

Quality Cruising



Toasting the Rainbow

By Cyndi Perkins

BUDDYBOATING KADEY KROGENS SPEND





FOUR MONTHS CRUISING LAKE SUPERIOR.

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arry and Jacque Nelson of *Waterford* and Doug and Jan Martin of *Day Dreams* couldn't think of a least favorite part of their trip when I caught up with them in Michigan's Upper Peninsula 34 days into their adventure.

The couples, who met at their shared home port, Toledo Beach Marina, situated between Toledo, Ohio, and the Detroit River on Lake Erie, were feasting on fresh local whitefish in the dining area of *Waterford's* afterdeck, a glorious meal accompanied by fresh garden salad and a bit more vino than planned.

They'd opened two bottles simultaneously—an honest mistake—and I was pleased to assist in rectifying the situation. As we toasted the rainbow forming over the hills of nearby Houghton, the couples talked about finding joy in slowing down, savoring time, history, scenery, the moment.

Summer temps had finally kicked in. "We left June 2, and hadn't even seen 60 [degrees] until now," says Jan. "There was nobody else out."

"We were in sweatshirts and parkas," says Jacque. Chilly temperatures didn't diminish the pleasure of traveling from Lake Erie up the Detroit River, across Lake St. Clair and into Lake Huron. From there the itinerary included stops in Kessel, Drummond Island at the Straits of Mackinac and up the St. Mary's River to Sault St. Marie, where their cruiser cleared the locks on the American side, a lift of about 21 feet that takes 20 minutes once vessels are secured.

At Lake Superior's northerly latitudes, summer light lingers well past 10 p.m. allowing for long, leisurely travel days. As the Krogen crews worked their way along the Upper Michigan shoreline they had no problems securing anchorage or dockage for the night long before darkness fell.

The couples viewed the four-month journey as a means to discover if long-term cruising—specifically the 6,000-plus mile America's Great Loop around the eastern U.S. and Canada—suits their skill sets, temperaments, equipment and all the other elements that come into play during extended passagemaking and living aboard.

"We thought this would be a great trial," says Jan, noting that their longest prior passage was 16 days.

"We're learning what we need and what we don't need," says Jacque, who's definitely enjoying the leisurely pace possible given a few months rather than a few weeks. "We always needed to bust our butts [on previous trips]. Now 15 to 20 miles [a day] is fine."

The couples treasure their long-time friendship but also give each other breathing room. "We're compatible but

don't need to be joined at the hip," says Jacque. "After five or six years of doing Georgian Bay we knew we were in sync."

They've formalized buddy-boating duties to keep expectations clear and equitable. Each traveling day, one boat leads and the other follows, maintaining a half to one mile between them. The following boat is responsible for researching routes and potential destinations for the next day.

Each member of this cruising quartet brings individual strengths to the endeavor. For example, when it comes to culinary skills "Jacque's a pro," says Jan.

Garry, an inveterate note-taker, is quick jot down my don't-miss suggestions for the next leg of their journey, Apostle Islands National Lakeshore (My top picks: Tom's Burned-Down Café and Madeline Island Yacht Club, along with anchorages at Julian and Quarry bays). From there the quartet's upward-bound itinerary included the Cape Cod of the North, charming Bayfield, Wisconsin; the industrial-artsy shipping port of Duluth, Minnesota; and a back-to-nature layover in Grand Portage, Minnesota, before trekking out to Isle Royale National Park, a remote, roadless archipelago and international biosphere with a family connection for Doug.

His great grandparents Dick and Alice O'Neil lived on "The Rock," as it is known, for a few years beginning in the 1890s, weathering two bitter winters. Dick worked for a copper mining operation established at Windigo near Washington Harbor on the island's southwestern end. There Doug's grandmother was born, either the first or second white child to earn that distinction. Baby

The crystalline waters of the largest sweetwater sea in the world are pure bliss for kayakers.



Courtesy of Day Dreams and Waterford



Waterford locking up into Lake Superior in Sault St. Marie, Michigan.

Blanche was carted off by a covetous Indian woman while Alice was picking blueberries. The infant was recovered without repercussions a few hours later.

The O'Neil family's life in the wilds on the isle and on the mainland at the foot of Brockway Mountain is chronicled in the book *Keweenaw Character*, a fascinating series of Copper Country vignettes by author Mac Frimodig. Doug traced family roots throughout the cruise through Keweenaw and was especially pleased to find photos of his family on display in the U.S. Park Service's Windigo visitor center.

LAKE NAVIGATION

Visiting personal and regional history on Lake Superior required all manner of modern tools. Navigation software, Automatic Identification System (AIS) technology and radar are considered essentials, along with vigilant dead reckoning to avoid fishing nets, say the couples, who have learned to be prepared for anything. Egos aside, they don't hesitate to call each other out if there's a question on course, speed or unidentified floating objects. The Lake Superior boating bible, Bonnie Dahl's *Superior Way*, hasn't steered them wrong, they say, although they bypassed one Marquette-area marina that didn't live up to its description.

Based on a tip from fellow boaters, the couple chipped in 50/50 on a Wi-Fi booster that proved handy along the way. For instance, when cell phones were rendered useless in Lac La Belle, Michigan, in the shadow of Mt. Bohemia on Keweenaw Peninsula's south shore, Jan was able to reserve slips at Houghton County Marina via electronic tablet. The couples marveled that despite the newly renovated municipal docks there was no one around but day-fishermen using the ramp.

The sounder was especially vital in the Mendota Channel leading off the big lake to Lac La Belle, although the way has been cleared due to dredging in recent years. It was also useful earlier in the cruise, on the passage from Marquette to Mayberryesque Big Bay, which requires counterintuitive maneuvers tight to the breakwall in order to clear nets and shoals.

For the most part, though, depth wasn't a problem on Lake Superior. The Krogen crews figure on a 5-foot draw, even though actual draft is closer to 4½, because it pays to overestimate when rocks, not sand, threaten to kiss the keel. The only low-water encounters occurred lower down the Great Lakes chain, in Lake Huron. Jan cheerfully reports that they bumped bottom without any lasting consequences in Port Austin.

Jan, who's retired, jokes that she's waiting for the others to catch up. Jacque and Doug are on hiatus while Garry continued to work along the way, so far only slightly thwarted by the lack of signal in remote Copper Harbor. The folks at The Pines Resort in Copper Harbor, the only spot in town with a pay phone, got to know Garry on a first-name basis.

Despite the cell phone dead zone, it was a favorite stop on the trip, starting with a Kadey-Krogen "mini-rendezvous," as Judy termed it. *Waterford* and *Day Dreams* joined the 48-foot Kadey-Krogen North Sea Alizann at Copper Harbor Municipal Marina, a lovely, underused outpost at the tip of the Keweenaw Peninsula. *Alizann* was the first vessel to dock at the marina in 2013; owners Suzanne and Marty Tuck, who hail from the Lake Michigan port of Charlevoix, were satisfying their own hankering for an extended Lake Superior cruise.

Waterford and *Day Dreams* made it a Krogen trifecta—one for the record books in this region. The couples say that typical of the "Krogen family" in six hours they all felt like they'd known each other forever. Among other highlights: The sunset view from the summit of signal-blocking Brockway Mountain with its awe-inspiring panoramic overlook of Lake Superior and lush Keweenaw forestland. The cruisers are grateful to Keith Hendee at Copper Harbor Municipal Marina for transporting them to the mountaintop in his pickup truck. The steep, strenuous pedal isn't realistic for recreational bikers.

The cruising Krogens would meet up at other locales around the lake during the circle tour, keeping tabs via the free Krogen Finder app for iOS devices. There's also a Trawler Tracker app to help kindred cruisers connect.



Three pretty Krogens all in a row, the first boats of the 2013 season to dock at Copper Harbor Municipal Marina.;
Below: The red dots on the shores of Lake Superior illustrate the many stops of the cruising Krogens.

Krogens are fairly rare on the Great Lakes in general. Day Dreams, hull number 3941, was ordered in fall 2002 and commissioned in New Jersey in June 2003. It fits the Martins' needs to a tee, from the customized freezer unit under a settee cushion to the oh-so-handly built-in drawers in the master cabin and Krogen's signature engine room with its generously sized workshop area.

"We think there are four or five Krogens max, on the Great Lakes," says Doug, as the couples trade off telling the story of how the Nelsons pretty much bought *Waterford*, hull 3944, sight unseen. Garry says he confirmed the general soundness of the vessel and set a few basic criteria, but felt he had to jump on it ASAP. And he has Jan to thank for a hot tip from TrawlerFest that set him on the trail of the Muskegon-based Krogen.

The Nelsons' first *Waterford* was a 45-foot Jeanneau sailing yacht, which was the favorite gathering spot at the marina, says Jan. "We bought our first before we bought our living room furniture," says Garry. This *Waterford* is their eighth boat.

"We had 12 wonderful years of sailing," says Jacque.

"Then we finally got religion," jokes Garry. "We would sail all day, keeping up, then get into port. These two would be ready to go out. We were already tired out."

These days all crews are up for excursions, including hiking and biking. They covered hundreds of miles of trails during the approximately 2,000-mile journey. Wilderness saunas, picking blueberries and thimbleberries, watching caribou and moose, and communing with loons remained on the agenda as they wended their way up Lake Superior's north shore to Thunder Bay, Ontario, and the remote outposts running from the Slate Islands and Rosport to Otter Cove and back to the Soo.

As they wrapped up their circle tour with a side trip to their fourth Great Lake of the cruising season, Lake Michigan, the inability to come up with any "worst moments" continued, aside from the occasional irritation of a few scope-challenged boaters anchoring too close for comfort. Cruising accomplishments



included anchoring out 27 of 30 days during the latter part of the trip, a new record for the couples.

The choppiest conditions they experienced were two-to-three footers on Lake Huron, ironic to those who consider Lake Superior more daunting.

Both couples blogged their trip, posting scads of photos and detailed information for each destination. Family and other followers also used automated identification technology at www.ais.boatnerd.com to track their whereabouts.

Jan says the blogs illustrate how two couples can visit the same places at the same time and still have so many unique perspectives. Both are well worth reading for anyone interested in Lake Superior boating or extended cruising on any wide-open waters. To trace their journey visit www.daydreamslakesuperior.blogspot.com and www.waterfordadventures.blogspot.com.

Freelance writer and editor Cyndi Perkins has completed two Great Circuits Loops aboard her 32-foot DownEast, Chip Ahoy. A Lake Superior sailor since 1995, the former Daily Mining Gazette managing editor's work has appeared in numerous publications, including the non-fiction Women on Board Cruising, which she was honored to autograph for Jan and Jacque.