



# News

## Local Residents Complete Trip of a Lifetime

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On the Pookie II cruising the Georgian Bay, the northern portion of Lake Huron, are Evan and Pookie Davis, who fly the white America's Great Loop Cruisers' Association Burgee denoting a loop in progress.

Evan and Pookie Davis of Pulaski recently received their BaccaLooperate degree from America's Great Loop Cruisers' Association.

The degree is given in recognition of completing a trip around America's Great Loop comprised of the Atlantic and Gulf Intracoastal Waterways, the Great Lakes, the Canadian Heritage Canals and the inland river systems.

Making the loop has been a dream of the Davises since hearing about it several years ago while attending a fall rendezvous at Joe Wheeler State Park Marina, where they kept their houseboat on the Tennessee River, after joining AGLCA.

"We knew we would have to buy a different boat, as our houseboat would not be safe to attempt the blue water parts or the Great Lakes portion of the trip, although we had taken the houseboat to Pensacola and back before," Evan Davis said.

They decided to make the loop after finding a boat that would make the trip. They bought a new boat design, a Ranger Tug 25, that would be very small but very rough water capable.

"I am not a mechanic, so I was afraid to buy a used boat, as all my former used boats had been problems," Evan Davis said. "Pookie kept talking about doing it, so we decided to go for it while we both had the health and physical ability to do it."

The Davises have traveled extensively in North America and overseas. They have been to all seven continents, all 50 states, all the National Parks, all the Canadian Provinces and 67 total countries.

"We had accomplished those goals and wanted a new one," he said.

Evan and Pookie bought their loop boat from a dealer in Manitowoc, Wis. They bought a trailer and pulled the boat home and put it in the water at Joe Wheeler, where it is today. They spent some time on the boat to get accustomed to it, commuting to Huntsville, Ala., at night. Evan had taken a U.S. Coast Guard Safety and Seamanship course when they bought the houseboat.

"That is, in my opinion, a minimum requirement for any would-be captain," he noted.

They arranged for their neighbor, Betty Jo Daniel, to look after their house, get their mail and take care of other matters that came up.

"She is a jewel," Evan said.

Canadian service was added to Pookie's cell phone so they could stay in touch with family and friends.

“Pookie had travel lists from all our years of foreign travel and RV travel, and we had to buy a lot of charts to go with our electronic charts, as back up,” Evan said. “We had to buy a lot more lines, fenders, other nautical supplies and get an air card to use our computer online wherever we were in the USA or Canada.

“We already had passports, which are required to re-enter the US from Canada, and we had to get the dogs, Lola and Scruffy, new vaccinations and take their papers with us, too.

“I also had to read a lot of manuals about the boat and its equipment and the radar, GPS, marine radio, chart plotter, etc.,” Evan continued. “The boat is small, only 25 feet at the waterline, but it has all the safety and navigational equipment of big boats, including a generator, bow and stern thrusters, trim tabs, shower and head, etc.”

With just 38 hours on the engine, they left Feb. 23 to make the loop and returned to Joe Wheeler on Sept. 29.

As expected, there were mishaps as well as fun times along the way. For the Davises, the ups included the great new friends they met and traveled with from all over the USA and Canada, plus the experiences of seeing new places, or ones already seen, from a new water based perspective and achieving a goal that is not easy to achieve.

“We went about 5,800 miles, at eight-plus miles per hour for the most part, and through about 125 locks,” Evan said.

On the downside, Evan said they were dependent on the weather and had to learn to let the weather dictate when they went and when to stay in port.

“Crossing the Gulf took a month of waiting, as the seas were turbulent and the weather windows were too short to cross,” he said.

Evan added that a 62-foot Blue Water yacht that tried to go in rough weather came back after 35 hours all beat up by huge waves, taking on water and ending up being disassembled and trucked across to Florida.

The Davises travelled down the Tennessee River to the TN-Tom Waterway to the Gulf, crossed Florida at Lake Okeechobee and went up the Hudson River from New York City to the Erie Canal to the Oswego Canal, across Lake Ontario to the Trent-Severn Canal through Canada to Georgian Bay, the northern part of Lake Huron, to the North Channel to Lake Michigan, down the west coast of Michigan to Chicago, Ill., through the Cal-Sag waterway to the Illinois River to the Mississippi River, down the Mississippi to the Ohio River, up the Ohio to the Cumberland River and up it, across the Barclay Canal to the Tennessee River and up the Tennessee River back to Joe Wheeler.

“We crossed our wake at the entrance to the TN-Tom and completed our loop,” Evan said.

When asked if they would go again, the answer was yes.

“Pookie would go again right now — she likes running away from home, and didn’t want to come home, plus she trusts my judgment on the water more than at home, as I’m a cautious captain,” Evan said. “I may take a little convincing and might prefer to take the boat to Mexico by water or do some more river system trips first, but if she keeps up the pressure, and we can afford it, we might go again to see the places we missed along the way.”

BaccaLooperate degree holders cruise on their own boats and set their own timetables. Some complete the cruise in one shot, like Pookie and Evan Davis, while others take several shorter trips.

Throughout the trip, the Davises relied on America’s Great Loop Cruisers’ Association to provide them with information and assistance vital to the successful completion of their trip.

For more information, the AGLCLA’s Web site is [www.greatloop.org](http://www.greatloop.org).

“It was just a great trip and the adventure of a lifetime,” Evan said. “It is also a great learning experience, although after 46 years of marriage, we didn’t learn much new about each other. We already knew we could tolerate each other in cramped quarters for long time periods, as we had done that in our RV.”