

Cheryll and Rich Odendahl Roam around Lake Superior July/August, 2012

*"I am Paddle to the Sea
Please Put Me back in the Water"*

In mid-July, Rich along with Captain Gary Graham and the crew of Contender won the C&C 35 class in the annual Port Huron to Mackinac sailboat race. This was the fourth year in a row for a Contender class victory. After the combination victory/19th wedding anniversary celebration, it was time for Rich to transition from racing yacht tactician into Captain of the cruiser Roam; our 25-foot Ranger Tug. We loaded Roam and the pickup truck for a five-week circle tour of Lake Superior. The plan was to trailer her from our home near Detroit, skip the long open-water passages, and launch in seven different prime locations around the world's largest freshwater lake. We ended up driving over 1700 miles and cruising 600 miles with visits to five National Parks and a gorgeous remote region in northern Ontario.



**Celebrating our Anniversary at the Awards
Party on Mackinac Island**



Roam at Anchor off Grand Island, Michigan

We drove north through Michigan, crossed the Mackinac Bridge into the Upper Peninsula and arrived at our first stop of Munising in the early evening. It was getting too late to launch the boat, and the local hotels were all displaying "No Vacancy" signs, so we decided to just park at the city launch ramp, sleep on the boat in the parking lot, and launch first thing in the morning. A few people stopped by to gape and ask questions, but no one gave us any trouble. Munising is the headquarters of Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. The Pictured Rocks are a 15-mile section of sandstone cliffs with several caves and natural arches that line the Lake Superior shoreline. After our cruise along their length, we anchored for the night near a shipwreck in a secluded bay. We were awakened at 5:00 AM by a thunderstorm. Rich got up to make sure the anchor wasn't dragging in the wind gusts. The thunder rumbled, and several lightning bolts came very close. Getting hit by lightning would likely have fried Roam's electronics and ended our journey after just one day, but we were spared from any strikes. Another line of storms was expected later that morning, so we hustled back to the launch ramp, pulled the boat and drove to our next stop in Marquette, Michigan.



**Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore;
One of the Few Photos Taken By Rich**



**Sandstone Arch at Pictured Rocks; We Weren't
Brave Enough to Take Roam through the Gap**

Cheryll has several relatives in Marquette. We stayed downtown at a very nice marina and took her Aunt Jeanette, Uncle Roy and many cousins out for tours of the harbor, freighter docks and the rocky islets nearby.



Cinder Pond Marina in Marquette



Roam Under the Houghton/Hancock Lift Bridge

The Houghton/Hancock area is in Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula; copper country. There is a National Historical Park commemorating the efforts of the miners who settled the area; including Cheryll's grandfathers and great-uncles. The Portage Canal runs about 30 miles through the middle of the region. We had arranged to tie up at a dock near the home of Cheryll's cousins Karyn and John. As we approached the dock, Karyn's cousin waded out to assure that we did not hit a large submerged boulder a scant two feet from where Roam would spend the nights. We were learning to be very careful with the docks in these waters. Again, Cheryll's relatives were very accommodating and we took her Aunt Betty and several cousins for tugboat tours. Afterwards, we set out on our own for a two-day tour to the other end of the canal. John not only stored our truck and trailer, but after our return, helped Rich pull the boat for our 100-mile road trip to Bayfield, Wisconsin.



**The Sauna Warms as Roam Rests
at the Dock In Oskar Bay**



**Cheryll and Rich Relaxing
at Cousin Karyn and John's House**

Bayfield, Wisconsin is the home of the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore and the largest charter sailboat fleet in North America. There is also one other Ranger Tug that unfortunately sits at the dock wearing a "For Sale" sign; a cruising dream ended by health issues of the owner. We spent a week in the area, exploring the many islands. Several have sandstone cliffs similar to Pictured Rocks, and a few have marvelous sea caves carved into the cliffs at the waterline. We found one where we were able to drive the dinghy into a cavern, around the dark passage, and then out through a different portal. Too cool! Cheryll was especially pleased at the Rocky Island dock when a group of fisherman had caught more than they could possibly eat and treated us to a fresh whitefish dinner and a campfire. Stockton Island had some great hiking trails through the forest and back along the sugar sand beach. We were guests for a night at the Madeleine Island Yacht Club before putting Roam back on the trailer and heading for the Superior, Wisconsin and Duluth, Minnesota area. Along the way, a black bear crossed the road just in front of us. It was startling, but bear encounters are much more pleasant from inside an air-conditioned pickup truck than out on the hiking trail.



Sandy Trail at Stockton Island



Devil's Island Sea Caves



**Swinging Gently at Anchor -
Justice Bay, Sand Island**

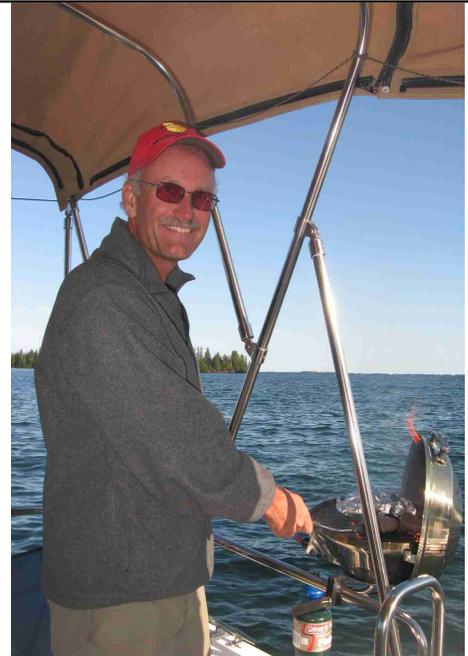


**Rocky Island - Can you hear the grease spatter
and smell the fish filets frying?**

At the far western corner of the lake, Superior, Wisconsin provided a good place to provision for our upcoming trip into the remote wilderness. We also did a cruise through the Duluth Harbor where freighters were loaded with coal and iron ore. We journeyed 15 miles up into the backwaters of the St. Louis River before the depth sounder alarm informed us that it was time to turn around.



Moose and Calves Swimming – Windigo Harbor, Isle Royale



Steaks on the Grill – Malone Bay

The northern shore of Lake Superior is more rugged and even more beautiful than the southern side. The Grand Portage National Monument is a few miles from the Minnesota/Canada border. It's a tribute to the Voyageurs who traveled to this area from Montreal in giant canoes to trade for beaver pelts. That was a real adventure. Nearby is the Grand Portage Indian Casino and marina. The casino is quite large and very modern with an attached hotel and excellent restaurant. The marina, on the other hand, was rather rustic and rickety, with a gravelly ramp and docks that ramble around a

small, shallow harbor. The marina is only 18 miles from Isle Royale National Park and had parking space for our truck and trailer while we spent the next eight days in the park wilderness. We had been backpacking on Isle Royale seven years earlier, but this time there would be no freeze-dried food or sleeping on the ground. No, we would be drinking cold beer and eating steaks from the grill. Unlike the sore hikers, we would not need to pop any “Vitamin I”; backpacker-speak for Ibuprofen. We slept well on the memory foam pad in the forward berth. We slept very well.



Cheryll Enjoys a Refreshing Lake Superior Dip



Exploring the Beach – Amygdaloid Island



Old Shaft at Minong Copper Mine



Isle Royale Wildlife

An hour after we checked in and purchased our National Park cruising permit, a moose and her twin calves decided that it was time for a swim in the harbor. There were eagles soaring overhead, the call of the loon and the sweet smell of cedars. Over the next week, we circled the 50-mile long island and strapped on the boots for day hikes to historical mines and lookouts. We swam in several places. Thank to a mild winter and exceptionally warm summer, the water temperature was a comfortable 62 – 72 degrees. On our final evening, our favorite ranger stopped by on her day off for a visit and Happy Hour on Roam's afterdeck.



Rainbow after the Storm in Nipigon, Ontario, Canada



Buoy Set by Locals to Mark the Path through the Boulders in the Blind Channel

We trailered Roam across the border into Canada, and onward to Nipigon, Ontario. It was getting late, and the marina was closed, so we decided to surreptitiously sleep aboard in the parking lot and quietly launch in the morning. Several locals stopped by to visit, including a talkative unshaven sailor who had just returned from a multi-day cruise. He had all sorts of advice and suggested that we could see him at the town's municipal office the next day. Rich joked; "Oh, are you the mayor?" He responded that he was. Oops. So much for our clandestine night in the parking lot. There was a gale blowing with ten-foot waves on the open lake, so we spent two more nights at the solid docks in the well-protected marina, and the mayor stopped by for a beer and to show us the uncharted paths through some of the difficult, boulder-strewn passages. Four other visitors also stopped by and invited us to stay at remote private fish camp docks in the out islands. They don't get many transient cruisers in Nipigon. Only three other boats had visited during the entire 2012 season. This was a warmer welcome than we've ever received from complete strangers anywhere.



Docked at a Remote Fish Camp – CPR Slip

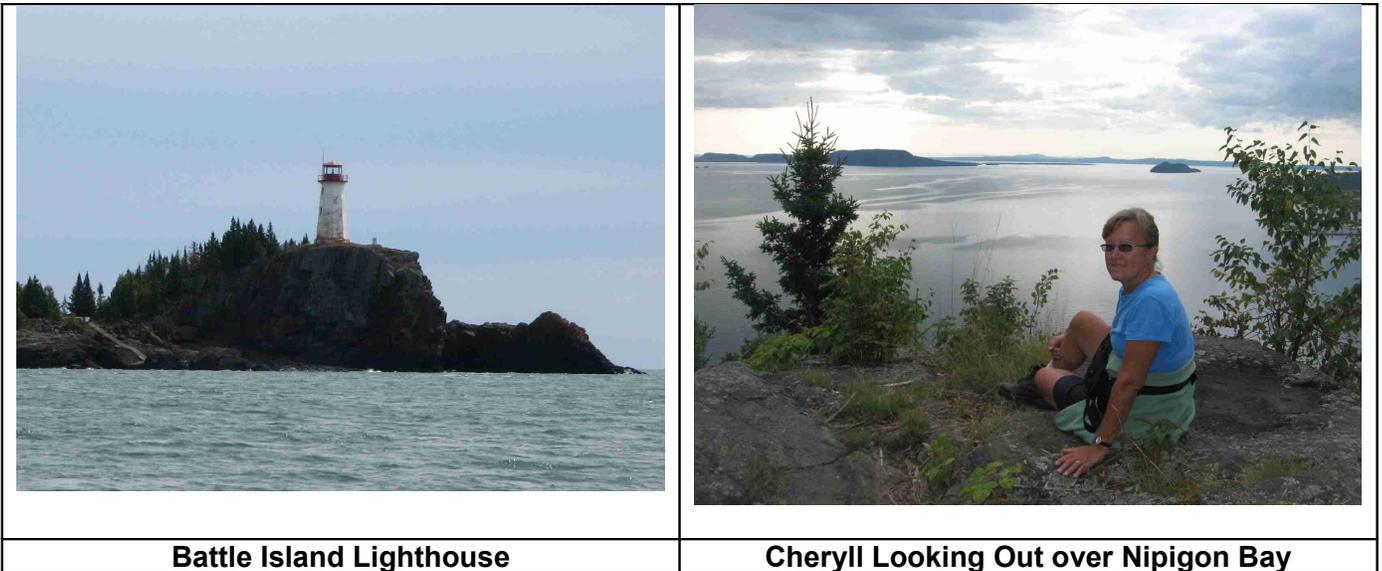


Rosspport Village Dock

After the winds abated, we pointed Roam toward the very remote out islands south of Nipigon Bay. It was risky, but we idled through the paths between the minefield of rocks using the local markers. We were a long way from help. The element of well-managed, calculated risk sharpens our senses and

makes the adrenalin flow. We did not hit anything and were treated to isolation and bright stars. In places, there were no other humans for miles and miles. A few days later we heard the Canadian Coast Guard calling a 43-foot cruiser in the passage that we had successfully navigated earlier. They had mistaken a stick for one of the informal channel markers and run up on a gravel shoal. It was some comfort to know that they were able to get pulled off with minimal damage in spite of grinding on the bottom for several hours.

The Nipigon area was our favorite stop. It's more rugged than the Pacific Northwest. Roam loves the fresh water and the people couldn't have been nicer. It is truly special to be in a place so remote, yet so friendly.



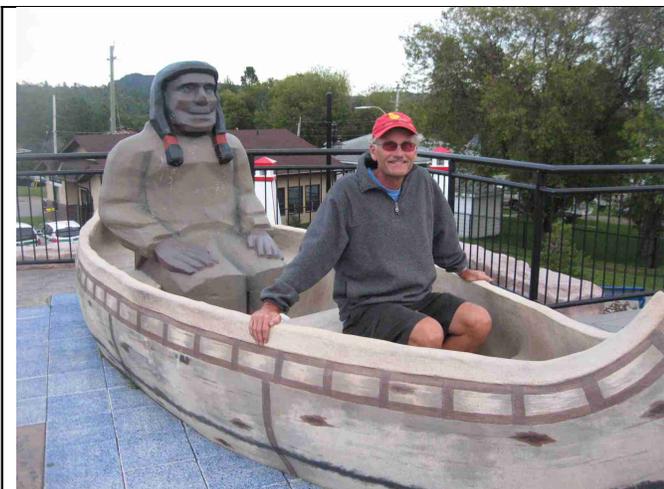
We returned to Nipigon after four days, but four days is not nearly enough to explore this vast area. Nipigon has two claims to fame; at 49 degrees latitude, it is the most northerly freshwater port in North America. It is also the origin of the “Paddle to the Sea” story. “Paddle to the Sea” is a 1941 book about a boy from Nipigon who carves a toy wooden Indian in a canoe with this inscription;

*“I am Paddle to the Sea
Please Put Me back in the Water”*

He then sends Paddle on an epic journey down the Great Lakes and out into the ocean. Paddle survives many encounters including ice, a snake, freighters, toxic sludge and a beaver that attempts to use Paddle as a chew-toy. In 1966, the Film Board of Canada sponsored a film version of the story. Rich was shown the movie multiple times in elementary school and can still recall some of the scenes. Perhaps this inspired his sense of adventure. Apparently, other people were also deeply moved by this story. It motivated them to spend over a million dollars to build a “Paddle to the Sea” park in Nipigon. The park has exhibits that retrace the story, and it comes complete with an oversized concrete canoe and artificial waterfall.

For the seventh and final time of our Lake Superior journey, we pulled Roam from the water in Nipigon. Rich lowered the mast and antenna, strapped her to the cold steel trailer and we three headed home. But as we crossed the border from Canada to Michigan, she quietly whispered;

*“I am Roam
Please Put Me back in the Water”*



Rich Hangs on for a Ride Down the Artificial Waterfall with “Paddle to the Sea”



Dee, Jim, Cheryl, Rich and the Boys' Toys at the Kewadin Casino RV Park

The balance of the trip was uneventful, with the possible exception of a US Customs official confiscating our yellow pepper. We caught up with Rich's dad and stepmother at the Indian Casino RV Park in Sault Sainte Marie on the way back, and then continued to our home in Sterling Heights.

Rich is heading to Nepal for an 18-day trek to Mount Everest base camp with three buddies in September. We plan to take Roam to Florida again this winter with a possible side trip to the Bahamas. Alaska is on the agenda for next summer.

Our world-wide trip reports are at:

<http://www.odendahls.com/>

The adventures of Roam can be found at:

<http://odendahls.com/roam/>