

Trawler Talk

A Great Loop Adventure

Last month we wrote about cruising “The Great Loop” and explained the route, how far it is, what kind of boat to use, and what it costs. Here is the story of how one couple fulfilled their dream and completed their “journey of a lifetime”.

Dick and Phyllis Daly from Madison, Wisconsin, came to see our in-stock American Tug 34 on a cold, snowy day in February 2004. It was perched on stands in the parking lot at the Manitowoc Marina along with the other boats in our inventory. They liked what they saw and proceeded to order an American Tug 34, hull number 64, scheduled for delivery in late June. Boating wasn't new to them having sold an older Grand Banks that they had cruised with for many years.



Richard & Phyllis Daly

When the Daly's boat arrived in Manitowoc, having been trucked from Washington to Wisconsin, they christened her “NELL BRADSHAW” in honor of Phyllis's grandfather. The Manitowoc Marina was their home for the rest of the summer as they enjoyed several excursions south on Lake Michigan to Port Washington and north to Sturgeon Bay. Experiencing some of the nasty wave conditions that can be found on the Great Lakes at times, they confirmed that

they had a boat built to safely handle those unruly and sometimes, unpredictable seas.



the NELL BRADSHAW

These short cruises also aided them in knowing how to equip their boat for the BIG trip...the Great Loop, which they planned to begin the middle of September. Following is the summary of the route they took, some of their experiences, and how they were able to orchestrate home & family commitments while on their 6000-mile journey.

Starting from Manitowoc, Wisconsin, they cruised south on Lake Michigan to Chicago, Illinois, and through the city via the Sanitary Canal. Then it was down the Illinois River to the Mississippi River as far as the Ohio River. Taking the Ohio to Kentucky Lake and the Tennessee River led them to the Tenn-Tom Waterway coming out in Mobile, Alabama. Here they left the boat at the Mariner Marina on the Dog River to fly home for the holidays. This is the same marina Ken and I left our first Nordic Tug 32 that we brought back to Wisconsin from Florida many years ago when we needed to head home for a break as well.

Returning 6 weeks later, the Daly's continued their journey towards the Gulf but did something we have never done...crossed from Carabelle to Tarpon Springs at night, leaving at 4 pm and arriving there at 6 am. Dick related that he didn't see another boat the whole time and that your eyes and mind play tricks on you in the dark. Bright lights in the distance that appear to be boats are really just the bright stars close to the horizon. After passing Fort Myers and one lock on the Caloosahatchee River they picked Rialto Harbor as another 6-week stopping off point. This is a marina that was started by a guy from Chicago that bought it as a junk yard. It only holds about 10 boats and Daly's American Tug was the

smallest. It's up river a bit and is fresh water and no tides. The marina owner's wife has a horse & carriage business adding further interest to the location.

The next leg of their trip took them past Stuart, Florida to Cape Fear, North Carolina, where they again left the boat for about 6 weeks and also attending a family wedding during that time.

Now for the final leg they cruised the Intercoastal Waterway (ICW) north. They did run aground once but with the deep keel and protected prop, Dick was able to just use the bow thruster to pivot around and was free in no time. The Chesapeake and Delaware Bay took them to Cape May where they went outside and ran on the Atlantic Ocean for part of a day, but it became too rough and they decided to go back in at Atlantic City. Another day they were able to run outside along the coast of New Jersey around Sandy Hook to Manhattan. While in New York City they were able to take an underground train from their marina to West Village where their daughter lived and worked. It was a great way to visit her!

Finally, the Hudson River to the Erie Canal and the Great Lakes to Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, completed the trip. Dick's says the American Tug 34 is the perfect boat for doing the Great Loop. He calls it a "dream boat" to dock and you will do a lot of that on the Great Loop in a wide variety of situations and configurations.

We thank Dick and Phyllis for sharing their story with us.

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