

"2005 Delivery of 43' Lagoon Power Cat to the Bahamas"

We started on our journey from Manitowoc, Wisconsin, to the Bahamas to deliver a new 43' Lagoon Power Cat to its new owner by heading south on Lake Michigan to Chicago and taking the river system to Florida. By the time we arrived in Peoria, Hurricane Katrina had done her damage in the south and we determined it to be too unsafe and unpredictable to continue. In conferring with the owner, we agreed to back-track to Wisconsin and take the Great Lakes east toward the coast and proceed to Florida and the Bahamas that way. This story starts with our trip to Peoria and back.



**43' Lagoon Power
Cat "Mystere"**

This 43' Lagoon Power Cat built by the Beneteau Company in Bordeaux, France, has been christened "Mystere" by its owner. The name comes from a Las Vegas show that features ballet and balancing performances, so she will have to live up to her name in how she performs on the water. We can tell you she did that with grace and style!

It was the end of August when we left Manitowoc and Lake Michigan was being kind to us with a clear day and 3-4 foot head seas.

Day 1 - We were able to hold an 18 knot cruise all the way to Chicago and easily locked through at Navy Pier. The view of the city was nothing short of spectacular but our clear day had turned hazy so we couldn't get the best pictures of the skyscrapers.

With our bimini top hinged down, we easily cruised under the 54 bridges, only detained by one railroad bridge in use for about an hour. There was a little excitement around the fourth bridge when several rescue-type boats sped past us to an area under the bridge ahead of us. With the binoculars we could see that someone was being pulled out of the water probably having jumped or fell from the bridge...this IS Chicago!



Ken at the helm; Chicago in the background



Navy Pier



Chicago Skyscrapers

We arrived in Joliet, Illinois, about dusk and tied up on the wall at the Billie Limacher Will Bicentennial Park, a welcome spot after 14 hours of cruising. A couple from the one other boat moored just ahead of us recognized us as the “trawler dealers”. We gave them a tour of our boat and they gave us the phone number for a good place to order-out pizza that also delivered. Just one day in and we are already experiencing the friendliness of boating people.

Day 2 - After two uneventful bridge openings in Joliet, we were on our way to the Brandon Lock which was open and waiting for us.



Dresden Lock

Not so with the Dresden Lock where we experienced a 4-hour delay with barge traffic getting the right of way. These delays always present an opportune time to keep your “stuff” organized and do some cleaning and maintenance as well. We decided to treat ourselves to a little shorter day and make Spring Brook Marina at Seneca, Illinois our rest stop.

Power catamarans with a 21’ beam are not your typical cruising boat so we certainly can’t slip in unnoticed. Very friendly boaters greeted us and were anxious to give us a hand. We took up the space of two slips but the nice folks at the marina only charged us for one slip. They weren’t full anyway.



Spring Brook Marina

Day 3 - It was a pleasure cruising the Illinois River since we spend so much time on the Great Lakes that we find this relaxing with interesting scenery. Once we spotted a long line of white birds off in the distance. The river is wide here but with the binoculars we could determine that they were white pelicans. Sure thought we had to wait to get to Florida to see those!!

There were only slight delays at Marseilles Lock and Starved Rock Lock and we tied up for the night at the old abandoned Henry Lock. It was either being eaten alive by

mosquitoes or walk as fast as you could up to the little town there just in time to catch a bowl of home-made soup before they locked up for the night.



White pelicans on Illinois River



Abandoned Henry Lock wall

Day 4 - We arrived in Peoria and spent an overnight with Rick, our son, and his wife Molly and family who just moved into their new country home the week before. We even got to watch some soccer practice since all 4 of their kids play and Dad & Mom coach one of the teams. We spent the next morning determining what to do in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. As we discussed with the owner that it could be a month or more before we could get through Mobile, Alabama, the decision was made to back-track to Manitowoc and cruise down the east-coast waterway. It would take a week to two weeks longer than the river system but a far safer way to go at this point.

Day 5 - Everyone was surprised to see us come back in at Spring Brook but they all agreed with the new plan. Going through Joliet where we had spent our first night, we came past "Freedom", an American Tug owned by Patrick and Jane Murray. They had spent several weeks in Manitowoc getting a davit and dinghy from us and attending our Trawler Fest. They are now on their first Great Loop adventure and were also surprised to see us back-tracking! Their journey south could continue on since they planned to spend extra time in Kentucky and Tennessee before they reached the Gulf.

For a new adventure and a change of scenery, we took the Calumet River through south Chicago, an alternate route from the Sanitary Canal we cruised on the way down. This is a longer route, but less traffic and a lot less tows. There were plenty of bridges but we could pass under with a foot or two of clearance.

The dockhands were very helpful at the Riverdale Marina, moving a small boat to another location so we could fit in an open slip.

Day 6 - Several railroad bridges had to open for us the next morning but all were pleasantly cooperative. It was an odd feeling to return to Manitowoc but everyone there too agreed with our decision having seen a lot of news on the Katrina disaster. It took us a few days to get the charts and guide books we needed for the new route but soon we were ready to set out again.



Passing tow boat & barge in narrow channel

Day 1 - Crossing Lake Michigan to Leland, Michigan in 3-4' waves was a pleasurable ride in the Lagoon 43 Power Cat with a 21' beam. She plowed through the smaller waves and loped easily over the higher ones at a comfortable speed of 15-16 knots. We spent the night at the Leland Marina, eating dinner at the seaside restaurant there and watching a beautiful sunset.



Lots of bridges on Illinois River



Mackinac Bridge

Day 2 - The next morning the waves had built to 5-6 feet as the wind had switched to the north but we were still able to maintain the same speed as the day before. Even though we've cruised under the Mackinac Bridge many times, it always leaves you in awe at the engineering feat it took to build such a structure. As the day progressed, the winds lessened and we cruised all the way to Harbor Beach in comfort.



GM Headquarters in Detroit

Day 3 - The next day being Sunday, we attended church at Our Lady of Lake Huron before heading out. As we cruised south on Lake Huron towards Port Huron, we reminisced about the fact that we were cruising down Lake Huron in an American Tug on our way to the Detroit Boat Show on Sept 11, 2001, when the World Trade Centers and the Pentagon were hit. We were enjoying a beautiful day on the lake with flat seas, unaware of what was happening to our country until we came into a port late in the evening and put on our TV. It was hard to continue on not knowing if the show would even be held, but we did, keeping our radio station on all day to learn more about the sad event. The show was held but very subdued as all felt the sadness.

This day was a relaxing ride down the St. Clare River to Lake St. Clare and the Detroit River, which forms the border between Detroit and Windsor, Canada. The riverside GM headquarters in Detroit are an impressive array of buildings as well as the many

other skyscrapers.

With the calm conditions we were able to cruise all the way to West Harbor , Ohio at the bottom end of Lake Erie . Dusk was upon us as we fueled up there and then just backed up a little and stayed for the night on the end of the fuel dock.

Day 4 - This day should probably go down in history as a novel event because we cruised the entire length of Lake Erie to Buffalo , New York in 2-3 foot seas.....(the last time we crossed this lake it was in 10-12 footers!!). There were a lot of bridges to go under in Buffalo but all were high enough except one railroad bridge where we only waited a few minutes for the opening. A small marina on the Niagara River was a good stopping-off point before taking on the Erie Canal .

Day 5 - In the morning, we washed down the boat and did some office work before we got underway and entered the Erie Canal .



Sunrise leaving West Harbor, Ohio



Sign marking entrance to Erie Canal

The speed limit on the Canal is 10 mph so 8.3 knots for us (it's like city driving after you've been driving in the open country-side). Before long we approached Lock 35, the first of 35 total on the Canal. There are lots of low railroad bridges and car bridges where we have to wait for openings. This is also the one route on the Great Loop that has the lowest fixed bridges with a minimum of 15 feet 6 inches clearance. Even with our bimini top and hinged radar arch down, we are barely able to pass under them.



Erie Canal bridges



Small town along Erie Canal

There are not many places to stay on this part of the Canal so we pulled in earlier than usual. This was not all bad since we've been coming into ports pretty late and it felt good

to get in before dark.

Day 6 - The next day, we enjoyed the beautiful scenery as we passed open farm fields, lush forests, and little towns along the Erie Canal . It's that late in fall that the boat traffic has diminished.

Having said that, we expected the weather to be on the cool side but we seemed to be cruising at the same pace of a very warm weather system. The daytime temperatures have been ranging from 88 to 92.

In Pittsford , New York , we tied up at a city wall drawing a lot of attention from shoppers. There were just some small runabouts docked there so we looked gigantic among them. Our nephew who lives in nearby Rochester picked us up and we shared a nice dinner and evening with him and his family.

Day 7 - The next day it took us 11 hours to get to Baldwinsville, New York as we navigated through locks 33 to 24 - lots of handling lines and waiting as water gets pumped in and out of the lock. The average drop is 20 feet on this section of the canal. We've been locking through with one other boat, a 36' Tiara that 3 fellows are delivering for the owner from Michigan to Florida. After picking our spot on the city wall for the evening, we invited them over for a relaxing cocktail to unwind after a day of cruising and locking through.



Mystere at Pittsford, New York

It was great getting to know them. One of the guys (and his wife) sailed around the world in a 40' sailboat, another has his captain's license and has done the east coast part of the Great Loop, and the 3rd has done the Great Loop with another guy and was the former owner of a 32' Grand Banks we are now brokering for the current owner from Milwaukee.....small world!!



Ain't Misbehavin' and crew

Day 8 - Another 11-hour day brings us to Ilion , New York , passing through Locks 23 through 19.



Mystere in lock

Just before we reached Oneida Lake , we spotted a blue 42' Nordic Tug and realized it was "Heart Tug"! We sold this boat to a very nice couple from Minnesota and we currently have it in our brokerage listings. They have decided to go back to their love of sailing. It's always good to see a reminder of home. Even though this is a big body of water and winds had kicked up a 3-4 foot chop, we were able to cruise at 20 knots across Oneida Lake.



Crossing Oneida Lake

Soon we were back on the canal and going through more locks. The fall hours just took effect that day and all locks closed at 5 pm. It was probably a good thing...we were all getting tired. We ate burgers at the Dockside Cafe there. A game of 500 Rummy was just enough to wind down the day.

Day 9 - You're probably getting as tired reading about the Locks as we were doing them but Locks 18 through 8 are now at least 35-40 foot drop taking even longer to empty.

We end up at the Schenectady Yacht Club in Schenectady , New York . We always seem to be the biggest boat in the marina, but again, they found a place for us on their fuel-dock wall and welcomed both boats for the overnight. The nice guys on the Tiara invited us to join them for dinner; since they had a marinating pork loin to cook, but the trade-off was we needed to eat in our boat because we have the bigger dining area. Sounded like a great deal for us! The meal also consisted of garlic-seasoned mashed potatoes, a vegetable and a bottle of home-made wine. We provided the cookies after dinner. Great camaraderie and lots of boating stories shared!! (Maybe it didn't hurt that just yesterday we had shared a plate I made of melted chocolate with peanuts mixed in and allowed to set in fridge.....pretty yummy stuff!!)



*Gate closing on lock behind
Ain't Misbehavin'*



Dinner with Michigan friends



Day 10 - We hit the Grand Finale today as we completed Locks 7 to 1 by noon and entered the Hudson River, still in New York state. The scenery along the river was beautiful varying from high cliffs to green flatlands. Our destination was the Saugerties Marina which we approached amid stares and doubting Thomas's whether this big boat would fit anywhere here. We saw an empty wall and Ken turned this big cat on a dime and we backed slowly into place!

Saugerties, New York

We did look kind of comical surrounded by little 15-25' runabouts! Another nephew, who lives less than 10 minutes away, picked us up and we spent a nice afternoon and evening with him and his wife and four children. It pays off to have such a big family!! Returning to the boat that evening, they all thought we chose a good life's work after the dairy farm!



Hudson River, New York

Day 11 - Leaving Saugerties early in the morning, we pulled into Kingston for fuel. Cruising the Hudson River at 20 knots (24 mph) versus the 10 mph speed limit on the Erie Canal is a significant change in miles covered in a day.



West Point Academy

Cruising past the very impressive buildings of the West Point Academy was especially meaningful to us. Ken has been serving on Congressman Petri's Congressional Committee for Academy Appointments for some twenty years and he has visited this academy as well as the Naval Academy in Annapolis which we will be cruising past while on the Chesapeake.

Entering New York City via the Hudson River is nothing short of spectacular. The bridges and buildings are indescribable as they go on and on. We tried to pull in at a marina on the New York side.

They were full but they gave us the names of two other marinas to try. We ended up on the New Jersey side at Liberty Landing Marina and we could see the Liberty Lady in the distance. Usually docks at a marina go from A to D or maybe even F but we are on K and we're maybe 2/3 of the way to the end....it's bigger than big!! So are the prices...we're paying \$3.00 a foot whereas most marinas are at a buck a foot at the most!! New York, New York!!

Day 12 - We stayed "put" here for an extra day since our next leg of the trip is on the ocean and there are thunderstorms in the forecast and the winds are not good today but will be switching to west winds tomorrow which is perfect. We took a water taxi across the Hudson to Ground Zero.



Water taxi to Ground Zero

It's a very sobering place to be. You can walk the streets around the area and look down on what's left and what is being re-built. There are memorial billboards listing all the victims plus drawings of what will be built in its place.

Lots of tourists are milling around in the area and taking pictures of the billboards as I did. All the windows have been replaced in the surrounding buildings which had all been blown out. Looking up at one very tall building on the adjacent street, we were told that this building is only half as tall as the Twin Towers. That really put it in perspective for us. Everybody who is criticizing the war in Iraq ought to come here for a day. Later in the day, Ken got a nice long bike ride in and I did some waxing on the boat. We want it ready to handle the salt water we will be in from now on.

Day 13 - At daybreak, with the sun barely throwing a pink glow in the eastern sky, we crossed the large bay between New Jersey and New York and it was already busy with water taxis buzzing around like flies. The night lights are still on so it's an amazing site. The Statue of Liberty holds her beacon of light for all to see.



Ground Zero



Statue of Liberty at dawn

It turns out the decision to hold off yesterday was a good one. As we cruised out into the Atlantic Ocean there was just a 1-2 foot chop and swells maybe to threes. We followed the 150-mile coast-line down Sandy Hook and the coast of New Jersey. It's lined with homes, condos, and hotels. Not more than a mile or two altogether of undeveloped shoreline. We had a good view of the Trump Castle as we cruised past Atlantic City.



Atlantic City - Home of Trump Castle



Chesapeake Marina & Inn

One of the times we took the Grand Banks to Norfolk for our friends from Martha's Vineyard, we met in Atlantic City and had dinner at the casino. It's always fun to reminisce about places you have been before.

The southern most tip of New Jersey is Cape May and it was good place to stop for fuel. It's a beautiful area to stay, not so commercialized as some others. But today we continued on to get across Delaware Bay . This is a huge body of water and can get very rough if winds are pushing from the northwest. We have a west wind, but still never more than 2-3 footers. This was easy going for the catamaran. At the northern end of the Bay we turned into the C & D Canal (Chesapeake and Delaware), which will take us to the Chesapeake . There's a nice restaurant/ marina at the foot of the bridge that has always been the place to overnight. Not this time...there's yellow caution tape strung along the piers and we find out it's been closed. We head across the canal and stay at the Chesapeake Marina & Inn. It's very nice and clean.

Now starts the ritual of cleaning the salt off the boat after every day on the water. There was enough wind today to throw the water spray on every inch of the boat! If you run your hand along the railing, you will pick up white powdery, sticky stuff. It does hose off pretty good though and I really don't mind doing it. It feels good to do something physical after a long day of cruising, studying charts, figuring out our course and time to go, etc. We were treated to some great seafood in the restaurant at the marina. If you are ever going to eat seafood, this area of the country is the place! A live 3-piece band playing on the deck outside entertained us with some great songs. Life is good!!

Day 14 - The Chesapeake is a much larger body of water than it ever appears to be on a map of the United States. Once you're out to the buoyed channel you are out of site of land for most of the day. You have to watch your charts and be sure to identify the numbered buoys when you want to head to a port so you know it's the right one. The first day we cruised in light waves half way down the Chesapeake to Solomons on the west shore of Maryland.

This is a natural inlet of the Patuxent River and it's loaded with marinas on both sides. Of the 16 marinas, there are only three with diesel fuel so we picked Spring Cove Marina. It's very nice but still pricier at \$1.65 a foot than we are used to in the Midwest . Navigable ports on the Chesapeake are quite far apart so you have to

watch your fuel and pick your stops accordingly. We also needed to get in earlier to catch stores open for re-stocking groceries. We walked to a nearby restaurant and I was treated to some of the best crab I have ever had.



Baltimore bridges

Day 15 - The next morning, we walked to a mini-mall for breakfast at a Roy Rogers. Something other than cereal was a treat. We usually want to leave at daybreak to take advantage of calm waters as much as possible so we have cereal while we're underway. The weather forecast was in our favor. Northeast winds were forecast as 10-15 knots and would be pushing us down the bay! As we got closer to Norfolk, Virginia, we started to see land on both sides since the Chesapeake Bay narrows into the Elizabeth River with Norfolk on the east shore and Portsmouth on the west.



Spring Cove Marina

We went past many, many Navy ships, some in dry dock, and all being guarded by patrol boats with a visible gun on its bow.



Navy ships at Norfolk



Homeland Security at work!

We stayed at the Portsmouth Boating Center. The friendly owner, Mike, said he was off at 7 and will give us and another couple from Canada, also there by boat, a ride into town for dinner at Brutti's. The owner of Brutti's, Charlie, came by our table when we were near finished and said he'll chauffeur us back (we were going to take a cab) and then he brought out a fancy complimentary dessert for us to share. Both guys were very talkative, giving us mini tours of the town with lots of history and how they came into the businesses they now own. They were very interesting characters and it was so nice to experience friends that help each other out and us as well.

Day 16 - We left at daybreak since we knew we would have lots of bridges where we would wait for openings. Some open on demand with one long and one short horn blast or

a call on the VHF radio. Others in a big metropolis like this open on the hour or half-hour and there are usually signs on the bridge telling you that. We were lucky with the first two, but then were told we would have to wait for a tow coming up behind us. The tows have the right of way and are accommodated ahead of pleasure craft. The first wait was 15 minutes or so but then the next was a 40-minute wait. While we're "treading water", we were hailed on our VHF radio by Ain't Misbehaving.....that's the boat with the 3 guys from Michigan . They heard us talking to the bridge tenders and we discovered that we're only a bridge apart. We really didn't think we'd get back together since they have to stop for fuel twice as often as we do and they had gone into Annapolis when we went on to Solomons. Just a note - they have twin gas engines and burn 40 gal/hr at 20 knots (24 mph) and we've been averaging 18 gals/hr at 20 knots. Quite a difference!! We averaged 5 gph doing the Erie Canal at 10 mph but then it takes more than twice as long so it's still similar economy.



Great Bridge Lock



Interesting swing bridge in ICW

The Intercoastal Waterway (ICW) to Florida starts in Norfolk at Mile 0 so from here down we know in miles where we are. We will enter the state of Florida at Mile 717. Ain't Misbehaving joined us in the Great Bridge Lock at Mile 11 where we have an hour wait. Just to give you an idea, this lock is 600 ft long and 72 feet wide. We have been in some smaller ones where we seem to take up half the width. All the locks have lines hanging down at intervals so someone on the bow (that's usually me) takes one and someone on the stern (that's Ken) takes the other, then you feed it out or pull it in depending if you are going up or down. The lines spend a good part of their time in the water so they get pretty yucky!! I wear rubber gloves and keep a wet cloth handy to clean up after.

A good stopping place for the night was Coinjock , North Carolina at Mile 50. Not as far as we were used to going in a day but the next place was too far to get in before dark and we don't like going into a place we have not been before in the dark. After de-salting the boat, I got in my 4-mile walk down a road lined with water canals. Ken took a long bike ride, too. Then we were ready for a nice dinner at the Coinjock Restaurant, which is noted for its 32 oz.

Prime Rib you can cut with a fork. That's one big steak!?! We eat with the Michigan boys who are down to two, Dan & John. Neal left them in Annapolis to fly back home for previous commitments. We pass on the steak (John went for it and wasn't disappointed) but Ken & I have, you guessed it, seafood.....a great platter of sautéed scallops, shrimp, & crab. Ken's finally taking my advice about eating seafood here and he's not disappointed either!!

Day 17 - We watched the sunrise as we leave Coinjock on a short jaunt to Albemarle Sound which is 14 miles across. The sounds are open to the ocean and can get very knarly! We were lucky the first few hours as winds are light but they did pick up and we were getting splashed pretty well by the salt water! Again we're impressed by the stability of the catamaran in choppy waters. We knew we were getting a lot more comfortable ride than our friends in the Tiara. We also cruised across Pamlico Sound . These are the two largest sounds on the ICW route south. The Neuse River , also quite wide and rough, brought us into Morehead City , North Carolina , at Mile 205. We have a guidebook that lists the marinas in the area and if they have diesel fuel (not all do) so we pick Portside Marina. As we approach the entrance we have to pass a tugboat pushing against a large Navy ship causing extreme turbulence behind it. We carried a little extra speed as we moved through the turbulence toward the fuel dock but then the wind, current, and continued turbulence from the tugboat gave Ken a real test of his boat handling skills. I had to quickly switch our lines and fenders (3 lines and 4 fenders) to the port side since we knew there would be no turning around in here. As we eased up to the dock an excited dockhand is telling Ken what a great job he did bringing the boat in. He has seen other outcomes in the past. While we are refueling, the big Navy ship pulls out with the help of the tugboat pushing it into a sharp left turn. The dockhand says the ship had brought some troops back from Iraq and was heading out with reinforcements. We waved to the guys on deck. It gave me the goose-bumps! Ain't Misbehaving cruises in, missing all the commotion, and are glad they were spared. Sometimes it's not good being in the lead!

I worked on getting the boat free of salt and bugs. Ken took a bike ride to check out the area and comes back saying there's nothing much within reasonable walking distance. We dined on the boat from my "doggie bags" ...don't feel sorry for us, this stuff tastes great warmed up in the microwave. Ken beat me in another game of 500 Rummy...he's married to the 3 Aces!!



Tugboat & navy ship leaving

Day 18 - Now we see how the rich folks live or at least where they spend their money. In this section, the ICW is close to the coast so on our left we can see the big homes (mansions) facing the Atlantic Ocean , and on our right a continuous stream of homes with long piers and big decks facing the ICW.



Only a small percentage of the piers actually have boats on them...I'm thinking some spent so much money on the home that they can't afford the boat yet. Needless to say, we have to honor the "no wake" rule for tedious miles and miles. We pulled into Mrytle Beach Yacht Club at Mile 346 at dusk so we did cover 141 miles and are now in South Carolina . We walked across a busy highway to a little bar & grill kind of place for dinner.

Coastal homes in North Carolina

Day 19 - After making use of the convenient laundry facilities in the morning, we get underway. Before long we are on the Waccamaw River

which is considered the most scenic part of the ICW with cypress trees lining the banks. It is very peaceful and a refreshing change from the mansions and piers although we still get our share of those as we get closer to Georgetown, South Carolina, our stop that night at Mile 402. It is the 3rd oldest city in South Carolina founded in 1730. I read that they have restored their historic downtown and give tours, but it's not in our itinerary...we've got a boat to deliver!! We stayed at the Harborwalk Marina and within walking distance there is a nice stretch of boardwalk lined with shops and restaurants. We picked an open-air bar & grill and enjoyed chatting with the locals.



Mystere at Myrtle Beach Yacht Club



Barge loaded with 3 semi-trucks

Day 20 - It rained intermittently all night and the morning was still overcast. Before long we caught up to Ain't Misbehaving. They also stayed in Georgetown but at a different marina (remember, they pull in more often for fuel). Soon it starts raining and we moved to our inside steering helm and a windshield wiper. Ain't Misbehaving asked if we'd take the lead because they are on their bridge looking through plastic without wipers. We're glad to oblige, but spotting buoys in these conditions becomes far more difficult. It takes diligent attention to the charts and gps chartplotter. We pass through several sounds and numerous rivers as we wind our way past Charleston, South Carolina, which can be a good place for Great Loopers to stay for a week or more to enjoy the city offerings. Great Loopers are those who generally do this trip at a much more leisurely pace taking several months to go south down the river system in fall, winter in Florida, and cruise their way up the east coast in spring back to the Great Lakes.

About 2 in the afternoon, it cleared up and we went back up on the bridge. Passing through the Beaufort area we again encountered many homes on the waterfront with long piers and, you guessed it, no wake zones. We made Hilton Head, South Carolina, at Mile 570 our evening destination and as we navigated into the Harbour Town Yacht Basin we could tell that we were now in with the "big boys". In fact our 43 footer even looks small, but we do spot another Lagoon backed into a slip there. We couldn't catch the name from the boat, but it's always exciting to see one of your "sisters". This is Hilton Head Island, the famous PGA Golf tournament location! But they really don't have anything over us since our home base, Manitowoc, Wisconsin, was also home to the PGA in 2004! Hilton Head is the largest barrier island along the Atlantic Coast and has strict housing and commercial regulations to maintain its prestigious atmosphere. Even its Wal-Mart is hidden behind lush foliage and a discreet sign. We shared dinner at the Crazy Crab with the boys from Michigan, kind of celebrating our likely last evening together since we'll be parting ways soon as they are delivering their boat to a place on the St Mary's River.

Day 21 - Morning dawns with clear blue skies and sunshine and a very warm breeze for so early in the day. Temperatures soar to 95 again. Our jackets were gathering dust in the closet! Very soon after leaving Hilton Head, we crossed into the state of Georgia . There are no "Welcome to..." signs on the ICW like there are on the highways. Wonder why nobody thought of that!?! We cruised past Savannah not seeing more than a cluster of tall buildings in the distance. Making our way down the coast of Georgia is like driving down a mountain with all the switchbacks, only flat. There are no houses or piers here either so we can run at 20 knots.



Ain't Misbehavin' entering Hilton Head



Egrets on ICW in Georgia

We saw a lot of egrets, an occasional fishing boat, and dozens of crab pots. Actually, you only see the float on the crab pot which is attached to a wire mesh box sitting on the bottom. The most exciting sight is always the porpoises as they gracefully arch out of the water, sometimes single and sometimes in pairs. We wish we could watch them swim under the water, too. On a different trip, I mentioned to a dockhand that we had seen a lot of dolphins and he corrected me and said these were porpoises and the dolphins were out in the ocean. They look the same to me.

Towards the southern border of Georgia , we cruised through some places we have been to on another trip with our good friends from Martha's Vineyard, John & Jane Wilber, who made this trip down to Key Largo and back each year for 13 years in their 36' Grand Banks trawler, DIXIE W VI. It cruised at 8 knots, so they made a lot more stops and took over 3 months each way. It was very nostalgic going through places like Jekyll Island and Fernandina Beach. We have a lot of fond memories of our time spent with them on several different cruises. But that's another story.

Late in the afternoon we crossed the St. Mary's River at Mile 705 which marks the boundary between Georgia and Florida. The best stop for the night is Jacksonville Beach at Mile 748. Ponce de Leon landed here in the 1500's in search of the Fountain of Youth. It's been a popular resort community ever since. After re-fueling, we did the same routine of Ken taking a bike ride to scout out the area and get some exercise. I get mine washing down the boat. It was still a very humid 92 degrees for this late in the day.

Day 22 - The ICW straightens out down the coast of Florida and we made good time except in the areas around the major ports which will probably sound more familiar to most of you like St. Augustine and Daytona Beach.



Famous St. Augustine Lighthouse



Minimal wake sign

We again enjoyed the porpoises, some of them even playing in our wake. But they move so fast it is impossible to get a picture of them. On the contrary, some of their friends in the water apparently don't move so fast. A new entity has been added to our trip....signs marking no wake zones protecting the manatees. As I'm sure some of you have heard, this has been a very controversial issue for Floridians affecting the tourist industry on the one hand the wildlife preserve on the other.

At Mile 878, Titusville is our evening destination. We can see the Kennedy Space Center off in the distance as Cape Canaveral, a very broad stretch of land runs from Mile 878 to 943. We have visited the Center back in the 70's so we know it's changed tremendously since then and we would really like to revisit it sometime again. We ate at a little outdoor patio place serving sandwiches about 10 blocks into town. They were doing some karaoke so Ken even got to sing a number of songs. He always gets compliments on his good voice and people think he must do it for a living. I haven't seen any money from it yet though! It was a pleasant evening for walking but the temperature only cooled to 85 degrees.

Day 23 - The sun rose between clouds with a forecast of scattered showers, but no thunderstorms & lightning predicted.



Sunrise on the ICW

We did encounter a few light rains, only one heavy enough to send us inside for a very short time. We never spotted any lightning though which would have driven us into a port for safety.

Another day of cruising slow versus fast as we navigate between places like Cocoa, Melbourne, Vero Beach, and Stuart. Many, many beautiful homes along the ICW and often we can see the ones lining the coast as well. We checked into running outside the last two days, but there were always thunderstorms out over the ocean so we played it safe and stayed in the "ditch" as it is often called. North Palm Beach at Mile 1014 is located on Lake Worth and the Lake Worth Inlet is our passageway to the Atlantic Ocean and the Bahamas. We choose Old Port Cove Marina to



Approaching rain shower

spend the night. Quite a few people on our dock are living aboard their boats and as we describe our plans, we keep hearing the fact that it's not good for crossing now. Northeast winds have been blowing and they are the worse because they meet with the Gulf Stream, which we have to cross through on our way to the Bahamas, and they cause major wave conditions. We know we won't be heading out the next day for sure.

As I was washing down the boat our neighbor says, "Don't work so hard...you'll never get all the salt off...it's in the air!" Course, he was sort of kidding, but the air is so muggy that it probably does pick up some salt from the mist blowing off the water.

Day 24 - The next morning being a Sunday, we took a taxi to St Paul of the Cross Church and the second reading for today starts with something like 'Don't be filled with anxiety but be at peace. Just ask God for what you need.' So we ask for winds to die down and turn to the south east. We know God can do it, but as we also know, He may be on a different time frame than we are! We walked halfway back from church to a mall that has a House of Pancakes....we needed the break in air-conditioning because it was 90 degrees (heat index of 112). Then we walked the rest of the way back to the marina and I think Ken's internal temperature was reaching the boiling point. We spent the day listening to the VHF radio weather forecasts, the TV weather channel, website weather sites, and more of the locals. It's looking unfavorable for several days.

Day 25 - The next day, the weather was the same...hot, humid, intermittent rain showers, and lots of wind. There was a band of tropical storms still coming across the Bahamas toward Florida . Everyone says when it blows like this, it lasts for 1-2 weeks. We discussed all this with the owner and determined that he will have his captain fly over the next day and stay with the boat until the weather is safe to make the 75-mile crossing to Ocean Reef Marina on Grand Bahama Island . We then booked a flight with Midwest out of Fort Lauderdale for the day after tomorrow. It just didn't make sense for us to wait for the weather to change. We ended our day taking a taxi to Duffy's Sports Bar to eat & watch the Packers on Monday night football. This is the next generation of sports bars in that it has a separate room from the normal bar and dining area called the Theater. It has two opposing high



*Old Port Cove Marina at
North Palm Beach, FL*

definition screens that almost cover an entire wall which make you feel like you are right there on the field. There are many more screens hanging from the ceiling, a half-circle center bar, and tables surrounding it. It was worth going there just to see this. Too bad for the Pack though, as Farve was making a strong comeback toward the end of the game but there wasn't enough time to actually pull off a victory. It rained on and off all night and the flags continued to fly straight out.



Strong winds & rain at North Palm Beach



Captain Les & Karen saying good-bye

Written by Karen Schuler,
Trawlers Midwest Inc

Day 26 - We spent the day with the new Captain going over all the systems on the boat and where things were located. It was three days later before Captain Les was able to cruise *Mystere* to her new home in the Bahamas.

As this adventure came to an end, we looked back on the great experience we had in cruising through or past 14 states in many different weather and wave conditions. It was challenging at times and peaceful at times. God has created a beautiful country for us to enjoy in so many different ways and we are grateful for what we've seen and the freedoms we have to be able to do this. And as always, it is the variety of people we encounter along the way that make a trip like this so memorable.