



# *The Voyage of Many Moons*



## An Old Trawler Does The Great Loop

August 2021-July 2022



# A 6,000-mile journey by water...



## ...on a 40-year-old Mainship

- 2 people \*
- 34 feet
- 345 days
- 19 states
- 5 inland rivers
- 4 Great Lakes
- 60 locks
- 150 (ish) stops

\* First Mate Mary missed 1,000 miles



# Our Route

## Counter-Clockwise Loop

- Lake Superior
  - Lake Michigan
  - Inland Rivers (Chicago to Mobile)
  - Gulf Intracoastal
  - Florida (Okeechobee Waterway)
  - Atlantic Intracoastal
  - Hudson River
  - Erie Canal
  - Lake Erie
  - Lake Huron
- ... and back into Lake Superior



Who does it and why?

What was hardest? Scariest?

What's it like to be boarded?

How a long boat journey differs from an outing.

Why I would do it again in spite of misgivings.



# Who Are “The Loopers?”



Hammond, IN



Alton, IL

About 200  
boats finish The  
Loop each year



Padukah, KY (Movie Night!)



Mobile, AL

Mostly retirees, mostly married couples, *all* adventurers with the income or flexibility (or both) to drop their traditional lives. Courteous, sociable, quick to help.



# Some become lifelong friends



*Eleanor Grace*  
Joined us on rivers & intra-coastals



*Rachel Ann*  
Joined us on Lake Erie



*Beachfront*  
Joined us on rivers  
and in Florida



*Superior Passage*  
Joined us on Erie Canal

# Why Do It?

“Because we can.”

“Retirement adventure.”

“To tour by water instead of by land.”

“We like the freedom.”



What was hardest or scariest?



# Locks?



Pickwick Lock, Tennessee River  
- A raise of 80+ feet - 10/2021



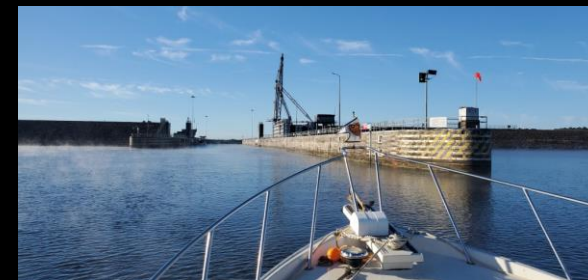
Illinois River, 9/2021



Mary's First Lock  
(while driving)



Erie Canal  
6/2022



Enter when you get the green light



And always hug the wall!



# Bridges?



Chicago - 9/2021



Wilmington, N.C. - 3/2022



Erie Canal - 6/2022



Erie Canal - 6/2022



Dismal Swamp  
4/2022



# Currents, tides, dam releases?



Squeezed at Kaskaskia, IL - 9/2021



5-knot current on Ohio River - 10/2021



Fueling up at low tide  
Carolina Beach State Park  
3/2022



Docks at Padukah, KY – 9/2021



Big dams on the rivers = varied water levels



# Other traffic?



Passing our first barge  
Illinois River - 9/2021



Lock encounter! Barge enters as  
we leave - Illinois River – 9/2021



Barge passes us in narrow  
Tom BigBee Waterway - 10/2021



Passing a cargo ship  
Gulf Intracoastal Waterway – 11/2021



Meeting a cargo ship,  
St. Mary's River - 5/2022

# Questionable stops?



Hoppies Marina  
Illinois River - 9/2021



Old Lock Wall  
Illinois River - 9/2021



Clifton Marina  
Tennessee River- 9/2021



Birdsong Marina  
Tennessee River - 9/2021



# Boat logistics and maintenance?



Hiring divers to inspect the prop



Checking the engine



Changing the oil



Caulking



Scrubbing



Lifting bikes to flybridge



Checking shore power



# Weather??



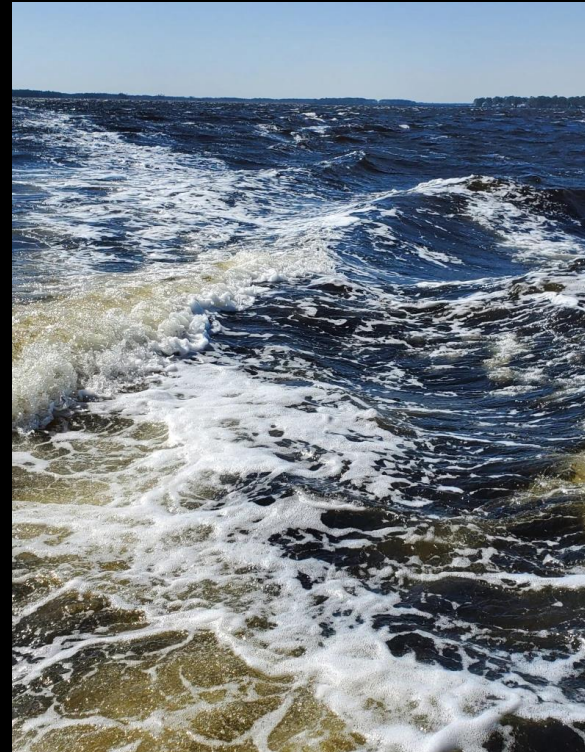
Waiting days for Lake Erie to calm - 6/2022



Fog on Illinois River - 9/2021



A "no-go" day on  
Lake Michigan – 8/2021



A dramamine day on  
Albermarle Sound, NC - 3/2022



Riding out the storm  
Fort Myers, FL – 12/2021



East Coast – 3/2022



Answer: None of the above

Scariest: Entering new marinas with tight corners in strong winds and/or currents (Note: single engine, no thruster)

Hardest: Sharing tight quarters\* under way for months, making decisions daily, communicating effectively

\* *Many Moons* is 34 feet long. Two feet bigger, or an enclosed flybridge, would make a difference. *But* you don't need a huge boat! Smaller boats are easier to maneuver.

# A word about boardings

*The Coast Guard is our friend!*



Our 4<sup>th</sup> boarding, Erie Canal - 6/2022



# How a journey differs from an outing

- Lots of planning (before *and* during)
- More working than relaxing
- Something new every day
- Tests relationships in new ways



I was “the first-shift.”  
I didn’t intend to stay.  
I left the boat twice.  
I came back. (Twice.)



After one month under way  
St. Joseph, MI – 8/2021



Saying good-bye to new friends  
Carrabelle, FL - 11/2021



Returning to boat 1<sup>st</sup> time  
Hontoon Island, FL - 2/2022



Returning to boat 2<sup>nd</sup> time  
Solomons Island, MD - 5/2022



# Why I would do it again

- You can escape “the world’s problems”
- You find your limits and test them
- You make interesting new friends
- It’s a unique adventure - even for adventurers
- It’s a unique way to travel - even for travelers



You pass so many cities and towns...





Entering Chicago River, IL - 9/2021



Anchored at Atlantic City, NJ — 5/2022



Anchored near Tappan Zee Bridge  
Hudson River — 5/2022



Passing Manhattan — 5/2022



Passing Lady Liberty - 5/2022



Moored at Brockport, N.Y - 6/2022



Approaching Detroit, MI — 6/2022



Arriving at Charleston, S.C. — 3/2022

...but also quiet lakes and rivers





Anchored in Illinois River, IL – 9/2021



Anchored in Boo Hollow, Pickwick Lake, KY – 10/2021



Anchored in TomBigBee, AL – 10/2021



Sunset at anchor in Panther Bay, KY - 10/2021



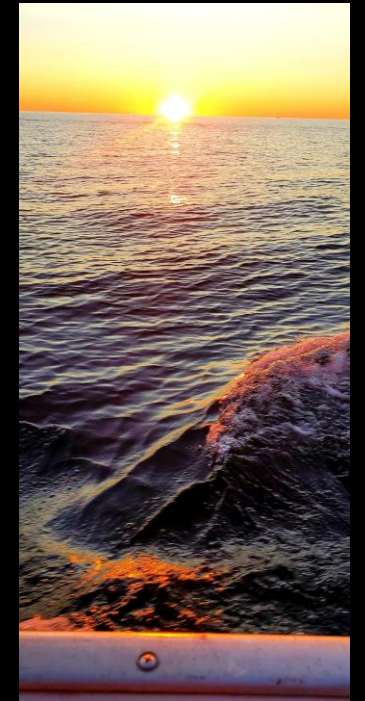
Navigating Delaware marshes , DE – 5/2022



Passing Pictured Rocks, MI – 7/2022



Heading up the Hudson River, NY  
6/2022



Under way at sunrise  
Lake Huron, MI - 6/2022



Then there's this....





# ...and the satisfaction of arriving!



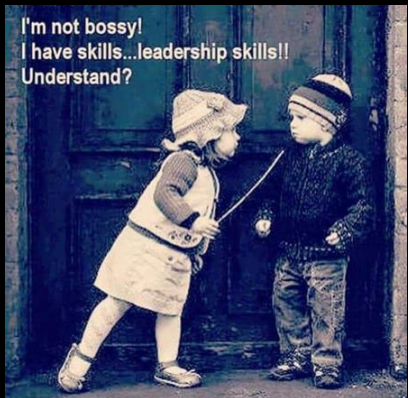
“Crossing the Wake” – July 3, 2022



Earning the gold burgee – July 4, 2022

# What I would change for Loop #2

- Slow down
- Explore more
- Anchor out even more
- Communicate better
- Create a private space
- Get a better dinghy





Mary's take-aways  
from 5,000 miles at 8 mph



The sea will get rough sometimes. Just wait.





You will encounter “big guys.” Give them room.



Barge on St. Mary's River – 7/2022



# You will get distracted. Stay focused.





# Sometimes the current/tide will fight you. Let it win.



Cumberland Island, GA  
at low tide - 3/2022



Darien, GA – 8-foot tide - 3/2022



Ohio River – 5-knot current – 10/2021



Church Creek, SC at low tide - 3/2022





Sometimes you will need a change of scenery. Find it.



Sometimes you will need to step down. So do it.





And sometimes it's best to pull over and wait



Bollard on wall of Erie Canal – 6/2022

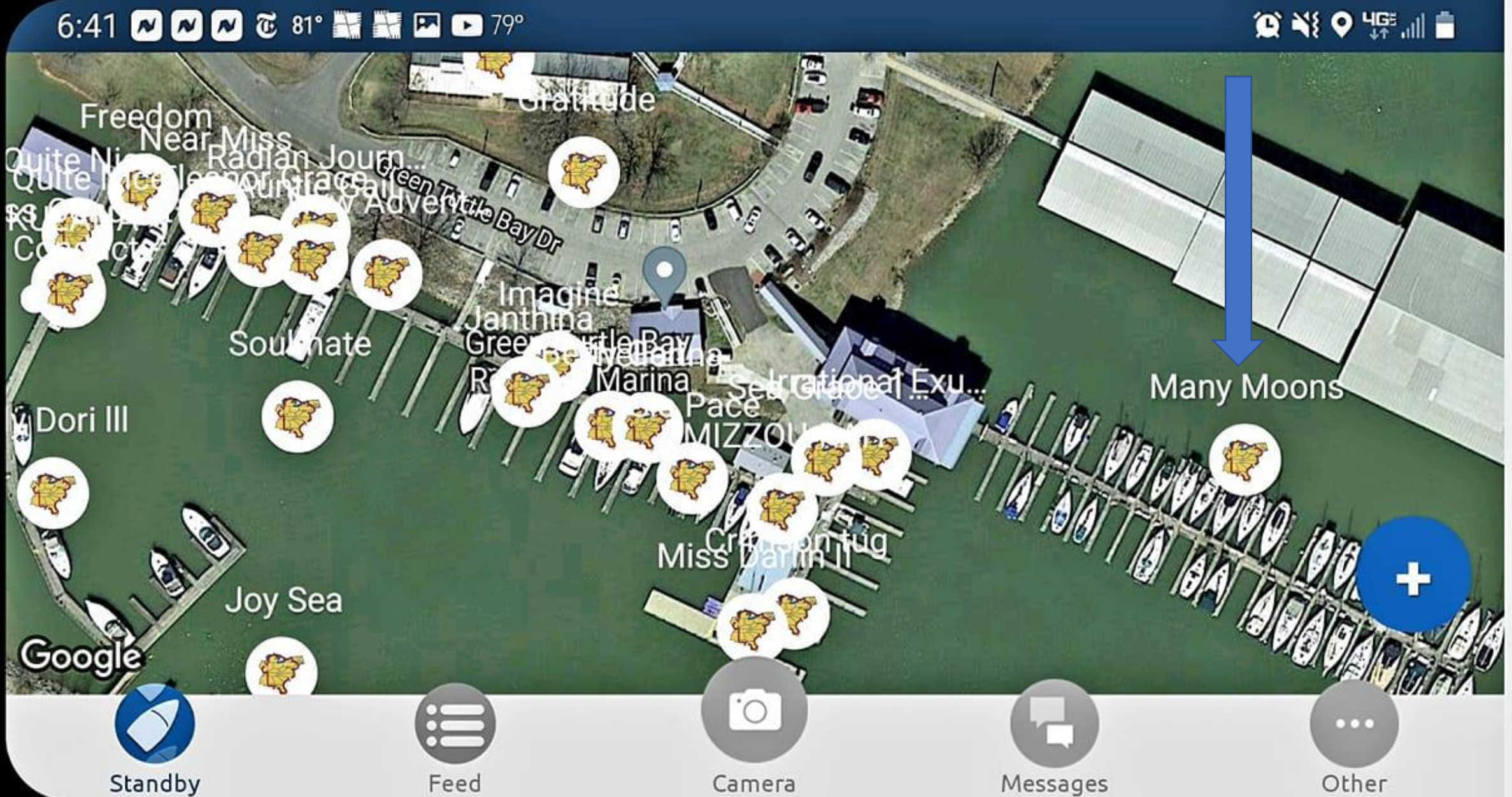


# You can ask for input when you aren't sure





# You can always find company when you want it...



Green Turtle Bay, KY – 9/2021



...and find ways to be alone  
when you need it



Walking the beach  
Whitefish Point, MI  
8/2021



Rowing  
Kentucky Lake, KY  
10/2021



Paddle boarding  
Half Moon Bay, NY - 6/2022



Blogging on the stern at night



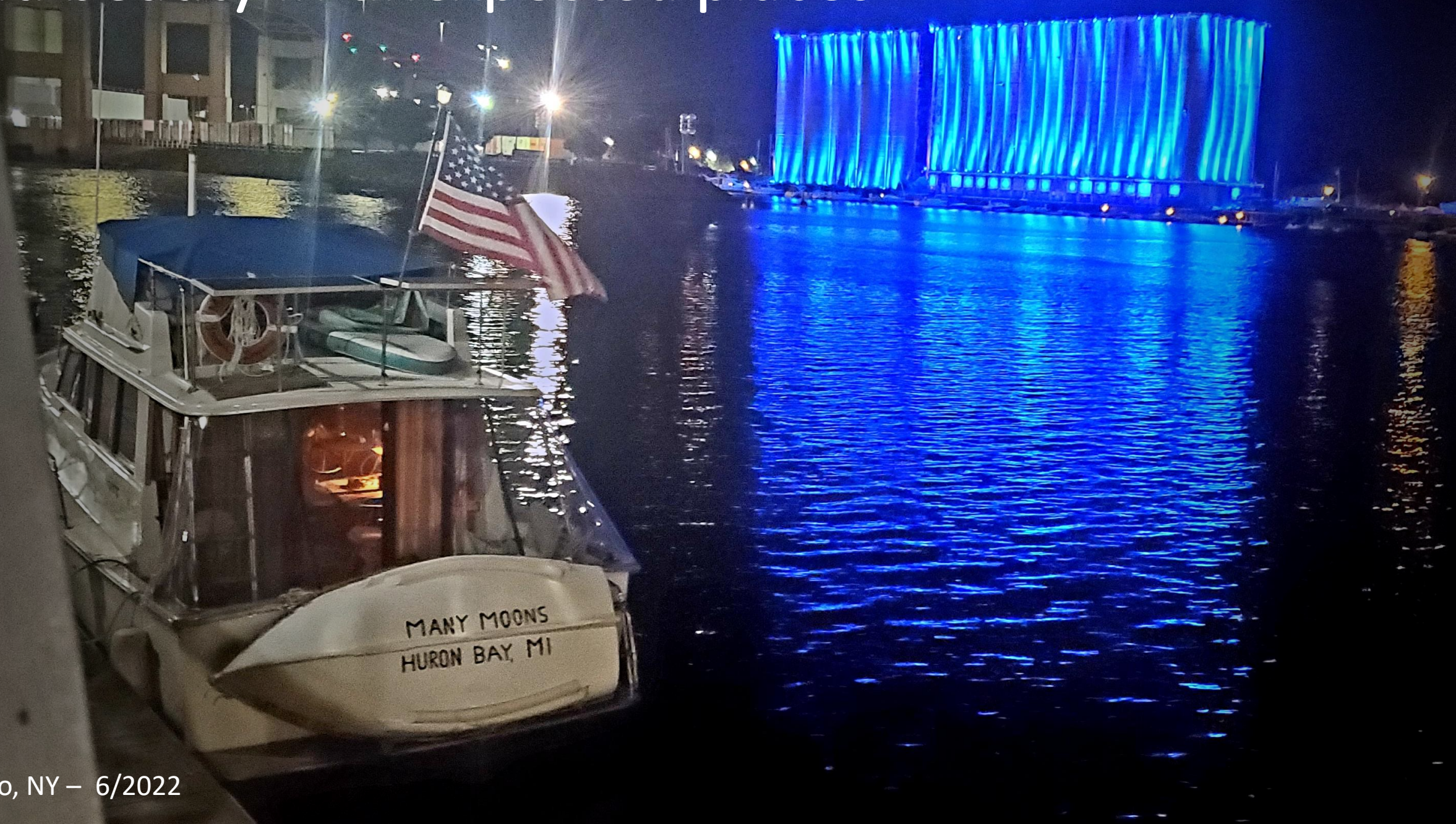
You will find new solutions...



Jeff with bikes on dinghy – 10/2021



...and beauty in unexpected places





You will be tested.

You may be squeezed.

But you will adapt.



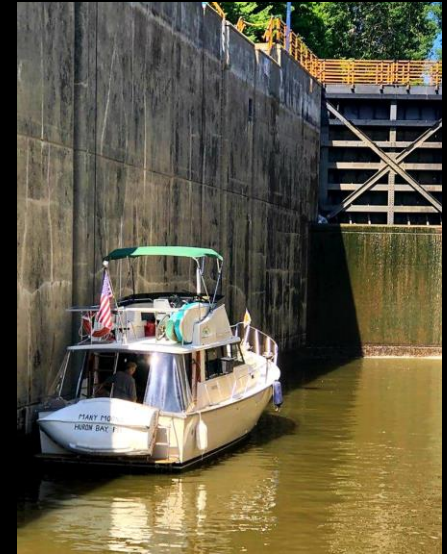
Learning the locks  
Lockport, IL - 9/2021



Squeezed at Kaskaskia, IL - 9/2021



Meeting a barge while leaving  
Lock #5 - Illinois River – 9/2021



Erie Canal Lock #1  
6/2022



If you keep showing up, the rewards are....!



Leaving Munising, MI before sunrise - 7/2022



# Slow down long enough to look



Photos taken from a kayak at Hontoon Island, FL – 2/2022

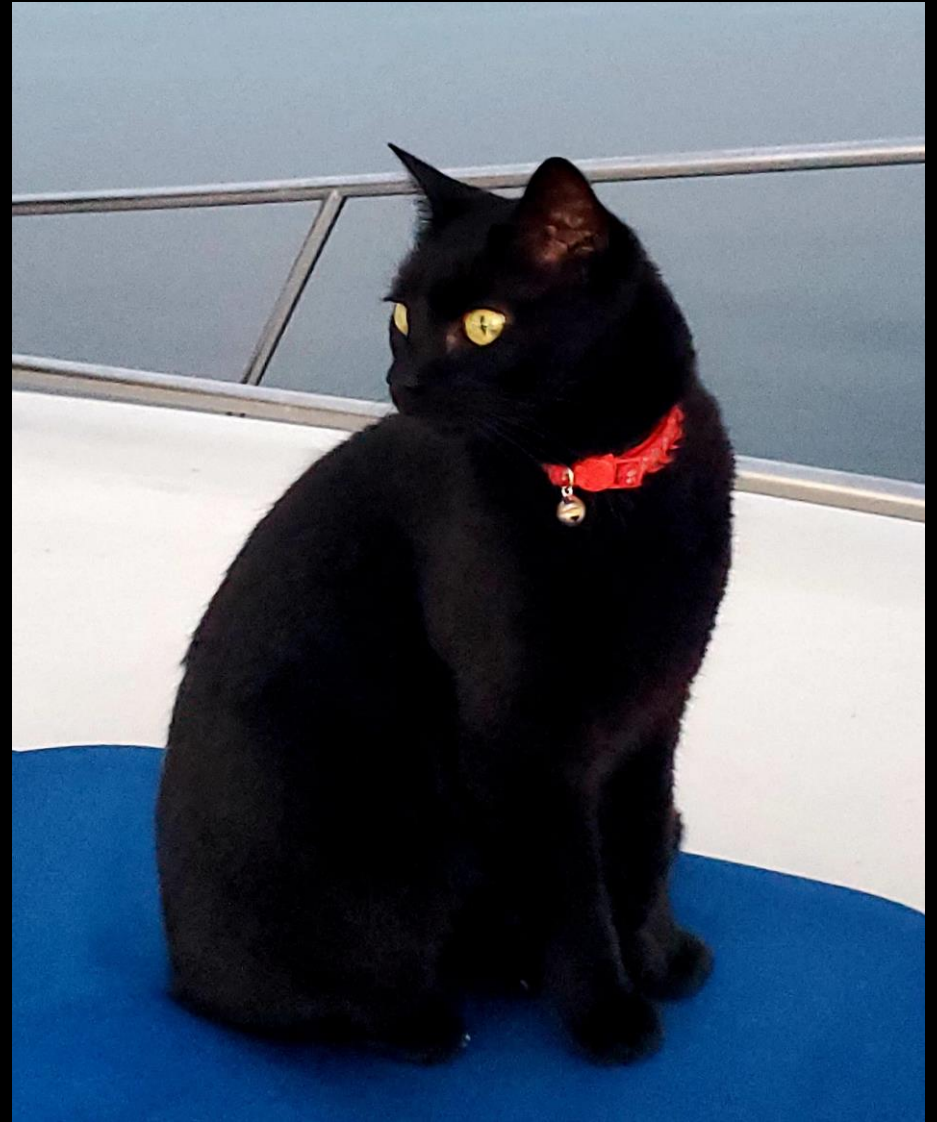


Be careful where  
you set anchor...





...and bring  
a buddy.





# Other sources

American Great Loop Cruisers' Association (AGLCA)

AGLCA Facebook Page

Great Loop Radio Podcasts

My blog: *mindfulmary.org/the boat*

Skipper: Jeff Larson

Presentation and photos by First Mate Mary Hanson

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