

Trawler Talk

By Ken and Karen Schuler

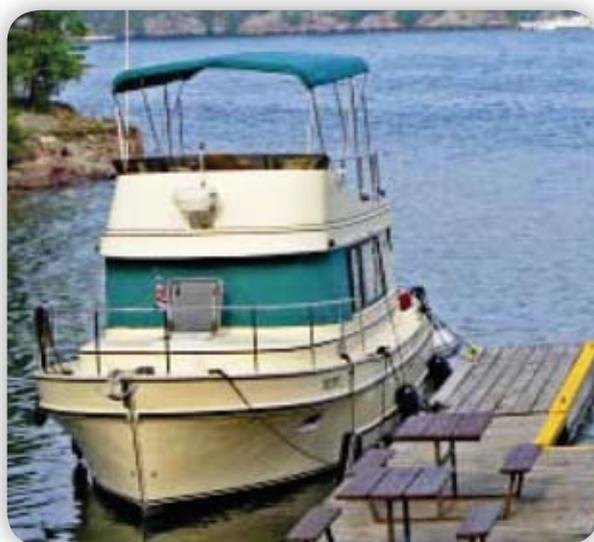
In a communication with a customer of ours, we found out that they had completed an interesting boat trip in Canada and we asked them to share some details of their excursion. We are presenting their story here. It will be in two parts.



Ken and Karen Schuler

2007 Triangle Trip Onboard Liaison *Part One*

By Hal & Jan Linscott



Liaison is a 31' Camano Trawler

Jan and Hal live in Kingston, Ontario, and have been boating for the past five years. In the fall of 2005 we purchased a 2004 Camano Troll, a Canadian made 31 foot trawler, through the boat's brokers, Ken and Karen Schuler of Trawlers Midwest. We named our boat "Liaison", a combination of our grandchildren's names; our grandson Liam and our granddaughter Allison.

In the summer of 2007, our second boating season with the Camano, we undertook our biggest trip to date,

travelling just over 300 miles in three weeks from our home port of Kingston, Ontario down the St. Lawrence Seaway to the Old Port of Montreal in the Province of Quebec, then from Montreal up the Ottawa River to the City of Ottawa, Canada's capital, and back to Kingston on the Rideau Canal. This route is known as the "Triangle" because of its shape and is a frequent side trip for boaters doing the Great Loop.

Kingston, Ontario, a city with a population of approximately 120,000, is located at the junction of the St. Lawrence River, Rideau Canal and Lake Ontario about midway between Toronto and Montreal. Known as the "fresh water sailing capital" of the world because of its strong and reliable southwest winds, Kingston was the location for the 1976 Montreal Olympic sailing events. We moor our boat, Liaison, at the city owned Portsmouth Olympic Harbour marina which was built for the Olympics. Portsmouth Olympic Harbour remains the site for the annual August sailing regatta CORK, "Canadian Olympic Regatta", which sees sailors from around the world compete in one of international yachting's most popular events.

Kingston was also the host of the Volvo Youth Sailing ISAF World Championships in July, 2007. For three days, as a warm up for our upcoming trip around the "Triangle", we volunteered Liaison and ourselves as a "coach boat and crew" to transport coaches

from the United States, Bermuda, Poland, Croatia, and Germany out to the Yellow Course race site where they could observe the races and coach their sailors between races. The American Girls 29'er crew won their category in heavy winds and some of the biggest waves we have ever boated in - we were warmed up and ready for our trip!



Picture from our dock showing the Junior World Sailboats preparing to launch at Portsmouth Olympic Harbour

Kingston to Montreal

We depart Kingston mid-afternoon on Saturday, August 25 heading east on the St. Lawrence River. Loading and refueling had not gone as quickly as hoped, and with a thunder storm approaching from the west and after traveling only several miles we decide to overnight at the docks on Cedar Island, the most westerly island of the St. Lawrence Islands National Park of Canada. The marine park is made up of approximately 20 islands on the Canadian side of the St. Lawrence River in the 40 mile stretch between Kingston and Brockville with docks, mooring buoys, privies and walking trails. Extremely popular with boaters from Canada and the United States, the park islands are one of our favourite weekend boating destinations.

Cedar Island lies just south of Fort Henry which is one of Kingston's most famous attractions. Construction on the Fort was started after the War of 1812 -1814 between British Canada and the United States and protected the Rideau Canal, Kingston Harbour, and warship building facilities from potential American naval attack. Improving relations between the two countries meant an angry shot was never fired and Fort Henry is now a major tourist attraction. The Fort Henry Guard puts on a daily ceremonial retreat during the summer months and when the cannons fire, the unwary boater docked at Cedar Island can get quite a start. The winds die out in the evening and we use the time to make sure our electronic and paper charts are in order and our Ports Cruising Guides at hand. As it gets dark the stars appear, the guns of the Fort fire, and the southwest winds bring the faint sound of music from the Blues Festival in downtown Kingston.



Fort Henry at sunset from the Cedar Island Dock

Sunday, August 26, we leave Cedar Island just after 8 in the morning, heading east down the St. Lawrence River with our planned destination being Stovin Island, the most easterly of the marine park islands some thirty nautical miles away. Our entire trip today is in the Thousand Islands, one of North America's most popular tourist and boating destinations - a beautiful area in which to cruise. We follow the Canadian middle channel past the town of Gananoque and the village of Ivy Lea and under the Thousand Islands Bridge between Canada and the USA to Rockport at which point just west of Wellesley Island we join the main St. Lawrence Seaway shipping channel used by ocean going cargo ships, huge lake freighters as well as growing cruise ship traffic. It is a clear day and the shipping channel is well marked so navigation is straight forward, although we keep a good lookout for the big freighters particularly those which might overtake us from the stern. We expect that our radar reflector will create a good return on the big ships radar but move over to the edge of shipping channel leaving lots of room.

The seaway channel moves back and forth across the border and is monitored by the Coast Guards of both countries, as well as various police marine units. In our five years of boating we have yet to be stopped by either coast guard for a safety equipment

2007 Triangle Trip Onboard Liaison, continued

check. Apart from good luck we suspect that husband and wife boaters in their mid-fifties wearing inflatable life jackets and moving at trawler cruising speeds of 8 - 10 knots are not a high priority. Nevertheless, we are careful to ensure that the required safety equipment and charts are onboard and current.

Arriving at Stovin Island around noon, just west of the Canadian town of Brockville, we find that the docks are full of rafted boats enjoying the last summer weekend in August and in no hurry to head home for the work week. Rather than wait for a possible spot, we decide to travel the remaining several miles to the Brockville municipal marina. The main shipping channel travels through the Brockville Narrows and is busy with recreational boat traffic, a group of scuba divers exploring a wreck on one edge of the channel, and an approaching westbound ship, which is showing no sign of moving off the middle of the channel. As it passes, it throws off a huge wake and we and other small boats are forced to reduce speed to a crawl and change course to cross the wake - surprising behaviour for what we see is the Greenpeace ship, Rainbow Warrior. We tie up at the Brockville City Marina just before 2 in the afternoon and enjoy a relaxing evening in one of our favourite towns.

We leave Brockville at 9 a.m. on Monday, August 27. The St. Lawrence River narrows at this point and the channel follows the middle of the river between Canada and the United States. Eleven miles east of Brockville we pass the towns of Prescott on the Canadian side and Ogdensburg on the American side. Referred to as the "Burg", it was founded by the French and saw military action in the War of 1812. Twelve miles further east, we approach the Iroquois Control Dam and Lock. This will be the first time we have used an international seaway lock and we are a little nervous.

The Iroquois dam controls the level of Lake Ontario and typically the elevation difference downstream is less than two feet such that it is possible, and somewhat surprisingly permitted, to bypass the lock and drive through the designated upstream and downstream dam sluices "at your own risk". However, the height clearance required to use the sluices is 8 feet or less, and Liaison with its flybridge and bimini has a height of almost 14 feet so we proceed to the small vessel dock at the lock, obtain our \$25 ticket from the automated machine and wait with several other small boats for our turn to lock through. That occurs within 25 minutes and we lock through, which given the small difference in water level consists of slowly driving into the open lock while the gate at the other end is opened so that we exit without having to stop. We travel for another 12 miles; our destination is Chrysler Park Marina on the Canadian side, adjacent to Upper Canada Village which is a re-creation of a 19th century village. Many of the buildings in the Village were moved to the site when the seaway was built in the late 1950's resulting in extensive flooding. On a Monday evening the marina is very quiet and we take the opportunity to check our engine water intake filter, fuel filters and oil level.

The next two days, Tuesday and Wednesday, the 28th and 29th of August, we continue east on the St. Lawrence River locking through six seaway locks, the first two on the American side and the remaining four within Canada. Priority is given to commercial seaway traffic, so we become used to tying up at the recreational boat dock, obtaining our ticket and waiting with the other small boaters for a break in commercial shipping traffic. For the most part, the wait at each lock is less than an hour and locking through is fairly straightforward. The American Eisenhower and Snell locks have floating buoys built into the lock walls for recreational boats to tie up to while the water levels are raised or lowered. Once tied up, Liaison is easy to control as the buoy drops with the lowering water levels. In the four Canadian locks there are no floating buoys and lock staff drop a bow and stern line which we hold onto as the water level goes down.

Wednesday we are determined to reach Montreal and so spend an eleven hour day travelling through the four Canadian locks, the Upper and Lower Beauharnois, St. Catherine's, and St. Lambert and under a number of bridges in the Montreal area including two that had to be raised to allow us to pass. At the last two locks we raft up to INSSA, a trawler from Annapolis, Maryland and meet a pleasant American couple who have been boating for the past three months and have just completed the Rideau Canal and Ottawa River. They completed the Great Loop three years ago. Like us they are traveling to the Old Port of Montreal and from there will travel to Annapolis via the Richelieu River to Lake Champlain, into the Hudson River and home. It has been a very hot humid day and as we clear the last lock we can see the thunderheads moving in from the west and so hurry out of the canal back into the St. Lawrence River where we head up stream for several miles in 6 - 8 knot currents hoping to reach the Port d'escalé marina in the port of old Montreal before the thunderstorm arrives.

The Port d'escalé marina is located at the docks of the Old Port of Montreal where the St. Lawrence River brought the first settlers and the river and port transformed a small

village into the international city of Montreal. We are greeted by helpful and bilingual marina staff who assist us in docking just before the thunderstorms arrive. The marina consists of floating docks located between 2 large cement piers that were designed to accommodate ocean going vessels and that rise high on the other side of us. The facilities are modern and well maintained, although this is the first time that we have seen marina washrooms, showers and office located on floating docks.

For the next three days we do our best to enjoy much of what Montreal has to offer - great shopping and restaurants, an historic old port area, and the islands of Jean Drapeau Park. This park was the site of Expo 67 and the swimming, diving, and rowing events of the 1976 Olympics. The American Pavilion from Expo 67 is one of the few buildings from Expo that remains in place and is now the Montreal Eco Centre.

Montreal to Ottawa

Sunday, September 2 arrives and time to leave for our next destination, the City of Ottawa. We cross to the Longueuil Marina on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River where we take on 283 litres (1 US gallon = 3.78 litres) of diesel fuel at a cost of \$1.16 Canadian/litre. We then head west retracing our steps back through the St. Lambert and St. Catherine's seaway locks and across Lake St. Louis to the Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue Lock which marks the entrance into the Ottawa River.

It is the September holiday long weekend and the approach walls to the locks are packed with rafted boats and boaters enjoying a beautiful sunny day observing each other and the marine equivalent of a Montreal side walk café. We tie up at the last available spot on the "blue line" dock which is reserved for boaters waiting to lock through. There are boats of all shapes and sizes including numerous high powered cigarette boats, the majority of which are crewed by men in their late 30's and early 40's and attractive and scantily clad women in their 20's. Isn't summer grand! We enter the locks which fill up with boats, the second last a marine police RIB and at the very last moment a cigarette boat. All eyes are on the four young male police officers who struggle in vain to maintain their air of professionalism and not stare at the beautiful young women in the cigarette boat that has rafted to the police RIB.

The Ottawa River is one of Canada's most historic rivers and was a main route of the 17th century French fur traders on their way to the west. Canals and locks were constructed for military purposes around a number of rapids between 1819 to 1830 and throughout the mid and late 19th century the river was the main route supporting a flourishing timber export industry. Leaving the lock, we continue upstream for an hour to the Yacht Club de Pointe-aux-Anglais where we stay overnight. It has been an eleven hour day for us, including a 3 hour delay at the St. Lambert Lock as we waited for commercial shipping traffic to pass through.

Monday, September 3, we decide to have a leisurely morning leaving the marina dock at 12:30 p.m. and only traveling for several hours as far as the Carillon Lock, where we overnight on the downstream dock. Our season's overnight docking pass for the St. Lawrence River National Parks Islands located just east of Kingston also applies to the docks at the locks on the Ottawa River and the Rideau Canal - a cost saving measure after having blown the budget in Montreal. We visit the small village of Carillon, a 10 minute walk and restock our supply of ice and beer at the village store.

To be continued.



Port d'escalé Marina, Old Port of Montreal



St Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue Lock, Province of Quebec