

A Summer Place

by Karen Schuler

September, 1996

This is the story of a journey by water from Florida to Wisconsin taken by Ken & I in our 32' Nordic Tug named "A Summerplace". The first part covers the trip from the St. John's River to Sanibel Island, Florida. The next part tells of our experiences from Sanibel Island to Mobile, Alabama, and the third part is the final chapter from Mobile to Manitowoc, Wisconsin. Some thirty years ago, Ken & I read an article in a boating magazine about a couple that took a boat around the "Great Circle Waterway". We saved that article for many years, re-reading it often. It became a goal of ours to one day travel the Great Circle. It is a pleasure to share with you the first half of "that dream come true"!! On our personally unprecedented journey from southern USA to northern USA, we encountered a very unique passage made by many before us. I hope in some small way I can describe the true wonder of it all!

A song from the fifties inspired the name for our 1987 Nordic Tug which we purchased from Ed Shelton in Florida in December of 1994. The opening lyrics go like this:

BELLS WILL BE RINGING
AND BIRDS WILL BE SINGING
IF YOU AND YOUR LOVER
SHOULD EVER DISCOVER THAT
"THERE'S A *SUMMER PLACE*
WHERE IT MAY RAIN OR STORM,
YET I'M SAFE AND WARM....."

Pretty fitting for a Nordic Tug, right? And it was soon to be put to the test. You see, we live in Wisconsin and the only logical way for us to bring the boat home was by water. Since we are still working for a living, it had to be the shortest route possible which was the inland river system. Never mind it's spring and the current is the strongest.....we have a Nordic Tug!!

The journey began at Lake Beresford Yacht Club in Deland, Florida, in February of 95. Yes, it has taken me a year and a half to get this story on paper. But it is fresh in my memory because we continue to tell it to whoever will listen. Our plan was to divide the trip in three sections each about 10-14 days long allowing us to return home to catch up on business in between. Our family business, Schuler Sign Products, is heavily involved in grocery store decor. We had scheduled dates of store openings, so we knew when our "windows of opportunity" would be to get away. Also, our oldest son had joined us in the business about 6 months before, so we knew we were leaving it in good hands.

We got some strange looks at the airport as our luggage rattled with pots and pans, was weighted down with Ken's portable tool box, and literally held "everything" but the kitchen sink!! We brought along the red (had to match the tug) melmac dishes that had made the rounds of college housing with our kids and Grandma's freshly polished old silverware (just 6 of each piece). It really made us feel like we were moving in to a new home, a very special one at that. Next we stocked up with groceries.....I was so excited to know that I could buy \$100.00 of groceries and put them all away. You see, I hate clutter and just because I was living on a boat I saw no reason to change things. Thank you Nordic Tug for accommodating me. One more thing.....we wanted bikes along.

Nothing fancy, no fold-up or 12 speeds, just a good dependable cheap bike.....Wal-mart here we come!....."\$99.99 a piece? We'll take them." We said our good-byes to Ed & Bonnie Shelton at Pier 44, having fueled up there. After motoring north on the St. John's River, we crossed Lake Dexter and Lake George to Palatka. We tied up at the Holiday Inn just as darkness and a light rain fell upon us. Wow!!.....it was happening.....the first day passed of a long,

daunting, and exciting journey ahead of us.

The next day, we continued on the St. John's River to Jacksonville and docked for the night at the Ortega River Boat Yard. We biked around the area and found a mariner's paradise....Pier 17 Marina....a store loaded with new stuff and out-dated, shelf-sitter stuff. I blew the dust off and bought A Summerplace's official boat log. That's another reason I can write this story a year and a half later!

Nothing like an early start to get your day on track! Oops, the Jacksonville Railroad Bridge kept us standing off for over an hour. We started questioning if our radio was working properly. Well, maybe those 100 mile-an-hour trains do have precedence over a 12 mile-an-hour tug!?! It was an interesting journey through the industrial side of Jacksonville as we marveled at all the large ships in the area. Next milestone was the marker designating the beginning of the Intercoastal Waterway (ICW from now on). We docked for the night at the Comachee Cove Yacht Harbor (near the Vilano Beach Bridge) in St. Augustine and received our first gift.....a nice Martini glass with their insignia. I suppose it could be used for water, too. Earlier that day, we had discovered that our propane stove was not working. The previous owner had never used it. For \$38.00, First Mate Yacht Services confirmed the tank was almost full and re-taped some wires, getting it to work.

The ICW gave us a treat as we had 3 different sightings of porpoises during the next day. Two even played in our wake for a while. It was pretty neat for us Wisconsinites to see!! We filled up with diesel fuel on our arrival in Daytona Beach at English Jim's Marina. So far we've paid \$1.32 / gal, \$2.50 / gal, and lastly, \$1.09 / gal. I guess we've got to learn to pick our spots better. Availability is definitely a factor in price!! After shutting everything down, we could still hear something running, and discovered it was the water pump. A hose was disconnected and we had water rising in the bilge. Ken got to use his tools!! He re-connected the hose, tightening the hose clamps, and let the bilge pump do its work. We re-filled the water tanks and were back in business. But not only did the tug need fuel and water, so did we. The directions to a grocery store were simply "it's 10 minutes down the road". Three miles later we found it. Thank God for bikes. Both of us loaded 2 grocery bags on each handle bar and started back. Five long blocks from the marina, I got a flat tire. What was that about bikes?? All I knew then was that it pushed hard with all that weight on the handlebars. There was still a bright side to this day. Our friends (and neighbors), Doug & Alice Brennan, from Valders joined us. They drove a car from their condo in Fort Lauderdale and stopped at Stuart, taking the bus from there to Daytona. They spent the next three days on the tug with us as we worked our way to Stuart.

The very next morning I wanted to impress our guests with the luxuries of living-on-board with a hot breakfast. The pancake batter was made and then I discovered that the propane stove wouldn't light!! C'mon, it worked yesterday. Oh, well, guess that's why we brought Captain Crunch along. We were all treated to porpoise-watching again today as we navigated from Daytona to Cocoa. One became our mascot and swam just off our bow. We camped out on the front deck most of the day enjoying the 80-degree sunshine but taking turns at the helm as needed. We capped off this beautiful day with champagne from Doug & Alice (they even brought wine glasses for us to keep on board) and a fine dinner at the Black Tulip.

The folks at Whitley Marine, our dockage for the night, were very helpful the next morning. They fixed our stove: a switch was malfunctioning intermittently so we by-passed it and now turn the propane on and off manually at the tank. They supplied us with the needed tools and patch to fix the flat tire on my bike. And they validated that our VHF radio was not transmitting. Good thing the previous owner believed in back up.....we still had one radio that worked. Another good weather day and we were in Vero Beach. We stayed at the Riomar Yacht Club. It was a Saturday evening so we walked to a church just 2 blocks away. Never fear for lack of exercise though, dinner was found at Waldo's about 10 more blocks away. The outside deck was a great place to dine with the sights and sounds of the ocean in the background. Eat your heart out Wisconsin!!

The next morning we treated ourselves to a dip in the beautiful pool at the Yacht Club and enjoyed a game of shuffleboard with our friends. It was then we met a nice couple with a 42' Grand Banks, Frank & Pam Murphy. She had blown a whole roll of film on the porpoises, but had a couple of great pictures to share. You don't have much time to "capture the moment"!! We came to the St. Lucie Inlet and Stuart just at dusk. It was a little tricky getting in especially if you have darkened windows. Guess that's what the crew was for....we stuck our heads out the doors and

watched for the right markers. The day was concluded with a great scallop dinner at the Pirate's Loft and one game of cribbage before we crashed.

Doug & Alice's car is right where they left it.....good thing 'cause it's a Jaquar. They took us out for breakfast at the Robin's Nest before they left to head back to Fort Lauderdale. We all agreed to the fun we had and "hope to do it again"! We hit the St. Lucie Lock at 11:30 with a little trepidation. It was the first of many we will encounter on the trip. All went smooth. Who says boating is a challenge!?! The weather reports were warning boaters that thunderstorms were in the area for the rest of the day. We decided to cut our day short and stayed at Indiantown. Good choice! It was pouring rain as we docked and I got to try out my rain suit. Ken donned his, too, so we didn't mind helping a 52' Bluewater with their lines as well. Another reason it was a good choice was that it was "spaghetti night" at the marina.....a real feast for \$5.00 a head. We socialized with the "Silver Nugget" Bluewater folks, Jerry & Marie Sutton from Sarasota, for a fun and relaxing evening between the rain showers.

We awoke to a clear, sunny day and left port at the same time as the Silver Nugget, heading west on the St. Lucie Canal. A northwest wind was building and it was very turbulent inside the Fort Mayaca Lock. We went around in a circle before we got ourselves secured. The lift was only 7 feet, but the lockmaster warned us that it would be very turbulent when he opened the gates. Boy, he wasn't kidding! Lake Okeechobee was really kicking up a fuss with 15-20 knot winds and the gates were the only separation to its fury. It felt like we were going to get bashed into the side walls of the lock, but Ken put our little tug in gear and "gave her". We marched right out into those 6 footers and I scrambled around the boat getting things on the floor (if they weren't already flung there!) and stuffing turkish towels in the cupboards to take up the sliding space. We didn't want to lose those wine glasses!! The Bluewater folks radioed us that they were turning back, but two stubborn farmers from Wisconsin armed with a Nordic Tug were not to be dissuaded. We set the autopilot on compass heading 226. Heaven knows, we could not have steered as accurately as good old Bob (nickname given to our Robertson Autopilot). The red marker located five miles out was a welcome site. I armed myself with a crash course from the Loran manual (reading was a little difficult at this point, but I'm persistent). Jerry Sutton had given us the L & L numbers for the first marker on the other side. Three hours and 25 miles later (probably more like 50 if you count going up & down), we enter the Caloosahatchee Canal. Even that had a foot chop on it. Moore Haven and Ortona locks were a breeze and we arrived at LaBelle, the "honey capital", and its City Dock about 4 pm. The docking was free for the first time since we left Palatka. A bike ride seemed pretty uneventful after our day on the high seas. Who says boating is a challenge!?!

The next morning we caught up on our chores.....I biked to the laundromat to do two loads of wash and then came back and vacuumed the boat. Ken found a hardware store and picked up a flashlight, bicycle tire pump, hose clamps, and a few more tools. Also needed distilled water for the batteries, which was easily found at the local grocery store. One more thing.....we had to hit the honey store and sample some flavors. We bought Palmetto and Orange Blossom Honey, honey-filled candy, and 2 bees wax votive candles. We'll remember our stop here for the rest of the journey as we enjoy our delectables and special candlelight. On returning to our boat, we found we had visitors. Kendall & Lillian Lewis from Pensacola live aboard their 36' Marine Trader and our Nordic Tug caught their eye. Since we're new at this game it was fun to share "live aboard" stories with others that were doing it.

Our destination for that evening was Fort Myers, only 50 miles ahead, so leaving at noon wasn't a problem. The Franklin Lock, only a 2-foot drop at this time, was child's play. So many beautiful homes along the way made the journey very enjoyable. We docked at Fort Myers Yacht Basin, to call our friends from Manitowoc, Bob and Audrey Niquette, wintering on Sanibel Island. We were planning to spend some time with them and were not sure where it would be best to meet them. While waiting for Ken to return from making the call, I met Red & Missy Nickerson, owners of the 32' Nordic Tug "Miss Sea". We had just started to exchange "tug stories" when Ken returned with the news that we had 25 miles more to go. We'd better get "on the road again....."

A short time later, a 60' yacht hailed us on the radio for permission to pass port side. We replied OK and slowed down a bit. I was standing by the port pilothouse door and became concerned that the boat seemed to be coming too close. Within seconds, I'm yelling, "He's coming too close!!" Ken responded to the danger by first putting the engine in neutral, then reverse. The big yacht came within an arm's reach of us and crossed over in front of our bow. The operator was up on the flying bridge at a center console (three stories up). He had to have totally lost sight of us. He did seem quite flustered on the radio saying he just didn't know what happened. Ken asked if he had his boat

on autopilot. That was an affirmative. We think he just didn't allow enough room for the range of deviation with the autopilot. Whew! We were all shook, including the "big guys"!!

The plan was for us to stay at the Sanibel Harbor Resort & Spa (Jimmy Connors territory!) for one night then bring the tug to Sanibel Island the next day. Some other friends of ours from Manitowoc, Tom & Marge Keller, have a home there and invited us to tie up at their private dock. But wait, one obstacle - a very, very low bridge. With the light and all antennas down, we gave it a try. As we nestled up to it, we knew it would be close. No problem...we had 3 inches, (yes, inches!), of clearance. We took a tide table with us to pick the best time to get back out. This is where A Summerplace rested for 2 weeks while we flew home, got caught up with the sign business, petted the dog, watered the plants, etc. Two more days were spent on Sanibel Island with our good friends, Bob & Audrey, enjoying the white shell-strewn beaches, wonderful food, and Wisconsin hospitality.

Two weeks later, we flew back into Fort Myers and Bob Niquette picked us up at the airport and took us to the boat. Marge reported no problems with the boat and said she saw a lot of smiles as people passed by and noticed the "cute little red tugboat" tied at their dock. Some even got out their cameras. We got right to work unpacking and stowing more supplies and "goodies" brought from home. Ken installed a new VHF radio to temporarily replace the other one to be repaired. We believe in back up, too. We reviewed the tide table again: "February 10th - 2:31 A Low; 8:40 P Hi". If we leave at the brink of dawn, there should be no problem getting under the bridge that only gave us 3" of clearance on the way in to Keller's dock on this "water" street.

Tide was low all right!! We woke at 6 am to a listing boat.....we were sitting on the bottom! Might as well make a pot of coffee and "bide the tide". At 6:50 we could push the bow away from the dock and pull ahead. You know how anxious those "captains" are to get going! We waved "good-bye" to Marge and headed for the bridge. No big deal.....we had more than 10" of clearance now. It was a beautiful sunny day welcoming us back from the snow & cold of Wisconsin. The temperature was 54 degrees on rising, but warmed to 72 before long. We had breakfast & lunch underway. Bob Niquette joined us for the days cruise and will take a bus back home tomorrow. Leaving Sanibel Island, we crossed the San Carlos Bay and then joined the West Intercoastal Waterway (WICW) at Mile 3. We spotted more porpoises playing in our path as we crossed Pine Island Sound, passed Charlotte Harbor, and cruised Gasparilla Sound. Along the way we had a pleasant surprise as we realized the boat coming toward us was a Nordic Tug!! It turned out to be Ken & May Horton with their 26' green Nordic Tug, "Footprints". It was the first green tug we had seen and it is a beautiful boat. We chatted with Ken for a while. It sure was fun to see "one of our own" as we traveled about. We headed across Lemon Bay and past Sarasota, coming to Long Boat Key. More friends from Wisconsin, Ted & Mary Fordney, were renting a house here and we had made arrangements to get together. The friendly folks at the Buccaneer Yacht Harbor made us feel welcome. Ted & Mary joined us for a cocktail and a "tour" of our boat. We reversed roles and headed to their place on the Ocean to relax among friends. A beautiful sunset graced their screened-in porch. We were still going through "culture shock", having made the quick transition from the winter wonderland of Wisconsin to the Florida sunshine. All this was followed with a nice dinner at the Beach House Restaurant and then good-byes and thank-yous to Bob, Ted, & Mary.

The next morning we went for a good bike ride and then a stopped at a little strip-mall cafe for breakfast. We got underway by 8:30 crossing Maria Sound and Tampa Bay. The charts demanded a lot of attention to detail and patience through the Tampa Bay area. The waters were a lot bigger than they looked on the charts and missing one marker number would lead you far astray from your intended course. We ran along the Sunshine Skyway to Boca Ciega Bay taking the east shortcut through St. Petersburg. There's a fixed bridge with 13' clearance, no problem for a Nordic Tug. We marveled at all the beautiful homes and elaborate condos as we continued through The Narrows, past Clearwater and St. Joseph's Sound to the Anclote River and our evening's destination, Tarpon Springs. There are a lot more people that live on the water than we ever imagined. Time to re-fuel so we pick Port Harpon Marina where diesel is \$1.55/gallon. We've been cruising at 1800 rpm's and averaging less than 3 gallons an hour. Pretty economical way to go!! We docked at the Sail Harbor Marina in pretty tight corners with some help from friendly fellow boaters. Inquiring about a Catholic Church, we even got an offer to take us there. We're feeling the need for some exercise so we biked to St. Ignatius Catholic Church about 3 miles away. We stopped at Eddy's for a sandwich on the way back. A good night's sleep was a must to tackle the Gulf tomorrow!!

Left the dock early and ate breakfast on the way out of Tarpon Springs. We plotted our course from Anclote Key to

Cedar Key and entered the coordinates into the Loran. The legs were 12.2 miles, 29.6 miles, and 10.2 miles. That's a long way to go with only 3 markers to reassure you that you are on the right track. Thank goodness for the compass and loran, and oh, yes.....autopilot!! The wave forecast was for 2-3' inland and building 4-5' offshore. The trick was that they were coming at us from the side. I'm getting real good at knowing what has to be secured. Funny though, some things really surprise you. We had this cute little white Valentine's teddy bear perched in front of the middle window on the chart table and it never moved from its spot. Just sat there saying "I love you!" all the way home. How could we go wrong?!?

We found each marker just about where they were supposed to be, so our confidence level was building. We found Cedar Key without a problem, but had difficulty locating the transient docks. We tried numerous times to raise somebody on the radio to no avail. We started heading in to one area where we could see some docks and boats but soon found ourselves in less than 3 feet of water. Backed out of there real quick! Finally a guy motioned us from a pier and pointed to the docks we went past coming in, which we thought were too out in the open for overnight use. Wrong! That was the Municipal Dock meant for boaters like us. After the boat was secured, we took the bikes for a ride around town. It was just like Walter Cronkite's Waterway Guide said, "The charm of the village more than compensates for the limited services." We saw signs for an airport so we headed out there since we are both private pilots and seem to be magnetically drawn to them. It was pretty neat to see one in such a remote area, but there was not much activity on that day. As we were getting back into town, I thought my bike was pedaling harder than usual. Oh, no, another flat tire! "No more patching, Ken, I want a new tube!!" In his defense, the patch he put on last time was doing fine; I had a new hole!! It was a long walk back to the boat dragging my bike alongside. By now the wind had changed direction and was coming right in at us. A Summerplace was bobbing and weaving like a cork. We secured more lines and went off to enjoy a good evening's meal at the Captain's Table where we could see the boat from a distance. All I could say was, "and we're going to sleep in there tonight??"

Actually the first few minutes were the worst and then you seem to get used to the movement and the sounds of the lines creaking. We had also learned by now to put a wrap around the burgee flag on the bow whenever there's a lot of wind because it'll make some kind of music of its own all night long! The winds did settle down a little during the night, but we had one pretty frayed line that did its share of rubbing to get like that. We were up before dawn to prepare for departure with the first glimpse of light. It was going to be a long haul and we knew we would be battling higher seas today. There were no storms predicted but increasing west wind. We charted our course to Carrabelle with legs between markers of 10.6 miles, 76 miles, 9.8 miles, 6.7 miles, and approx. 16 more miles up river to the town. It sure was a funny feeling to pass that first marker and then know that you will not see another one for 76 miles!! The Loran gave us a time of over 6 hours for that leg. We again had a beam sea that day and the waves had built up to 8 footers. We ran at 2300 rpm's doing about 13 to 13.5 knots. We stayed on course better with the increased speed...nice to be able to do that with the Nordic Tug! We're really putting this "little" tugboat to the test and ourselves, too!! We all managed just fine, but we were sure surprised not to see any other boats along the way. Spotted one barge a long way off and just an occasional seagull. Where is everybody?? Is somebody trying to tell us something??

Some stretches we passed through made you feel like you were on some sort of obstacle course dodging all those crab pots. We sure didn't want to get one of those lines tangled in our prop out in these rough conditions. Once, after going for miles not seeing any at all, we spotted a neat red and white crab pot bobber. We thought it must be broken loose and would make a nice little souvenir so we circled around it and I grabbed it with our boat hook. But wait a minute, it's still attached. We decided to pull it up and check it out anyway. The water was 42' deep at this point and it came up with a little pulling and Ken handling the boat to keep the tension off. There were about a dozen little black fish in the box along with a couple crabs so we just said "hi" to the fishes and let them back down again. Now at least we know what it looks like on the other end of those "bobbers". What some people won't do for a little excitement to break up the routine, right?!? The only other eventful thing we had happen was finding a large clump of purple, white, and black balloons which we tied to our stern giving us a real festive flare. I guess neither of us admitted to the other how concerned we were about finding that 2nd marker at the end of the 76-mile leg, but we got pretty excited when we spotted it with the binoculars just a little more off to the right than we were anticipating. I was so glad to see it, I took a picture of it as we passed by. The rest of the markers were far less dramatic and we arrived at the Moorings in Carabelle around 6:30 having traveled 125 miles across heavy seas. A bit tired were we!!

The Moorings was a friendly, clean place to visit. There was a grocery store right across the street so we restocked our supplies. Ken found the two charts we needed to get to Mobile. The Gulf was exciting and challenging, but it felt good to be back "running the ditches". The first 24 miles from Carabelle were across the Appalachicola Bay, which had a 3-foot chop.....piece of cake after the last two days. We followed the Appalachicola River, Jackson River, Wimico Lake, Searcy Creek, Wetappo Creek, and East Bay to Panama City on St. Andrew's Bay. Sounds like we're in Indian country! We pulled into the Municipal docks at dusk and took a slip. No one was around. A nice man from another boat came over and filled us in on the local facilities and nearest restaurants. He gave us good advice. We biked to the Hawk's Nest and had a good dinner. Enjoyed chatting with our waitress who was currently living aboard a 30' sailboat. Truly, it's the people that make a trip like this so great. Everyone has a story to tell and it's even better when you have the time to listen.

We woke up to thunder, lightning, and pouring rain. We waited out the thunderstorm, but left while it was still raining. It cleared up a couple of hours later. We were now on the Gulf Intercoastal Waterway (GIWW) as we traveled from St. Andrew's Bay to West Bay. Here you have to really watch and BELIEVE the charts as the red and green markers switch sides at St. Andrew's Bay and switch back again on West Bay. We had a good method of helping us remember this. Before we left home, my Uncle Vic Lensmeyer gave me 2 large ceramic mugs with a ship's wheel insignia on the front, one in red and one in green. We had these standing on the chart table and placed them accordingly as a real quick reference of where the channel was. You don't ever want to find yourself on the wrong side of a marker.....it can ruin a good day in a hurry. Sections of the West Bay Creek are dug canals with the ground piled high on each side. The Choctawhatchee Bay is 28 miles long (like it's name) and quite choppy. There was a lot more boat traffic here. The Narrows took us to Santa Rosa Sound and finally to Pensacola Bay where we spent the night. It had been another long day, covering 111 miles. Ken and I always took turns at the wheel and navigating so we each got the chance to kick back and relax in between or work on a project to break up the day. Sometimes, if there was a lot to be watching for we both stayed in the pilothouse. Other times, one stayed at the wheel and the other was free to roam.....as far as you can roam on a 32' boat!

Another place called the Moorings was very accommodating. We fueled up and made phone calls back home. We touched base with our son every other day since we were never sure exactly where we would be from day to day. Some evenings, such as this one, we ate on board. We enjoyed the peace and quiet of the boat in the evening, too. But it was a warm evening and I wanted to see the beach so off we went on our bikes. From the street we could hear the waves splashing in, so we rode until we found an entrance to the beach. We couldn't ride far on the sand because our bikes sank in too much. It was a beautiful star-studded night with a warm breeze off the water. The pounding of the waves was mesmerizing. Oh, how romantic it was!!

We woke up to another thunderstorm so we delayed our take-off until it passed over. As we traveled in the rain across Pensacola Bay and the Big Lagoon, we met four different barges loaded with logs. These were the longest ones we had seen so far and just the start of many more to come. Another thunderstorm was moving in so we tied up at the Oyster Bar Restaurant & Marina at Perdido Key and waited it out. A couple of cribbage games helped pass the time. An hour and a half delay and we were on our way to Mobile Bay. Soon the sun was shining again as we started north on Mobile Bay, but we are surprised at all the logs and floating debris we were having to dodge. The Grand Mariner Marina on the Dog River at the north end of the bay was our destination knowing we could get there before dusk. The folks at the marina said they had lots of rain the last two weeks and the rivers north of here were flooded. The current between Mobile and Demopolis, our next destination, was flowing as fast as 10 knots at times. To cruise at 13 knots or less does not sound like a good idea. It soon looked like we would be changing our plans.

Of course, we had bought one-way tickets to Fort Myers and had not purchased any for the way home not knowing where we would end up. We had allotted ourselves 3 or 4 more days for this trip and had thought we could get somewhere north of Demopolis near Columbus, Mississippi, so as to fly home from there. But no sense battling this strong a current. The "locals" said conditions would probably be a lot better in a few weeks. We might as well stop here and just arrange more time for the last trip to get all the way home. We could get a flight out of Mobile on the day after next.

The Grand Mariner Marina is a family-run marina and they couldn't have been nicer to us. First, they said they would only charge us \$150.00 to leave the boat for a month. Next, they let us use their car to go into town and do laundry.

They even took us to the airport and wouldn't take any money for it. Like I said, really nice people! So we had an extra day to give the boat a thorough cleaning and, yes, go for a nice long bike ride. Other than perishable food, we can pretty much leave everything on board for the next trip. This has really been a great adventure so far and we feel funny going home and leaving our boat behind. I guess you could say "it's grown on us"! But the nice thing is we know we're coming back before long to continue this exciting journey.

Six weeks later, we flew in to Mobile and the folks at the Marina kindly picked us up at the airport. The tug had been secured in a water slip under a roof. Thought we were pretty smart to have found that kind of storage. What we didn't know was that the spiders loved it under that roof, too. I was stunned to see our beautiful boat so covered with you know what!! Well, no time for cleaning now. We loaded all our gear onto the boat and enjoyed a relaxing dinner at the Mariner Marina Restaurant. Had a good night's sleep on our "home away from home".

Daybreak came at 5:30 am and we gently backed out of our slip to start our journey northward. There was a small chop on Mobile Bay, but soon we entered the Mobile River and passed by the Alabama State Docks. Up to 34 ocean-going vessels can use the docks simultaneously along with the barges, trucks, and railroad cars that load and unload them daily. It was quite a sight to see. Before long we passed the official beginning of the 450-mile waterway to the Tennessee River by way of the Mobile River (0-45 miles), Lower Tombigbee River (45-217 miles), and the Tenn-Tom Waterway, opened in 1985 (217-450 miles). It is located at the Bankhead Tunnel under the downtown riverfront built in 1941.....just a bit of history. Making the journey more interesting is that the entire waterway is marked with mile-markers, so you always know just how far you are on the journey.

No autopilot for us today. We must be diligent at the helm to avoid the many logs and debris floating toward us. The design of the Nordic Tug with its protected prop is an assuring feature!! We calculated the current at 5-8 knots. This is easy to do by recording the time between mile markers. We ran this 90-mile leg at 2200 rpm's cruising at 12-13 knots, taking 10.6 hrs and burning about 5 gal/hr. We passed or met numerous barges before we reached our destination for this first day and the first possible stop, Lady's Landing at mile marker 79.9. Expecting much more, we only encountered a floating dock and a sign on shore telling us we were there. The attendant used a rowboat tied to a line to pull himself to the floating dock. The fuel lines were underwater. We could see only one of 35 steps.....that's how high the water was!! Needless to say, we spent the evening on the boat.

Next stopping point was Demopolis at 213.2 mile marker. An early start was a must. The first bend in the river was the spot where recently a tow had difficulty navigating the corner pushing its 5-barge load and had gotten too close to shore. As it gunned its engines to turn, it created so much turbulence that it actually washed out the shore and the foundation under a home built on a bluff high above the water's edge. Understand that litigation is still in progress over that one. Since the water level was 30-35 feet above normal, we ran closer to shore to dodge the worst current and debris. We actually saw whole trees, roots and all, floating down the river. We even encountered a bloated, dead animal, which looked like a sheep. It was a challenge to know which path to take and sometimes we actually took it out of gear to let some big log get by. We continued to calculate a 5-7 knot current. At mile marker 173.5 we came to the Meridan Bigbee Railroad Bridge and found a tow had become jammed sideways against the bridge. The bridge is located on a curve of the river and apparently the barge got in trouble navigating the sharp corner. Luckily we could still get under the span of the bridge off to the side and were able to continue our journey. Nonetheless, it looked pretty scary.

The next adventure was the Coffeerville Lock & Dam. We were in the lock with a tow and its two barges. This was the first time we experienced the floating bollards. You just throw a midship line around one and it floats up with you. Your lines stay clean, but I can't say the same about the fenders as they drag up along the brown slimy wall. We had read about covering them with large plastic bags so we tried that. Before long they would be shredded from the rough walls, so we quit that and just cleaned them more often. The weather was a real treat, getting up to 84 degrees in the afternoon. We arrived at the Demopolis Lock & Dam at dusk but had about an hour wait. It got dark on us and we had to motor the last three miles by spotlight. Because of all the debris in the water, I sat on the front deck with a flashlight, too, and motioned Ken right or left to dodge the big pieces. Just glad we didn't have to go any further that way. Tired and hungry, having navigated over 136 miles today, we were quite relieved to see a restaurant at the marina.

Nice clean showers and a hearty breakfast got us off to a good start. We fueled up at \$1.25 a gallon and added some oil to keep that engine purring. Still on the Tombigbee River, at just .8 of a mile we passed the inlet to the Black Warrior River. At mile marker 217 we were officially on the Tenn-Tom Waterway. We immediately noticed less current and less debris. What a pleasant relief. We could now turn over some of the work to "Bob", our trusty autopilot. It remained overcast but no rain and still 75 degrees. About 2 pm, we had a smooth lock-through at Gainsville Lock and arrived at the Tom Bevill Lock at dusk. It is the deepest so far bringing us up 35 feet. Just beyond the lock was Marina Cove and we were glad to get in before dark. We had a nice visit with the owner there. He was familiar with Manitowoc, having worked on building the Point Creek Nuclear Plant. There was a large Maco Shark mounted on the wall in the marina with a baby alongside. His son in Miami, Florida caught it. The shark was pregnant at the time and the mounting was really an eye-catcher. I always remember this stop because I came the closest to falling in the brink. We were tied up at the dock in glass calm water, so that was no excuse. I was washing down and working on the side when I lost my footing and started falling. I made one grab for the handle on our starboard door and got it. That was my only chance to stop my direction toward the water. Let me tell you.....my heart was pounding for a while after that. Oh, yes, I can swim so I suppose it wouldn't have been so bad.

After three days of navigating over 300 miles (more than that if you count zigzagging around logs), we were ready for a shorter day. We went for an early morning "hilly" bike ride.....guess we've left the flat lands of the south. We toured the Tom Bevill Visitors Center, a beautiful replica of a plantation home of the 1850's with its big white pillars and copula lookout. One room has a relief scale model of the entire waterway, locks and all. Leaving there we biked the other direction to a small convenience store for essentials.....milk, juice, and bread. We left at 10:30 am under cloudy skies and experienced rain off & on all day, sometimes heavy. It's just not a big deal in our Nordic Tug. No stubborn snaps or sticky zippers on canvas to battle, just close the door where it's coming in. Windshield wipers as needed kept us on track. Our timing through two locks, Columbus (46 feet up) and Aberdeen (25 feet up) went smooth with no waiting. We radioed ahead to the next lock and he said he had two tows waiting and we would have to do two locks before the next marina. Easy decision....stay at Aberdeen Marina. Good choice because it is a well cared for marina, the nicest so far. They let us use their courtesy car to get supplies at Wal-Mart and dine at the Shelaine Restaurant, our first taste of civilization in 4 days. I was still having trouble getting all the spider remains off having tried several different cleaning solutions. The man back at the Mariner Marina had suggested Tilex and this was the first place I could get some.

A little trivia on the Tenn-Tom Waterway. It is divided into 3 sections: the River Section, the Canal Section, and the Divide Cut. The River Section starts at Mile 217 at the junction of the Tombigbee River and the Black Warrior River. Its channel was dug 9' deep and 300' wide with 30 cut-offs and 4 locks & dams: Demopolis, Gainsville, Tom-Bevill, and Aberdeen. The Canal Section is 46 miles long and bypasses the river, separated by a levee. It has 5 locks: A B C D and E. The Divide Cut is 39 miles long and takes you from Bay Springs Lake to Pickwick Lake and has 2 locks: Bay Springs and Pickwick.

Got an early start today hoping to get through as many "alphabet" locks as possible. Had ourselves a warm sunny day. Breezed through Locks A and B, one hour wait at C as a tow came through from the other side, and only 15 minute wait at D. Egstasy, a 45' powerboat, joined us. At E, a tow went in ahead of us and the wait stretched to an hour and fifteen minutes. We anchored and I got out the Tilex to tackle the brown spots and Yes! it worked. Just a word about the tows.....we were warned that they can be hard to deal with. We found the opposite. Very often, the captain or crew would step out of their pilothouse to give us a thumb's up wave. We knew they liked our "tug look"!! Ken was always good about getting on the radio to let them know where we were and what our intentions were or asking them which side we should pass on. They were always helpful and obliging.

Upon reaching Bay Springs Lock, we could see two tows ahead of us. We rafted with Egstasy, toured each other's boats, shared a beer, and told our stories. Jason, a young captain and broker, was delivering the boat to its new owner in Philadelphia. Two other fellows were along for the trip; an ex-lawyer getting captain's hours and a retired businessman who is the cook. They are making the trip in 10 days to 2 weeks, putting in some long days, no doubt. When the lock finally opens, we are in for a sight.....84' walls!! It made us feel like ants. I was busy with the video camera, then the still camera, and let's not forget...I'm first mate. Get that line on the bollard! You have to be there to really appreciate the beauty and wonder of this all. When this lock was built, 150 million yards of dirt were removed. I wonder where they put it all??

Bay Springs Marina is just about a mile from the lock. A father and his three sons started it from scratch 13 years ago and there was not even water there at the time. The Divide Cut just opened 10 years ago. They have their original "work" hats on display in the office. This is a beautiful facility and it was a pleasure to stay here.

Everyday was a new adventure on the canal and you just never knew what would be ahead. We saw something swimming across the canal. As we got closer we could see it was a cute little hound dog on his way to meet his friend on the other side. Soon after we passed the Holcut Memorial Overlook, a tribute to a small town that was lost due to the building of the Waterway. One can't help but have mixed feelings. We were enjoying the use of the waterway but it's sad to think some people gave us their homes and family history to achieve this. Next, an important stop at the Aqua Yacht Harbor Marina to buy a Tennessee River Chart which we had not been able to find. A highway map just didn't cut it. At the end of the Divide Cut, we crossed the 31-mile long Pickwick Lake and were now at the end of the 450-mile Tenn-Tom Waterway. It certainly is a unique system that links rivers and lakes with man-made locks & canals. We feel very fortunate to have been able to experience it. Two hours of waiting and locking through the Pickwick Lock & Dam, put us at mile marker 206 on the Tennessee River. We enjoyed the beautiful scenery including high rock cliffs, wooded hills, and elegant homes. We passed two car ferries in operation; one at Clifton and another at Saltillo. Arriving at the Perryville Marina near dusk, we found the folks very friendly & helpful. They called for a pick-up car from the Scenic Restaurant and we enjoyed a relaxing meal off the boat. The marina had experienced high wind damage a few weeks ago and repairs to a large roof section was still in progress. All the docks here and the marina itself are floating structures.

Awoke at 6 am to thunder, lightning, and heavy rain so we waited out the storm. It stopped raining about 8 but stayed hazy and overcast. We cruised another 68 miles on the Tennessee River past more cliffs and beautiful homes. The river was dotted with lots of mussel boats, also called brail boats, which are open boats with a small outboard motor and an overhead structure on which the brails hang. These are large 2-wheeled frames with short chains and hooks attached. The brails are dragged along the bottom. Mussels spend their life with their shells open, but when they feel the chain or hook, they close their shell on it. Mussels are sold to restaurants and to Japan to be made into tiny seed pearls. Other mussel harvesters use diving equipment with an air compressor. We saw both types and I have a new appreciation for the mussels I like to order in seafood restaurants. We were able to use the autopilot much of the day but still have to watch diligently for those wooden alligators! We entered Kentucky Lake at mile marker 67 and took it 42 miles to the 4-mile cut-off to Green Turtle Marina in Grand Rivers, Kentucky. Kentucky Lake is actually 450 miles long but we only used a short piece of it. We arrived at the marina about dusk and had a nice dinner at the Docker's Restaurant.

The next morning it was time to get caught up on laundry at these pleasant facilities. We also biked to a newly remodeled IGA grocery store with large oval pictures showing the town's historical sites. Aisle markers have street names on them.....a nice touch. We were impressed with this neat little town and felt we could have easily spent another day here, but we decided to move on. We cruised out on the Cumberland River and experienced a 45-minute wait at the Cumberland Lock, which dropped us down 45 feet. The river runs downstream here, so we made good time. We encountered numerous mussel boats, occasional beef cattle, and lots of barges that kept our day interesting. It was a beautiful sunny day warming to 73 degrees. After 32 miles on the Cumberland, we joined the Ohio at mile marker 923 and followed it to mile 982 where it joined the Mississippi. We were told about a fuel stop at Cairo, just before we got to the Mississippi River. You need to bring your boat up to a long slanted concrete slab on the shoreline and radio for a truck to bring fuel. The river is quite wide here and heavy with barge traffic. The turbulence they cause along with the wave action and current was more than we cared to deal with while trying to hold our boat on a concrete slab. No thank you!!!

We had been warned that we may have difficulty getting fuel because the next most logical stop for fuel was Cape Girardeau and its fuel dock had been wiped out in the '93 flood. Knowing this, we had conserved fuel today by running at 1900 rpm's since we were going downstream and would still make good time. We would burn just a little over 3 gallons an hour. Still on the Ohio, just before you get to the Mississippi, there is a connecting waterway called the Angelo Towhead, which runs kitty-corner from the Ohio to the Mississippi. It is a narrow inlet and we decided to anchor here for the night. The current and debris coming through here was unbelievable. We put out 200' of anchor line and marked our spot on the shoreline so we could check if the anchor was holding. After we shut everything down, we could still hear something running. Ken traced the noise to the stuffing box, opened it, and could see the

shaft turning. He tried to stop it with his hand and couldn't hold it. The force of the current was spinning our prop that much! We were duly impressed. We fixed a cocktail and sat out on the front deck to watch a beautiful pink & orange sunset. The contrast of the soothing sunset and the tumultuous waters was an experience beyond words. Pieces of logs and whole trees would come rushing toward us, hit the side of the boat, slide along the side or go right underneath, making an awful sound, and then come out the back end on their journey to the Gulf. We dined on pork chops by candlelight.....romantic but also saving our batteries for a sure start in the morning. Sleep came intermittently as the noise of the logs hitting the boat continued all night. At 4 am there was a loud tapping on the side of the boat. It sounded like someone was pounding on the boat wanting to board. With flashlight in hand, Ken went out to investigate. It was a tree longer than the boat whose top branches had hooked our anchor line. We both donned our life jackets and I manned the flashlight while Ken worked with our boat hook to try to free the crooked branch. We actually had to get a line around part of it to simultaneously lift and pull it off. There were several missed attempts and the loss of the end of our boat hook before it finally departed. Now, was our anchor still holding or not? We checked the shore to see if the stump we had picked as a marker was still lined up. No, it was at least a hundred feet or more further up, but as we watched, it appeared the anchor had re-set itself. Will we forever be proponents of the Bruce anchor??...heck, yes! Well, Ken, are we still having fun?? I was too wide-awake to sleep, so I read and sipped coffee. Ken got a few more zzz's.

Dawn came at 5:45 am so we tackled the "mighty Mississippi" entering at mile marker 1. The current was really strong and our main concern was fuel. We did the first 3 hours at 2300 rpm's at 13 knots or 15.6 m/hr and recorded the time and mile marker where we started. We also measured the fuel with a stick to be sure (never totally trust the gauges). After 3 hours we had traveled 31 miles. That meant that our actual progress forward was 9.1 m/hr and the current was 6.5 m/hr. We used 22 gallons of fuel and at this rate we would need the full 65 gallons left to get to the next known fuel stop, St. Genevieve. That would be cutting it too close. We slowed down to 2100 rpm's and re-calculated again in three hours. It was a little unnerving and we re-did the numbers again trying to gain confidence in our decision. This was not a place where one would want to run out of fuel. We identified Cape Girardeau and confirmed there was no fuel to be had there. We now knew we could not make St. Genevieve before dark and would have to find another place to anchor. Our every three-hour fuel calculations confirmed we should continue at 2100 rpm's. The day remained overcast and 50 degrees. Guess we've left the warm south. The charts showed a boat harbor insignia at Chester, but the '93 flood changed that. There was nothing there but an empty barge tied to some pilings. At worst, we could raft ourselves to it. We could also see an inlet across the way from here so we decided to try that. It's a little river that forms the state line between Missouri and Illinois. We went in several hundred yards and eased up to a large fallen tree. We tied our stern to the tree and anchored the bow. The current was much less here and it seemed a safe haven for the night, which was quickly upon us. Our final calculation told us we are on target with 15.5 gallons left and 12 miles to go. Do you know how little 15 gallons looks like on the stick?? It's downright scary!!

After pushing all the logs and debris away that had piled against our boat during the night, we got underway. We weren't taking any chances and decided to motor along at 1800 rpm's knowing we would burn less than 3 gallons an hour. Even with the current, we should make it in 2 hours and we did! St. Genevieve was a beautiful site to us. We tied up to the dock with a little shelter on it. No one was around and the dock to the shore was flooded. A boat was tied to a line from the dock to the shore, so we got in and went ashore. There was a mini-mart at the top of the hill and fuel tanks!! But this place was locked up, too. It was 8:15 on a Sunday morning and they didn't open until 9. We didn't even mind...we were just glad to be there!! We talked with a fellow from the town and he said the river was up 25' here. He explained how they were sandbagging to keep the town from flooding and so far it was holding. It's always interesting to talk to the "locals". We took on 102.6 gallons of fuel in our 115-gallon tank, which meant we had 12.4 gallons left. We congratulated ourselves on having met the challenge and won, but don't think we weren't a bit nervous about it all!!

Today was to be an eventful day. We had also been planning for months to have Ken's sister, Joan, and her husband, Eddie, join us for a few days on this trip. They were driving from Wisconsin to Kimmswick, Missouri, and would leave their car there. When we would get to Peoria, their nephew who lives there would drive them back to pick up their car. We had been given their hotel name and number before we left, so we called them from St. Genevieve and left a message that we would be arriving at Hoppies Marina around 3 pm. Having a full tank of fuel, we "barreled" it to Hoppies anxious to see some family and not really caring if we wasted a little diesel. Joan & Eddie greeted us at

the dock along with Fern, the lady in charge and a self-appointed Mississippi "queen". She told us how to dock and then sat us down to explain how to get north from here and what signs to watch for.....it was pretty cute. Hoppies is an old barge converted to a marina, with fuel tanks, electricity, water, and even a private bathroom or rather a toilet with wood walls around it. We re-fueled (we want as much as we can get) and moved to the inside of the barge for the night. Using Joan & Eddie's car, we drove uptown to Kimmswick, a real authentic 1800's river town. Many homes have been restored and converted to art & craft shops. We headed for the grocery store to get re-supplied. Eating out at The Old House, a restored log house with waitresses wearing long dresses, took us back in time. While there we chatted with a group next to us also going north with a boat called "Home James", owner Rick James of Chicago.

We again woke up to thunder & lightning. We had a leisurely breakfast on board as we shared the details of our trip so far. The weather conditions remained overcast and drizzly as we got underway. Before long we passed the Arch of St. Louis. What a beautiful site with a different perspective seeing it from the river!! We could also see the new stadium being built and we all marveled at the size of several casino yachts in the area. We had a two and a half hour wait at Lock 27 due to a lot of barge traffic. At the Melvin Price Lock we breezed right through with Home James because they have 2 locks; one for pleasure craft and the other for the tows. When the gates opened there was a solid covering of logs & debris across the exit. We hesitated going through it, but Home James proceeded forward so we followed in their wake. There continued to be a current of 7.5 knots with many logs to dodge. We had to watch diligently for the "diving nuns". The current was so strong in places that it pushed the red buoys over and they would just disappear. You could still see the swirling water around the area and all of a sudden they would pop back up. We sure didn't want to hit one of them while they were down. Palisades was our resting spot that night. Dale, the friendly manager of the marina, said they had gotten word that in 5 more days they will have 4 more feet of water. We can still get fuel now but he said they will be pulling the tanks the day after tomorrow. The restaurant there was already closed and they had started sandbagging around it. We had a nice docking slip under cover. Ken & I went for a bike ride in a drizzling rain; Joan & Eddie stayed on the boat and enjoyed a game of 500 Rummy. We had dinner on board and relaxed with an evening of sheepshead (a Wisconsin card game) and fellowship.

Leaving Palisades at Mile 212, we passed the town of Grafton, which was totally flooded in 1993. Some places next to the shore had been left to ruin. You could see the rows of white trailer homes that the government provided for those who lost everything. A reminder of the power of this great river.....the beauty and the beast. At Mile 218, the end of our Mississippi journey, we entered the Illinois River. There was a definite difference in current, but we still calculated about 3-4 mph current with lots of logs & debris to dodge. About mid-afternoon a heavy wind and rainstorm moved through. We slowed way down but kept moving. Visibility was at a minimum. We found out later that tornadoes had actually touched down about 50 miles north of here. When we arrived at the LaGrange Lock & Dam we discovered it was wide open because of the flooding. The lockmaster radioed to us to pass to the right of it. Having navigated 104 miles, we came to the River Edge Boat Club. It was not quite what the name implied or what we had in mind. A rusty barge with a sign for fuel greeted us. The attendant came by boat since it was flooded from here to the restaurant. He filled us up with fuel while smoking a cigarette. It kind of humored us that there was a large NO SMOKING sign on the barge. Oh well, just for looks I guess but we were glad to be getting diesel. We ate on board and for entertainment watched a tow come around the bend and past us using their floodlights for navigation. It was a beautiful star-studded night and very peaceful.

We're all up at dawn.....Ken was anxious to leave this fuel barge. We had breakfast and lunch on board. That made 8 meals in a row for 4 people since the last grocery store. It's nice to know we could store that much food on board. Another heavy shower just as we came to Peoria Lock & Dam. The wicket dam is lowered to the river bottom when there is more than 9-foot depth, so again we passed right over. We have a son, Rick, living in Peoria with his wife, Molly, and twins, Connor & Katie. Rick had researched the marinas in Peoria and advised us to head for Wharf Harbor Marina. He informed us that it was the next marina after the orange bridge. We got settled in and Joan & Eddie's nephew picked them up. Farewell to two enjoyable "temporary crew"!! That evening our son & his family met us at the boat. It was the first time they saw the Nordic Tug and they were impressed. We ate out at Donnelly's with them. It was great sharing our adventures with them!!

The next morning was spent doing some boat cleaning and playing with the grandkids. Rick got off work early so he and his family joined us for lunch on the boat and then a cruise in the Peoria area. Close friends of Rick & Molly's

brought sub sandwiches and a bottle of champagne to celebrate an enjoyable evening on the boat.

We planned to make 108 miles the next day. The current was still running 3.5 mph. After a two-hour wait at the Marseilles Lock, we got lucky with no wait at Starved Rock Lock. Sometimes we radioed ahead to let them know we were coming. Often, they will wait for you. At Dresden Lock we waited for about 10 minutes for another pleasure craft. Just so things didn't get dull, a little bird flew right in our pilothouse startling both of us. It found its way back out before we had to do anything drastic. Just beyond the lock is the Harborside Marina. What a nice place.....flowers along the walks, clean bathrooms, a fountain, and a beautiful restaurant. Quite a contrast to the places we treated Joan & Eddie to!! We wished they could see this.

Up early, we got a bike ride in with a light drizzle falling. We rode through a neat covered bridge over Dresden Electrical Plant & Cooling Pools. Back at the boat, we re-fueled, but a strong wind and hard rains had come up. We decided to stay at Harborside for another day and celebrate Ken's 54th birthday here! It was nice visiting with Ron Setina who is in the 3-way partnership that owns Harborside. He was a former dealer in Nordic Tugs about 7 years ago. There is a neat model of a Nordic Tug in the restaurant, but Ron did not want to part with it because we would have gladly taken it off his hands. We walked to a neighboring marina called Bay Hill, owned by Jim Vitek, having a long talk with him. He had throat cancer surgery and has a permanent tracheotomy and talks by holding a little microphone next to his throat. He was restoring an old trawler by the name of Choy Lee and he showed us around it. We bought an Illinois River Chart, which we did not have. Dinner seemed especially nice at the Harborside having been away from restaurants for quite a few days. Later, we watched a couple, John & Marta, on their maiden voyage with a new Gibson Houseboat. After docking, they invited us in for a tour & cocktails. They have a two-year-old blonde curly-haired active daughter who was constantly putting their patience to a test. Marta is from Poland and was a dentist there. She has to re-do her schooling in order to practice here.

Sunday morning we got a ride to church with one of Ron's partners, Don, in his Town Car. Back at the boat, we gave John, from the Gibson, a tour of our boat as promised, so we had a little later start than expected. We radioed ahead and the lockmaster at the Brandon Road Lock (mile 286) said he will wait for us because it would be a three-hour wait after this. We put the pedal to the metal and got there in time; way to go Nordic Tug fast trawler!! Two other pleasure boats were waiting. One was "Willie Winkle", a 45' Carver, captained by Jeff, the owner, and his friend, Bob. We had talked with them at the marina the day before. They had pulled out from the Marina when we left for church and were still waiting at the lock. We thought we were pretty smart having gotten to church during that time and still made it for the lock-through. God provides!! The other boat was a 30' Carver with two fellows on board taking it to Grand Rapids, Michigan.

We have followed the Illinois River from mile 1 - 273 and now will follow the Des Plaines River to mile 290 where we pick up the Chicago Sanitary Canal. Entering the Lockport Lock at mile 291, we encountered lots of wind and swirling waters. We got our line secured OK, but the smaller Carver had much difficulty. They'd catch the bow, but then the stern would swing out, or visa versa. One guy almost fell in, but there was nothing we could do to help. Coaching from the lockmaster finally got them secured. It's not as easy as it looks sometimes. The Chicago Sanitary Canal is much narrower than the rivers and there is still barge activity. We followed "Willie Winkel" and chatted on the radio ever so often. At one point he told me to come out on the front deck and he threw us each an apple. Once we heard two other boaters talking about how one of them been shot at and he still had the souvenir in his boat. In another area we saw a rescue team lifting a body out of the water with one of those large nets. This is Chicago!! We continued through the city of Chicago, passing under all 56 bridges. The low profile of the Nordic Tug was a blessing here. It was such a beautiful sight winding around the tall buildings. I sat out on the front deck with both a still camera and our video. This was too breath taking to worry about gunshots. We decided to follow Willie Winkle out of Chicago to Waukegan even though we would get in after dark. He promised he would lead the way and even radioed ahead for them to give us a spot for the night near his boat. What a nice guy!! We have one more lock, the Chicago Harbor Lock. That makes 28 locks since we left Deland, Florida. And what a welcome site when we left the Chicago lock and entered Lake Michigan: the water was a beautiful blue-green color!! Quite a contrast to the muddy, ridden-ridden waters we had been navigating most of this trip. There were no problems getting into Waukegan. We toured each other's boats and were thankful for the nice day of cruising we had shared.

From Waukegan, we made the 71-mile trip to Port Washington. Waves were 2-4' and "Bob" navigated all the way.

On the charts, we identified the border between Illinois and Wisconsin as we crossed over. It's been 16 days since we left and a lot of great experiences to show for it. After docking at the Port Washington Marina, we checked out a steel-hulled trawler tied up across from us. Turned out it is owned by a fellow from our area. He restored and finished the inside and it is beautiful. It has a round bottom though and we're impressed how much it rolls even sitting in a quiet slip. Another nice long bike ride through hilly Port Washington and a great meal of peel & eat shrimp at the Shanty restaurant capped off this day.

The next morning we enjoyed a 3-hour trip to Sheboygan where Joan & Eddie joined us for a "victory" lunch at the Dockside restaurant. We celebrated the chance to have had the opportunity to make this great trip. We were also thankful for the safety and success with which we had met the challenge. Another 3 hours to Manitowoc in 5-6' waves and proud of how our Nordic Tug could handle anything we gave it, we were convinced we had bought the right boat for us and our desire to cruise the Great Circle Waterway. A Summerplace had served us well.....

FOR WITHIN THAT *SUMMER PLACE*
YOUR ARMS REACH OUT TO ME
AND MY HEART IS FREE FROM ALL CARE,
FOR IT KNOWS
THERE ARE NO GLOOMY SKIES
WHEN SEEN THROUGH THE EYES
OF THOSE WHO ARE BLESSED WITH LOVE,
AND THE SWEET SECRET OF
A SUMMER PLACE
IS THAT IT'S ANYWHERE
WHEN TWO PEOPLE SHARE
ALL THEIR HOPES,
ALL THEIR DREAMS,
ALL THEIR LOVE.

We've had this dream for over 30 years and now half of the dream was about to be completed. As Manitowoc harbor came into view, we were both struck with a slight feeling of sadness to think this great journey was soon to be over. But, we were glad to be home!!!

Statistics: Total days motoring - 35
Total miles - 2650 (average 76 miles/day)
Total hours motoring - 315 (average 9 hrs/day)
Total fuel - \$1450
Total dockage - \$667
Total food - \$1277 (groceries \$609; eating out \$668)