

North Cruise 2004

Ships:

Bubbles — George Shiffer and Arlene Marie

Flying Dragon — Terry Trush and daughter Liz replaced with wife JoAnne

Snowbird — Dave Gardner and Mike Warchol replaced with Joni Gardner

Solitude — Bill Hartman, sons Chris and Andrew and friend Dan Roney

Venture — Lary Smith and Rich Stahley

Wings of the Morning — Bob and Barb Howard and granddaughter Rachel Spicer

WinQuest — Doug and Kathy Howe

Saturday, 17 July (to Detroit)

The run up the river was lumpy, but otherwise a beautiful, sunny trip. The evening was spent at the TriCentennial State Park Marina; a modernized St Aubin Marina. Lary and Rich joined them from Harbor Hill Marina and transferred the entire group by land yacht to the Stony Creek Brewery for dinner. This evening we were serenaded by the sounds coming from the Shene Park Amphitheater just a block away.

Sunday, 18 July (39 N miles to Algonac)

Most of the boats were off to Lake St Clair by 10:00. There were light winds, naturally (for a WSSC cruise) from the NNE, the direction we wished to go. Some boats sailed North first and then were able to make it to the mouth of the Shipping Channel when the wind swung around to the NNW. Another went east first and then was able to almost make the mark as the wind changed. Many boats motored to the entrance of the Middle Channel and up that way to Algonac. The last one to pull into Algonac Harbour Club was there by 6:00 PM. A number of us enjoyed the pool waiting for others to arrive. For dinner some cooked on shore or ate at the Marina restaurant while others went to Prinzivallis Galley, across the road from the marina.

Monday, 19 July (34 N miles to Port Huron)

First stop this morning for many boats was to Mike's Marina in Algonac for additional supplies. It is located right in front of the marina. The day was calm and sunny as the group departed for a motor trip up the St Clair River to the Port Huron Yacht Club. The PHYC is for racers only and many of the slips had been vacated because they were on the Port Huron to Mackinac Race. We were directed into the empty slips by Ed Beebe who then welcomed us into the club's bar for 50 cent beers. He also invited us to visit their widow's walk for a great view of the area. After some of the cruisers had too many beers we went to dinner at the Quay Street Brewery.



Tuesday, 20 July (32 N miles to Port Sanilac)

This was a beautiful, clear, 80° day as the group headed under the Blue Water Bridge and then out onto Lake Huron. The wind was 4-7 Knots from the West so we were able to sail from



shortly out of the River to almost Port Sanilac. It was a great day on the lake. For dinner this evening, the entire group went to the Uri's Landing Restaurant above the ice cream parlor right on the waterfront in the next marina. Ann and Arnold Presley joined us for dinner and chats. They were previous WSSC members now living between Port Sanilac and Harbor Beach.

Wednesday, 21 July

This was our first scheduled rest day with nothing planned except wandering the town, getting groceries and relaxing. Port Sanilac is small,

but does have Mary's Diner on the main street and a new bakery straight up from the marina. There was also a massage parlor and Dan availed himself of their services. The town was starting to set up tents for a festival this weekend. The gazebo was a great place for people to learn several new card games. Dinner this evening was a great picnic, pot luck from materials purchased today or brought along. The meal started about 6:30 and lasted well into the night (including an ice cream break to the parlor next door). Part of the time was spent looking at charts and considering the alternative of crossing the lake on Thursday instead of going to Harbor Beach because of the advanced weather forecast which was for high winds from the North on Friday and even stronger winds from the NE on Saturday. In the end we decided to wait until morning to make the decision as to what we would do. During the day *WinQuest* experienced the fun of fixing a bicycle inner tube and annoyed to find that one little tack could make eight holes in the tube.



Thursday, 22 July (29 N miles to Harbor Beach)

Another beautiful sailing day as we headed North to Harbor Beach. Our thought was that if we crossed to Goderich then we would be trying to get to Kincardin with heavy North winds on Friday. It was thought better to continue with the original plan. Today's winds were light and from the South which allowed us to do wing-on-wing for much of the way. Near Harbor Beach a wind shift came through and it was now 12-15 Knots out of the NE causing the lake to go from an almost flat state to something quite bumpy. We were thankful that there were high walls around the Harbor Beach harbor allowing us to duck in with reduced sea state and wind to take down sails. The marina is located in the NW corner of the very large harbor and had only 5' or less of water meaning that some boats sat on the bottom. This also caused a problem for another boat and a special opportunity. As *Bubbles* enter the harbor a boat that had participated in the Port Huron to Mackinac race was circling in the harbor. The people on board waived their hands, but *Bubbles* went on. *WinQuest* was the next to enter and they received the same treatment so went to investigate the problem. They informed *WinQuest* that they could not get to the gas dock because of the depth and had to get one of their crew off so that he could get home, be fitted for a tux and then head to Chicago for the Chicago to Mackinac race. The transfer was accomplished

to *WinQuest* and it turned out that the person was the son-in-law of Ed Beebe who was our host in Port Huron. *Wings of the Morning* had problems the entire day with their engine and so Tony, from a neighboring boat, came over to take a look. He rebuilt their carburetor and the engine was eventually running fine with only a small drop in the wallet. Dinner this evening was downtown at Al's Restaurant. The marina shuttle took us there and brought us back.

Friday, 23 July (56 N miles to Kincardin)

At first light the decision was made to wait a day to head across the lake. We knew that we had a ways to go and didn't want to do it in the 4-7 seas that were visible and with the wind out of the N at 15 Knots. As the morning progressed, *Bubbles* had Tony look at their boat and he declared it to be inoperable because of a worn cutlass bearing. He suggested that they wait for a calm day to sail to Port Sanilac to have the boat pulled and the bearing fixed. They went into town because of this. General concern was expressed that if we didn't go today, we certainly were not going to go tomorrow as the wind was predicted to be stronger and from the NE, the exact direction we would be going. By 11:00 it was clear that the majority of the boats would try it with some crew changes: Chris was aboard *Flying Dragon* and JoAnne was aboard *Venture*. The trip was about 8 hours of Hell, very cold, very bumpy and very windy. The seas had increased to 5-10 and the winds were above 20 Knots. Only a few were happy with the trip, most liked it for about the first hour and many had upset stomachs. Along the way the upper fitting of the forestay on *Flying Dragon* broke and they couldn't maintain their heading under engine alone so headed nearly straight East coming out only a few miles from Goderich where they went in for repairs. The 5 other boats did make it to Kincardin with *WinQuest* coming in last because of waiting for *Bubbles* to return to their boat to tell them that the rest of us were off. *Venture* had prepared for the crossing by putting in a double reef and tying it down before leaving, but upon pulling up the



reefed main found that they had tied down the first reef by mistake. We all tied up along the wall and in the end finger docks in the Kincardin harbor just as the piper played from the lighthouse as the sun was setting. For dinner some went to the Erie Belle to chat about the crossing. We now had JoAnne in Kincardin with her clothes in Goderich and vice versa for Chris. The good news was that JoAnne's parents were coming up tomorrow and would now stop in Goderich to pick up people to drive them to Kincardin for the day.

Saturday, 24 July

This was a nice day of rest and strange since there was very little wind and the sea state looked flat it probably would have been great for a crossing! For many it was breakfast lunch and dinner in town with some going to the Pelican Roost for dinner while others going to Madison's. The goal was to finish prior to 8:00 when the Kincardin Pipe Band lead the parade down the main



street and then back to the park for a concert. Most joined into the event. Some went to see the play *the Wild Men* at the community theatre. Joni joined *Snowbird* and sent Mike packing.

Sunday, 25 July (33 N miles to Goderich)

After breakfast in town it was with sadness that we left Kincardin. This was a port that we wished to visit again, without having to cross the lake as we did. At the start the wind was about 6 Knots out of the WNW, the temperature about 75; and no clouds in the sky. As the day progressed the wind increased to about 10 Knots by 1700, but prior to that it was time to fly various sails as *Wings of the Morning*, *Solitude* and *Venture* crisscrossed each other's path which offered opportunities for great photo shots. It was a great sail with the waves building as we approached Goderich. Again, some ducked behind the breakwalls to take down the sails. *Venture* even entered the wrong harbor to take the sails down in calmer water. It had been a great sail, but now it was reported that most of the people on board were grumpy. We tied up in the back harbor of the Maitland Valley Marina right down the steps from the pool and facilities in a sheltered cove with very little wind. What a great facility they have! Dinner was at various places including the Park House Tavern. It was later found out that all those great pictures taken by *Flying Dragon's* Jo-Anne were done with an empty camera!



Monday, 26 July

Another day of rest to enjoy land and the town of Goderich. This is an always popular place: both the marina and the town. The Maitland Trailer Park and Marina is, as it says, impeccably clean. The town has a central park and around the town square (actually 8 sided) are many stores and the houses should all have historical markers upon them. Crew used the time to do the laundry, walk the town, shop and investigate the various ice cream shops. This evening we all had an excellent meal at Robindales Restaurant.

Tuesday, 27 July (29 N miles to Grand Bend)

This day started off with light 70; winds from the North so we were able to sail. Eventually the winds built to 12 Knots and then back down to zero. A fog and bug bank appeared ahead and then drizzle started which eventually turned to rain. About an hour out of Grand Bend the wind picked up making it able for us to sail again — in the rain. We all tied up pointing down river along the North shore of the river. From here it is 30 steps up to the rest rooms and the town. These restrooms needed both a code and a key to enter. Once in, the light was on a sensor so if someone didn't keep waiving their arms in the hall, the light would soon go out leaving the person in total darkness. (That maybe was for the better, as you then didn't see the condition of the facilities.) This evening we went to D. Jays for dinner and then 14 headed back to *Venture* to watch the movie *Captain Ron* while it continued to rain outside.



Wednesday, 28 July

This was another day of rest and one to dry things out. It is a beautiful day and one to spend in



the shops and on the beach. This evening some went to the Oakwood Inn while others ate near the beach at Growlin Gater and then walked across the street to the beach to watch the sun set. This evening a smaller group watched Toy Story or played dominoes aboard *WinQuest*. Speaking of *WinQuest*, even though it was the end of the trip and it had rained all the day before, they decided it was time to clean the boat so that it would sparkle when they got to Sarnia.

Thursday, 29 July (39 N miles to Sarnia)

There was no wind along the way from Grand Bend to the Blue Water Bridge except for the last few miles. For much of the distance the boat's wake made the only ripples on the water. There was some excitement swatting gnats and watching for fishing nets. These gnats stuck to everything so the once clean boats (like *WinQuest*) were now a mess with all the bugs. Once into Sarnia Bay Marina most went to the nearby Paddy Flaherty's Irish Pub for a great dinner, all the while wondering if it would again rain.

Friday, 30 July (41 N miles to Belle River)

This was a mostly overcast day with some drizzle early. There was no wind but lots of fog on Lake St Clair. This all together meant that it was a motor trip watching the GPS all the way to Belle River. This evening we ate above the Marina office at Captain Nikolas Greek Restaurant (with several having saganaki as an appetizer) and then returned to our boats in the rain. *Snowbird* was the first into port and took over the duties of Port Captain as *Flying Dragon* had gone straight home from Sarnia. This fits into the normal WSSC cruise operating rules since the Port Captain is usually the last to arrive (if they do arrive) along with the rule that the wind will always be on the nose during a WSSC cruise.

Saturday, 31 July (to home)

The morning started with as much fog as there had been the day before. *Snowbird* headed out early while the rest of the boats meet at 10:00 for a late potluck breakfast of pancakes, eggs, hash and bacon complements of Arnold Presley. We finally finished and again departed early at the crack of noon. By this time the fog had disappeared and there was a steady wind from the WSW allowing us to actually sail to the Detroit River. *Solitude* and *Venture* tacked back and forth in front of each other with *Venture* finally making it to the entrance of the river under sail. On the way down the river in the Livingston Channel *Wings of the Morning* and *WinQuest* saw a pow-



erboat approaching. *Wings of the Morning* moved over to let it pass on the other side and the powerboat did likewise. *Wings of the Morning* again moved back to the other side and, again, so too did the powerboat. It finally passed with a giant wake. Just then another powerboat with a flashing blue light came out of a cut and pulled the errant boat over. How many times have we wished that this would have happened!

While most of the boats headed home on Saturday, *Bubbles* stopped for several days at the Detroit Yacht Club on their way back down the river.

This was a great trip with many more opportunities to actually sail than on most WSSC Cruises.

Lary R Smith
Cruising, Fleet Captain

