repairman, Rudy, and was told he was very good, and best of all, very reasonable. He lives in a boat that he had built and could do plumbing, electrical, canvas, etc. Folks like him are few and far between. We have had a couple of nagging problems and so I asked him to take a look. Well, he spent two hours on Tuesday, made a list of necessary parts and told us he would be back today. Yesterday, he called and said he had all of the parts and would be here "mid-morning".

This morning at 0830, there is a knock on the door and it is Rudy.

First, we worked on the shower drain pump. Remember that since we are loaded down, the thru-hole for the drain and bilge are sometimes underwater. The problem was that since the floor of the shower and the pump are under water, when the pump was cycled on, a siphon was created and in many cases, we would get more water back in than we pumped out. So, Rudy cut the drain hose, installed an anti-siphon valve, and mounted it ABOVE the water line. Now, when it starts to siphon, the siphon action is broken by the valve as air is introduced into the line.

Works like a champ.

Second, we installed a new bilge pump. Again, since the bilge thru-hole is under water, we sometime got water back into the bilge. In doing so, the pump ran too often and finally quit working. We installed a new pump with the float switch in one unit. The only real problem with the installation is that the pump is about 4 feet below the floor and there is an air conditioner in the same compartment, making it just a little tight. But, we got it in and it works great.

Third, the problem that we initially wanted to solve was addressed. The problem is that on occasion, we get a siphon of water back into the head, filling up the head. While this is not critical, we only have a 10 gallon holding tank, and if we flush a bunch of sea water into the tank, it fills up too fast, and we have to pump out too often. We were going to install a siphon break on the input line. But first, just to be safe, we called Glacier Bay and talked to Scott. He told us that there is a solenoid on the back of the head, and he is 99% sure it is not closing all of the time. It runs with the pump switch and is suppose to close the head intake, when the pump is off. It opens the head when the pump is on. He told us to order a new solenoid from GB and install it. So, we did nothing about the head problem. I will order the part and install it when we get back to NC.

<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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The rest of the day, we cleaned up the mess we have made doing the two jobs. It was too cold to get out and explore, so we stayed in and read and continue our R&R. During the day, Betsy and the New Zealanders were interviewed by the local weekly paper about doing the loop.

We still plan to leave here on Saturday and go to Carrabelle. We discovered that the weekly rate here is a better deal than the daily rate and so that if you stay 7 days, you pay the rate for five. So, we cannot leave on Friday or Saturday as they are the free days. And we cannot turn down free dockage, especially in such a great marina.

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<u>12/4/2009</u>	<u>201</u>	<u>70</u>	<u>4.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>30° 8.709'</u>	<u>85° 43.665'</u>	<u>Bay Point Marina - Panama City, FL</u>	<u>\$27.56</u>	

[Rick] I used the Thesaurus to look up a word describing today and all I can find is "Lousy". The weather was cold, damp, dark. The only thing missing was the rain. We were going to take some pictures but they would not have come out well.

We left Ft Walton Beach and motored 70 miles to Panama City and the Bay Point Marina. Betsy took a picture of a statue of a pelican in the Ft Walton Beach Municipal Park. We think we saw the model for the statue.

Before we left, we chatted more with the New Zealanders and got to tour their boat. It is actually 32 feet long with a steel hull. Pearl, the boat, has a 90hp truck engine. As I reported yesterday, they have only an ice cooler and a 2 burner stove. The family sleeps on 4 mattresses spread on the floor. Then, the next morning, they pile the mattresses under a bench and use the space for home schooling of the two teenage children. The father, John, is a retired teacher. The wife, Phillippa, is a teacher. In New Zealand, a teacher teaches 5 years and then gets a year off. So, this year, they bought the boat and are doing the loop. Obviously, they are very adventurous folks and love to travel, having already motored most of the European waterways.

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<u>12/3/2009</u>	<u>200</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>3.50</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>30° 24.101'</u>	<u>86° 36.398'</u>	<u>Ft Walton Beach, FL</u>		
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 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.

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<b>12/1/2009</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0.75</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>30° 18.759'</b>	<b>87° 29.120'</b>	<b>Tom Conrad Dock</b>		

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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<u>12/1/2009</u>	<u>198</u>			<u>W</u>	<u>30° 18.759'</u>	<u>87° 29.120'</u>	<u>Tom Conrad Dock</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
<p>12-02-09 At Tom and Patsy Conrad's Dock &amp; Dine</p> <p>We spent the day with Tom and Patsy Conrad again in their wonderful home, which we have dubbed "Tom &amp; Patsy's Dock &amp; Dine.". We did stay on our boat last night and as the night wore on the water got rough. There was a terrific thunder and lightning storm so we're glad we stayed on the boat because Beamer the Psycho Dog is at her psychotic best during loud storms.</p> <p>We awoke to a very cold day with high winds which lasted throughout the day. I helped Patsy with some more decorations, so am really starting to get in the Christmas spirit. Mid-afternoon Tom went outside to do something, and then we noticed him running to his boat. As it turns out, the high winds had caused his boat to pull so hard on his finger pier that a piling actually broke and an eight foot section of his finger broke loose. Rick and I immediately ran out to help Tom. Rick and I did our best at holding his boat off the dock while Tom lassoed another piling farther out to hold the bow away from the dock. It was a harrowing 15 minutes or so that seemed much longer. Of course, one reason Rick and I were anxious to help was that if Tom's boat broke loose it would have rammed right into ours, and then who knows what would have happened!</p> <p>This evening five other loopers joined us for dinner. We had just met Theresa and Larry off of "Lauren Grace" yesterday when they rode with us to West Marina. Also joining us were Ann and Hank off of "Queen Ann's Revenge," who we think we met or at least saw at the rendezvous several weeks ago. The final new person joining us was Tom off of "River Rat." We had seen his boat at the marina yesterday but had not met him before. He is doing the loop single handedly on a pontoon boat that he has rigged with a very interesting canvas cover. I think he designed and built it all himself. Wish we had gotten a picture of it! He travels with his dog River, and has made it down from Lake Huron. We're surprised we had not met any of these folks before, but they had just been a few weeks behind us all the way. "Lauren Grace" actually finished the loop last year and this year have been re-touring the Tennessee River system.</p> <p>We were seated at two tables in the Conrad's home, with no spouses seated at the same table. Patsy gave us our topics of conversation: how you met your spouse and what made you decide to do the loop. Of course, she said she was just kidding about giving us topics of conversation, but at my table we pretty much talked about just those things.it was fun!</p> <p>After a marvelous dinner of pork loin, roast veggies and rice, we sang Christmas Carols accompanied by a keyboard and me on the harmonica. Patsy is very musically talented, and in fact is the President of the Pensacola Choral Society. Tom has recently learned to play the autoharp. We had great fun!</p> <p>By eleven o'clock the winds had finally died down to the point that we could get on and off our boat singlehandedly. All day long any time I wanted something off the boat or needed to get Beamer off for a walk, Rick would have to go out with me to pull the boat closer to the dock and hold it as I got on and off.that's how strong the winds were. We generally got wet in the process from the waves breaking against the dock, so it was really something and we were glad that it died down before we went to bed!</p> <p>Weather permitting we will leave here tomorrow and proceed to Fort Walton Beach.</p>									

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<u>11/30/2009</u>	<u>197</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>3.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>30° 17.623'</u>	<u>87° 37.898'</u>	<u>The Marina at the Wharf - Orange Beach</u>	<u>\$57.72</u>	
<p>11-30-09 Marina on the Wharf - Orange Beach AI</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&amp;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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<u>11/29/2009</u>	<u>196</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>30° 32.555'</u>	<u>87° 54.183'</u>	<u>Eastern Shore Marina - Fairhope AL</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>

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.

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!

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

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...

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<u>11/27/2009</u>	<u>194</u>	<u>96</u>	<u>6.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>31° 45.862'</u>	<u>88° 9.483'</u>	<u>Bobby's Fish Camp - Silas Al</u>	<u>\$26.00</u>	<u>1</u>
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.

<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>
<u>11/26/2009</u>	<u>193</u>	<u>90</u>	<u>6.25</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>32 31.603</u>	<u>87 50.392</u>	<u>Demopolis Marina AL</u>	<u>\$32.50</u>	<u>2</u>
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!?

<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>
<u>11/25/2009</u>	<u>192</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>4.25</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>33° 13.311'</u>	<u>88° 16.833'</u>	<u>Pirates Marina Cove, Pickensville, AL</u>	<u>\$23.00</u>	<u>2</u>
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!

<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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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!

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<u>11/24/2009</u>	<u>191</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>33° 50.383'</u>	<u>88° 30.502'</u>	<u>Aberdeen Marina</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
<p>11-24-09 Aberdeen Marina, Aberdeen MS II  [Rick] We did not do much today except chill out.  Having said this, I will digress to a geography lesson. Grand Harbor, the marina where we stayed last week sits in an interesting place. It sits at the confluence of the states of Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama. The waters around Grand Harbor are the Tennessee River and the Tombigbee Waterway. The actual marina sits in Mississippi. If you leave the property and turn right, you will be in Alabama. If you go to the left, you will go into Tennessee in about 1 mile. Because of this, boaters in these waters are rarely sure in what state they are actually motoring. In fact, they go from state to state and back again without even knowing it. The lettering indicating the home port on the back of this boat says it all. Tomorrow, more miles and more locks...</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>
<u>11/23/2009</u>	<u>190</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>5.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>33° 50.383'</u>	<u>88° 30.502'</u>	<u>Aberdeen Marina</u>	<u>\$55.64</u>	<u>4</u>

[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.

<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>
<u>11/22/2009</u>	<u>189</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>3.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>34° 17.863'</u>	<u>88° 25.224'</u>	<u>Midway Marina - Fulton, MS</u>	<u>\$27.82</u>	<u>3</u>

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.

<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>
<u>11/21/2009</u>	<u>188</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>3.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>34° 32.426'</u>	<u>88° 20.421'</u>	<u>Bay Springs Marina</u>	<u>\$27.82</u>	
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>
<u>11/20/2009</u>	<u>187</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>34° 59.462'</u>	<u>88° 12.951'</u>	<u>Grand Harbor Marina</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
		11-20-09 Grand Harbor 2							

[Rick] We have been lolling around Grand Harbor waiting for Eric to call and let us know when he will be able to perform the 700 hr service on our Honda motors. He called this morning and we are set up for 1300. We have to go about a mile from Grand Harbor to a boatyard with a travel lift. It turns out that they have a 100 ton travel lift, certainly adequate for lifting the 9000 lb Rick `N Roll II.

We arrived at 1300, were lifted up and placed on land. The three technicians jumped on the task and got the maintenance done very quickly. We changed the oil, filters, spark plugs, and other general maintenance. We also changed out a bilge pump that had quit working. Here is a picture of us on the travel lift. For those interested, the maintenance is about \$600 and the cost for the lift is about \$200.

On the way back to Grand harbor, we saw an eagle in a tree. As we approached, he flew off. I got this picture.

Tomorrow, we begin our trip south down the Tom Bigbee waterway. It is 449 miles to Mobile Al. There are 12 locks, all going down, and we anticipate the trip to Mobile to take about 7-8 days.

<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>
<u>11/18/2009</u>	<u>185</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>4.50</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>34° 59.462'</u>	<u>88° 12.951'</u>	<u>Grand Harbor Marina</u>	<u>\$93.90</u>	<u>2</u>
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.

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

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>
<u>10/20/2009</u>	<u>156</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>34° 47.212'</u>	<u>87° 40.433'</u>	<u>Florence Marina - Florence AL</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
<p>10-20-09 Coon Dog Cemetery</p> <p>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."</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The description above of the Coon Dog Cemetery comes from a brochure about the sights and entertainment in Florence, AL and the surrounding area.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>									

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<u>10/19/2009</u>	<u>155</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>34° 47.212'</u>	<u>87° 40.433'</u>	<u>Florence Marina - Florence AL</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
		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.

Tomorrow, The National Coon Dog Cemetery. I cannot wait.. This is due to vandalism on the original statue.

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<u>10/18/2009</u>	<u>154</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>5.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>34° 47.212'</u>	<u>87° 40.433'</u>	<u>Florence Marina - Florence AL</u>	<u>\$104.00</u>	<u>2</u>
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.

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<u>10/17/2009</u>	<u>153</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>34° 46.619'</u>	<u>87° 13.209'</u>	<u>Bay Hill Marina Athens AL</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
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 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.

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<u>10/16/2009</u>	<u>152</u>	<u>71</u>	<u>4.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>34° 46.619'</u>	<u>87° 13.209'</u>	<u>Bay Hill Marina Athens AL</u>	<u>\$52.00</u>	<u>1</u>

[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...

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<u>10/15/2009</u>	<u>151</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>2.50</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>34° 21.731'</u>	<u>86° 17.406'</u>	<u>Guntersville Town Dock</u>		
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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<u>10/15/2009</u>	<u>151</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>34° 34.813'</u>	<u>86° 4.760'</u>	<u>Scottsboro AL Goose Pond Marina</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
10-15-09 Goose Pond to back to Guntersville, AL									

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<b>10/11/2009</b>	<b>147</b>			<b>M</b>	<b>34° 34.813'</b>	<b>86° 4.760'</b>	<b>Scottsboro AL Goose Pond Marina</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>0</b>
<p>10-11-09 Sunday</p> <p>You will recall that the Presbyterian minister, Rev. Roy Hall, whose wife runs the wonderful restaurant at the marina, invited us to the Cumberland Presbyterian Church of Scottsboro. He told Betsy to be sure to bring a harmonica with her if we came and she said she usually had one in her pocket. Since we were still in town on Sunday, we did attend. The church was modest, with about 200 in attendance. Rev. Hall gave a very good sermon entitled "Here's what to expect". Every time we attend a church, there is something special happening, usually communion. Today, at Cumberland, they were installing Deacons and Elders. Rev. Roy asked Betsy before church if she would play something as the postlude. At the appropriate time, she played "My Country Tis of Thee". She received a very nice round of applause. Then, one of the members presented her with the flowers that had graced the front of the chapel.</p> <p>Our Canadian friend, Gayle from Falcor, attended the service with us, and Betsy gave the flowers to her, since we do not have room for them on our small boat.</p> <p>We were going to Wal-Mart for flu shots but someone else had the car reserved and we could not get there in time. Oh well, we'll get them somewhere else.</p> <p>We will probably be here for a couple more days. There is nothing on the schedule and we really like it here. Monday and Tuesday are supposed to be rainy, at best.</p> <p>There will not be a blog until we have something to report. We are killing time until the rendezvous on Oct 25. Remember that we were going up the Cumberland to Nashville. We decided not to do that and that gained us a week. Then, we were going up the Tennessee to Knoxville, but again decided not to go past Chattanooga. That gained us another week. So, here we are, killing time for two weeks. Tough life!</p>									

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<b>10/8/2009</b>	<b>144</b>			<b>M</b>	<b>34° 34.813'</b>	<b>86° 4.760'</b>	<b>Scottsboro AL Goose Pond Marina</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>0</b>
<p>10-08-09 A side trip to Guntersville  [Rick] Since we've been here in Scottsboro for several days, we decided to take the boat out for a bit. It was a perfect day, so we drove about 20 miles back to Guntersville, walked the town some more, and had lunch. When we first got there we were the only boat at the free public dock right downtown. By the time we returned, several looper boats had arrived and we visited briefly with old friends before heading back to Scottsboro.</p> <p>10-09-09 Scottsboro and the tornado  We have been very lazy. Two looper boats that we've met previously arrived here today (Falcor and Carolyn Ann), as well as one that we hadn't met before, although we do remember passing them on our way upriver and waving (Noah Genda). So we spent the day chatting with our friends here, reading, and piddling on the boat. Late in the afternoon, a huge black cloud covered the sky. It was moving very fast and for a while, we thought we would be bypassed. Then, we heard the tornado warning siren from the town of Scottsboro. A voice from the heaven indicated that a tornado had been spotted about 8 miles away and for everyone to seek a safe place. We, and the others from the other boats, abandoned the boats and went to the hallway of the marina office. The marina was closed, so about 15 of us huddled in the hallway leading to the bathrooms. Then, the rain, the thunder, and lightning began and lasted for about 10 minutes. The power went out, but fortunately one of the boaters had brought a couple of flashlights with him. Then it cleared up and was actually quite nice afterward. A siren indicated that the warning was over. We returned to the boat and watched the radar as the front moved eastward.</p> <p>One weird thing happened as we waited in the hallway during the worst of the storm. We saw a man walking on the dock. He came to the hallway and asked which way to the boat ramp. We told him the ramp was a good distance away, and to get his friend still in the boat and come inside. He went back to the boat, a 16 ft Jon boat, got in and left with his friend toward the boat ramp. These are the people you read about in the newspaper after a storm.</p> <p>10-10-09 Saturday  We did nothing except laundry.</p>									

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<b>10/7/2009</b>	<b>143</b>			<b>M</b>	<b>34° 34.813'</b>	<b>86° 4.760'</b>	<b>Scottsboro AL Goose Pond Marina</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>0</b>

10-07-09 Scottsboro, AL

We lounged around the boat most of the day. The only thing of note that happened was that we went to the local restaurant for lunch. They are normally closed, but the manager told us to come on over as she had two groups eating there. She was to serve meatloaf and fresh vegetables. It turned out to be two groups from the Presbyterian Church. The locals, Primetime, were from the First Presbyterian of Scottsboro. The others, Joy Club, were from Birmingham, AL. Betsy went back to the boat and got her harmonica and returned to play a few hymn selections for them. They sang along and seemed to enjoy themselves. We promised the minister that if we were in town on Sunday, we would come to the Presbyterian Church. The minister is the husband of the restaurant manager and the chef is their son. The rest of the day was just resting and relaxing...and another trip to Wal-Mart!

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<u>10/6/2009</u>	<u>142</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>34° 34.813'</u>	<u>86° 4.760'</u>	<u>Scottsboro AL Goose Pond Marina</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
<p>10-06-09 Scottsboro, AL II Unclaimed Baggage, Inc  [Rick] I wasn't going to write a blog for Tuesday until I remembered that we went to Unclaimed Baggage, Inc. The rest of the day, we just relaxed and rested.</p> <p>Unclaimed Baggage was begun about 30 years ago. In the beginning, it was the place where all unclaimed baggage from the airlines would be sent when the owner could not be found. At that time, you would literally open suitcases, rummage through them, and buy what you wanted at a very good discounted price. After all, the basis cost to the store was zero. I am told that it was not uncommon to get \$600 watches for \$30. Enter the children of the founder. They decided that they needed a different business model. So, now, the place is a converted strip shopping center. It is one big store, with everything out for you to browse. It is much like a Big Lots. However, they now sell closeouts, overstocks, etc from businesses. After all, it is hard to imagine 100 pogo sticks came from someone's luggage. Also, the bargains are not a great as before. New hardcover books are \$6.00 and at one time were \$.50. DVD movies are about \$3.00 each, non returnable. They have a museum of some of the "better" items brought in. This includes a space camera that belonged to NASA, later returned. There is 1770 violin and bow, in the original case. A bound book of a French newspaper from 1870-1873 is on display. All in all, the Unclaimed Baggage store is a good way to kill an hour while waiting for the rain to abate. They have a second store in Boaz, AL, about an hour away.</p>									

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<u>10/5/2009</u>	<u>141</u>	<u>130</u>	<u>5.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>34° 34.813'</u>	<u>86° 4.760'</u>	<u>Scottsboro AL Goose Pond Marina</u>	<u>\$200.00</u>	<u>1</u>

[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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

<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>
<u>10/4/2009</u>	<u>140</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>35° 3.373'</u>	<u>85° 18.993'</u>	<u>Chattanooga, TN</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>

10-04-09 Chattanooga: Ruby Falls

Betsy speaks: Our plan was to leave sometime today and head upriver towards Knoxville. We have one lock to go through, and had really planned to go only about 20 miles today, to the town of Soddy Daisy. We were never positive we'd make it to Knoxville, about 150 from here, but hoped to make it eventually as far as the Tellico River and the Little Tennessee River. That would be about 100 miles farther upriver. But the plan was always flimsy, so the plan changed!

We called the lock, which is less than 10 miles away, and found out that there were five barges waiting to go through, so we probably wouldn't be able to go through until very late this afternoon. We already knew that once we made it through this lock, we'd have a problem coming back as work is beginning tomorrow which will cause the lock to be closed Monday through Thursday until 5PM each day for the next several days, so our coming back would have to be very dependent on timing the lock just right. So we decided to just stay in Chattanooga one more day, then head back downriver tomorrow morning rather than heading upriver against a very strong current.

My brother Steve, a great lover of waterfalls, had told me about an "underground" waterfall that he remembered visiting somewhere near here many years ago. So when I saw a brochure for Ruby Falls a few days ago I picked it up. This afternoon we called a cab and rode out to Ruby Falls and took the tour which was very enjoyable. Sure enough, it is a very high waterfall inside a mountain. After riding an elevator down 260 feet, you then walk 2/5 mile through a cave to the falls. Of course it is lit with ambient lighting and many interesting formations are pointed out.

Once you get there, the falls are magnificent. nothing like Niagara Falls, but beautiful nonetheless. They are very tall (145 feet), and are inside a huge chamber that you come to after ducking and holding your breath in to get through narrow passages to get there. You can walk behind them if you're willing to get a little wet. Fortunately we went prepared with rain gear since it looked like it was going to rain anyway!

So that was about it for today. We arrived back at the boat late afternoon just as it started to rain, and now at 10:30PM it hasn't let up. We expect rain all day tomorrow and the next day. Still, we hope to leave here tomorrow morning and head downriver about 80 miles to Scottsboro, Alabama. If its raining too hard we have several options for stopping sooner. We'll be back in Central Time which we really like because we don't have to stay up so late to watch Letterman!

Here's one last picture of us at the marina in Chattanooga with several other loopers. Two of these have just started the loop in the last few days so we just met them here for the first time. Now that 25 foot Pookie II has finished her loop and we are so far ahead of 21 foot Quotidian, we're by far the smallest boat in the bunch again.

<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>
<u>10/3/2009</u>	<u>139</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>35° 3.373'</u>	<u>85° 18.993'</u>	<u>Chattanooga, TN</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
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 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.

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

[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 our 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.

<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>
<u>10/1/2009</u>	<u>137</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>5.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>35° 2.696'</u>	<u>85° 32.252'</u>	<u>Guild TN Hales Bar Marina</u>	<u>\$26.00</u>	<u>1</u>

[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>
<u>9/30/2009</u>	<u>136</u>	<u>56</u>	<u>4.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>34° 23.737'</u>	<u>86° 16.770'</u>	<u>Guntersville, AL Alred Marina</u>		<u>1</u>

09-30-09 Guntersville, AL

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.

<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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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!!!)

<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>
<u>9/29/2009</u>	<u>135</u>	<u>47</u>	<u>4.75</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>34° 37.003'</u>	<u>86° 58.267'</u>	<u>Decatur AL Riverwalk Marina</u>	<u>\$13.00</u>	<u>2</u>
<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</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>
<u>9/27/2009</u>	<u>133</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>3.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>34° 47.214'</u>	<u>87° 40.432'</u>	<u>Florence, Al Marina</u>	<u>\$52.00</u>	

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.

<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>
<u>9/25/2009</u>	<u>131</u>	<u>65</u>	<u>7.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>34° 59.462'</u>	<u>88° 12.951'</u>	<u>Grand Harbor Marina-1</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>1</u>
09-25-09 Grand Harbor, Counce TN									

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.

<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>
<u>9/24/2009</u>	<u>130</u>	<u>65</u>	<u>5.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>35° 23.149'</u>	<u>88° 0.366'</u>	<u>Clifton Marina</u>	<u>\$25.68</u>	
09-24-09 Clifton Marina, Clifton TN									

[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.

<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>
<u>9/23/2009</u>	<u>129</u>	<u>76</u>	<u>5.25</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>36° 3.706'</u>	<u>87° 57.303'</u>	<u>Johnsonville, TN Pebble Isle Marina</u>	<u>\$26.98</u>	
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>
<u>9/22/2009</u>	<u>128</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>37° 0.431'</u>	<u>88° 13.553'</u>	<u>Green Turtle Bay Marina</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
09-22-09 Green Turtle Bay Marina V (Grand Rivers, KY)									

Since we spent another day at Green Turtle Bay getting the throttles fixed there's not a whole lot to tell today. We were successful in getting the repair done, and look forward to smooth throttling tomorrow.

I took advantage of the day with nothing to do and went to town. Grand Rivers is a very small resort town, beautifully located in what is referred to as The Land Between the Lakes. It is nearly surrounded by water, with Kentucky Lake on one side and Barkley Lake, where we are located, on the other side. There's not really much in town. The biggest attraction is "Patti's 1880's Settlement." Patti's Restaurant features their famous 2 inch pork chop, which several of us enjoyed when we ate there Sunday night. It is also famous for their "mile high meringue pie" which you have to see to believe. Patti's Settlement also consists of numerous gift shops, a farm of sorts that has peacocks, emus, llamas, a pony and various other animals. There is also a tiny wedding chapel, a pond, many exotic plants, and a putt-putt course. In the center of all of this is a little memorial garden explaining how the settlement was started by Patti and Bill Tullar in the early 1970's. Overall, just a mishmash of stuff that you wander around looking at. The entire settlement takes up about half of the downtown area.

Did I mention Grand Rivers is a small town? Here's a picture of the City Hall! The unlabeled door is the fire station.

Since nothing much more happened today I just wanted to share a few photos. We mentioned day before yesterday that friends on the boat "Biddi and the Beast" crossed their wake at this marina (finished their loop). They had more mishaps than anyone else we've heard of. Three times within a week's time they hit a rocks in Georgian Bay, and had to have their boat hauled out of the water each time for major repairs and it is a very large boat! Then just a week or so ago they managed to wrap a chain around a prop. So they were very happy to be done with the loop, although they live on their boat so will just continue cruising. Someone purchased a very appropriate shirt for Dan (aka the Beast) which reads: "I'd rather be in the boat with a drink on the rocks than in the drink with a boat on the rocks."

Rick mentioned in a recent blog that one of the best things about doing the loop is the camaraderie among loopers. We love having docktails (or dock tales) most evenings prior to dinner. Here is a picture of the small group still left here at Green Turtle Bay.

And here's a picture of some of the goodies!

And, finally, we've been tackling a leak in the main cabin since before we left home. As of today we think we have it fixed (knock on wood). Rick got the caulk out yesterday and caulked the overhead hatches (again) and today it poured, poured, poured rain and there was no leak. The leak was not around the hatches he caulked, but it is sort of like a roof that leaks you never know where the water is really coming from. So keep your fingers crossed that this minor irritation is taken care of.

Tomorrow we will leave heading up the Tennessee River to at least Chattanooga..

<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>
<u>9/20/2009</u>	<u>126</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>37° 0.431'</u>	<u>88° 13.553'</u>	<u>Green Turtle Bay Marina</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>

[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>
<u>9/19/2009</u>	<u>125</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>37° 0.431'</u>	<u>88° 13.553'</u>	<u>Green Turtle Bay Marina</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>

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 "Bididi and the Beast" (her name is Bididi, 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".

<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>
<u>9/18/2009</u>	<u>124</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>9.35</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>37° 0.431'</u>	<u>88° 13.553'</u>	<u>Green Turtle Bay Marina</u>	<u>\$152.60</u>	<u>2</u>

[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.

<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>
<u>9/17/2009</u>	<u>123</u>	<u>92</u>	<u>11.50</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>37° 7.447'</u>	<u>88° 40.429'</u>	<u>Lock 52 Ohio River</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>1</u>

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.

<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>
<u>9/16/2009</u>	<u>122</u>	<u>110</u>	<u>11.00</u>	<u>W</u>			<u>Diversion Canal-Cape Girardeau</u>		
09-16-09 Diversion Canal - Cape Girardeau, MO									

[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 conversion 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 Beam 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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<u>9/15/2009</u>	<u>121</u>	<u>43</u>	<u>5.50</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>38° 21.474'</u>	<u>90° 21.650'</u>	<u>Hoppies Marina Kemmswick, MO</u>	<u>\$26.00</u>	<u>2</u>

[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.

<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>
<u>9/14/2009</u>	<u>120</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>38° 53.091'</u>	<u>90° 10.360'</u>	<u>Alton, Il Marina</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>

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 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.

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

[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.

<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>
<u>9/12/2009</u>	<u>118</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>38° 58.106'</u>	<u>90° 26.310'</u>	<u>Grafton, IL Grafton Harbor Marina</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
	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 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.

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

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)!

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<u>9/10/2009</u>	<u>116</u>	<u>80</u>	<u>6.00</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>40° 1.041'</u>	<u>90° 26.332'</u>	<u>Beardstown, IL Tied to a Tow</u>	<u>\$26.00</u>	<u>1</u>

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

[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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<u>9/5/2009</u>	<u>111</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>41° 20.487'</u>	<u>88° 47.204'</u>	<u>Heritage Harbor Ottawa IL</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
		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.

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

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

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](http://www.betsyrick.com) webpage under the Log Book Tab on the left side of the page. Just look at the top of page 1.

<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>
<u>9/3/2009</u>	<u>109</u>	<u>74</u>	<u>6.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>41° 17.933'</u>	<u>88° 37.724'</u>	<u>Seneca IL, Spring Brook Marina</u>	<u>\$26.00</u>	

[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!

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!

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.

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.

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.

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!

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.

I look forward now to weeks and weeks of stress free boating!

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<u>9/1/2009</u>	<u>107</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>41° 38.509'</u>	<u>87° 35.286'</u>	<u>Marine Services Corp-Dolton, IL</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
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.

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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<u>8/30/2009</u>	<u>105</u>			<u>M</u>	<u>41° 38.509'</u>	<u>87° 35.286'</u>	<u>Marine Services Corp-Dolton, IL</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>0</u>
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"!!!

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.

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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!"

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.

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<b>8/29/2009</b>	<b>104</b>			<b>M</b>	<b>41° 38.509'</b>	<b>87° 35.286'</b>	<b>Marine Services Corp-Dolton, IL</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>0</b>
<p>08-29-09 Marine Services Corp Marina</p> <p>[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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>(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.</p>									

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

[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.

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

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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<u>8/19/2009</u>	<u>94</u>	<u>116</u>	<u>6.25</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>41° 53.055'</u>	<u>87° 36.760'</u>	<u>Chicago, IL</u>	<u>\$316.06</u>	

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

[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.

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

[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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<b>8/12/2009</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>4.30</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>44° 37.897'</b>	<b>86° 14.418'</b>	<b>Frankfort MI</b>	<b>\$59.50</b>	

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

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

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!

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<u>8/7/2009</u>	<u>82</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>3.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>45° 52.001'</u>	<u>84° 43.139'</u>	<u>St Ignace, MI</u>	<u>\$90.00</u>	

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

[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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<u>8/6/2009</u>	<u>81</u>	<u>43</u>	<u>2.50</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>45° 55.519'</u>	<u>83° 6.732'</u>	<u>Drummond Island - Yacht Haven</u>	<u>\$31.00</u>	

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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).

<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>
<u>8/3/2009</u>	<u>78</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>5.75</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>45° 55.144'</u>	<u>82° 27.699'</u>	<u>Gore Bay, North Channel, ON</u>	<u>\$87.36</u>	

[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 out 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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<u>7/31/2009</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>4.00</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>46° 3.009'</u>	<u>81° 28.677'</u>	<u>Baie Fine Fjord</u>		
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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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<u>7/30/2009</u>	<u>74</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>1.75</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>45° 58.989'</u>	<u>81° 55.657'</u>	<u>Little Current, ON</u>	<u>\$191.10</u>	

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

[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.

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

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!!

<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>
<u>7/24/2009</u>	<u>68</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>4.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>45° 21.463'</u>	<u>80° 14.335'</u>	<u>Killbear marina</u>	<u>\$78.00</u>	

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

[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 Penetanguishene. 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.

Penetanguishene 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.

<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>
<u>7/19/2009</u>	<u>63</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>4.00</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>44° 37.873'</u>	<u>79° 23.918'</u>	<u>Big Chute Wall</u>		<u>2</u>

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.

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<u>7/18/2009</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>1.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>44° 39.364'</u>	<u>79° 21.166'</u>	<u>Ojibway Marina-Rama Tribe</u>	<u>\$49.61</u>	
<p>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.</p>									

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

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

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..

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

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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<u>7/12/2009</u>	<u>56</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>6.50</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>44° 29.319'</u>	<u>78° 13.905'</u>	<u>Youngs Point Lock 28</u>		<u>8</u>

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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<u>7/9/2009</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>5.25</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>44° 17.770'</u>	<u>78° 19.093'</u>	<u>Peterborough, ON Marina</u>	<u>\$114.66</u>	<u>1</u>

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 flies, 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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<u>7/8/2009</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>7.00</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>44° 18.350'</u>	<u>77° 57.427'</u>	<u>Hastings Lock #18</u>		<u>8</u>

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

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.

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<u>7/6/2009</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>72</u>	<u>4.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>44° 6.122'</u>	<u>77° 34.475'</u>	<u>Trenton, ON</u>	<u>\$32.50</u>	

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.

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<u>7/3/2009</u>	<u>47</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>3.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>44° 13.683'</u>	<u>76° 28.715'</u>	<u>Kingston ON</u>	<u>\$141.91</u>	

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.

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.

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 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.

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.

July 5, 2009

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.

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.

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.

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.

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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.

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<u>7/1/2009</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>76</u>	<u>3.50</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>44° 20.447'</u>	<u>75° 54.800'</u>	<u>Alexandria Bay, NY</u>	<u>\$104.00</u>	

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).

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<u>6/29/2009</u>	<u>43</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>5.50</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>43° 27.686'</u>	<u>76° 30.582'</u>	<u>Oswego NY</u>	<u>\$78.00</u>	<u>8</u>

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

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.

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<b>6/27/2009</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>3.00</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>43° 12.023'</b>	<b>75° 43.570'</b>	<b>Sylvan Beach - Lake Oneida</b>	<b>\$32.50</b>	<b>3</b>

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.

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.

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.

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<u>6/26/2009</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>5.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>43° 6.705'</u>	<u>75° 12.930'</u>	<u>Utica Docks</u>	<u>\$26.00</u>	<u>4</u>

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.

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.

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.

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.

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<u>6/25/2009</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>51</u>	<u>8.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>42° 59.684'</u>	<u>74° 40.778'</u>	<u>St Johnsville Municipal Marina</u>	<u>\$26.00</u>	<u>8</u>

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>
<u>6/24/2009</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>3.75</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>42° 51.063'</u>	<u>73° 53.199'</u>	<u>Schenectady Yacht Club</u>	<u>\$37.50</u>	<u>6</u>

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!

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<u>6/23/2009</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>66</u>	<u>6.00</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>42° 47.178'</u>	<u>73° 40.711'</u>	<u>Waterford, NY Town dock</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>1</u>

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

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..

<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>
<u>6/19/2009</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>2.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>41° 12.972'</u>	<u>73° 57.982'</u>	<u>Haverstraw Bay</u>	<u>\$131.50</u>	
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.

<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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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....

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

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

<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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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>
<u>6/14/2009</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>66</u>	<u>4.75</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>40° 5.575'</u>	<u>74° 3.547'</u>	<u>Point Pleasant, NJ</u>	<u>\$72.50</u>	

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.

<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>
<u>6/10/2009</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>7.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>39° 22.752'</u>	<u>74° 25.752'</u>	<u>Farley Marina-Atlantic City</u>	<u>\$364.00</u>	

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

<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>
<u>6/8/2009</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>73</u>	<u>4.50</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>38° 57.069'</u>	<u>74° 54.321'</u>	<u>Utches Marina-Cape May</u>	<u>\$104.00</u>	

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

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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<u>6/4/2009</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>2.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>39° 16.923'</u>	<u>76° 36.079'</u>	<u>Inner Harbour East Marina</u>	<u>\$171.42</u>	

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.

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<u>6/1/2009</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>56</u>	<u>3.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>38° 51.978'</u>	<u>76° 26.853'</u>	<u>Ego Alley-Annapolis Md</u>	<u>\$165.00</u>	

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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<b>5/30/2009</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>3.75</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>38° 18.926'</b>	<b>76° 18.756'</b>	<b>Solomons Yacht Club</b>	<b>\$104.40</b>	
<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>									

<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>
<u>5/29/2009</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>2.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>37° 33.595'</u>	<u>76° 18.756'</u>	<u>Deltaville, Va-Doziers Regatta</u>	<u>\$40.00</u>	

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.

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.

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...

Tomorrow, Solomons Island..

<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>
<u>5/28/2009</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>4.00</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>37° 14.334'</u>	<u>76° 30.425'</u>	<u>Waterside Marina-Yorktown VA</u>	<u>\$45.50</u>	<u>1</u>
<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>									

<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>
<u>5/24/2009</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>2.10</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>36° 20.307'</u>	<u>75° 56.965'</u>	<u>Atlantic Marine-Great Bridge</u>		
<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 come 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>									

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<u>5/23/2009</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>84</u>	<u>4.50</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>36° 20.070'</u>	<u>75° 56.965'</u>	<u>Coinjock Marina, Coinjock NC</u>	<u>\$52.50</u>	
<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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<u>5/21/2009</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>72</u>	<u>5.50</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>35° 31.975'</u>	<u>76° 32.149'</u>	<u>Dowry Creek-Belhaven, NC</u>	<u>\$86.00</u>	
<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>									

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<u>5/18/2009</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>2.50</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>34° 43.288'</u>	<u>76° 42.276'</u>	<u>Morehead City Yacht Basin</u>	<u>\$161.40</u>	
<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>									

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Grand Totals-->								6034	505.48			\$10,046.74	117