

Sent: Friday, April 24, 2009 11:12 AM

Subject: C-Life From Southport - "The Final Leg" - Well at least of this Adventure

It has been very difficult to write this final edition of our adventure around the Great Loop. While we have had many diversions since arriving home, the real reason is that this final edition really brings the whole event to a close, and as you can guess, that comes with mixed emotions. After approximately 6,500 miles, 107 locks, xxxx gallons of diesel fuel, \$\$\$\$\$ and untold numbers of new friends, we have arrived home in Southport, and therefore, this is the final leg and final log of our first Great Loop adventure.

After a couple days in Beaufort, SC, with *Bella Luna* and *Nightingale* it was on to Charleston. We had some really windy days while in Charleston but managed to work in a little excitement along the way. Gene, of *Nightingale*, and I made our way over to the location of the Loopers Rendezvous and were able to get Gene and Gail their first America's Great Loop Cruisers' Association (AGLCA) flag. While in Charleston we also made a trip to Fort Sumter, named for South Carolina Revolutionary War Patriot Thomas Sumter, and the location of the beginning of the Civil War. One of our dining locations while there was at a home cooking location called Jestine's Kitchen. Great food and great company made it a wonderful evening.

While making our way from Charleston to Georgetown, we crossed the South and North Santee Rivers. Most notable in this area are the large bays that once were large rice fields. The rice fields were fed by the freshwater coming down the rivers. Because of the freshwater coming down the rivers, it is also home to a large population of alligators. We were able to see two "gators" while crossing the rivers. Just south of Georgetown we saw two more bald eagles, one perched in a tree and one soaring high above. We were met in Georgetown by our middle son John, his wife Sharon, and their children Kylie, A.J., and Ivey. They traveled with us all the way back to Southport. While in Georgetown we visited a rice museum and learned a lot about the "Carolina Gold" that was a major crop of the area from around 1690 until the late 1800's. The rice from the Georgetown area was in demand worldwide. After the Civil War most U.S. rice production was moved to Louisiana and Texas where mechanized equipment could be used for harvesting.

Within an hour of leaving Georgetown, traveling up the Waccamaw River, we spotted another bald eagle. It was a real thrill for John and his family to see a bald eagle in the wild with us. This evening we anchored on the edge of the Waccamaw River with *Bella Luna*. After anchoring and putting the dingy in the water, John, the children and I just played around on the dingy. John, A.J., and I went dingy riding back in the cypress trees looking for alligators and were able to spot two. The "gators" would not let us get to close before they would dive under the water, not to be seen again. That evening for dessert Louis and Diane, of *Bella Luna*, prepared grilled Twinkies for all of us, complete with ice cream, chocolate syrup, whipped cream, and cherries. WOW! To entertain the children, Louis tied one of his Crocs (shoe) to a rope and threw it out the back of his boat and told the children that he was trolling for alligators. He had no bites! The next morning, still anchored on the Waccamaw, was Easter, and somehow the Easter Bunny made his way past all of the alligators with surprises for the children. Later in the day we boated to Barefoot Landing at Myrtle Beach and Sharon hid Easter eggs for the children to find. Oh, I didn't mention that the boats swung around several times during the night and the anchors and chains of *C-Life* and *Bella Luna* were quiet tangled.

At Myrtle Beach we dressed in western clothing with John's family and had an "Old Time Picture" made. What a hoot! The ladies were all saloon girls and guys were mean looking cowboys. A.J. caught a baby turtle while at Myrtle Beach which we kept on board for several days and Kylie and Ivey enjoyed greatly. He put the turtle back in the water as we were leaving though.

We caught back up with *Bella Luna* at Myrtle Beach Yacht Club, where one of their daughters met them with all four of their grandchildren, what a treat! That evening we all went to Calabash, where we had great seafood at Capt. Nance's Restaurant. At Calabash we were back in Brunswick County, North Carolina, very close to home, wow!

On April 15, 2009, it was our last day on the adventure! We left Myrtle Beach Yacht Club and crossed into North Carolina at 12:20 pm. At approximately 6,500 miles, with mixed emotion, we were happy and sad at the same time! We passed through the floating pontoon bridge as Sunset Beach just before 1:00 pm when a tug and barge had the bridge open for him. The pontoon bridge is being replaced with a 65 foot bridge and next summer will probably be its last season of operation. Just past Sunset Beach the Coast Guard came by on a Brunswick County Sheriff boat, questioned where we were coming from, and going to, and left us alone but boarded the boat just ahead and just behind us. That was the first time that we had been questioned by law enforcement the entire trip other than Canadian and U.S. Customs.

Our welcome home started just north of the Sunset Bridge with A.J.'s grandmother waving as we went by. Then Jerry and Ginny Harbica had a welcome party formed on the docks at St. James Marina. Next we were met by Bert & Becky Felton on their boat *Solomon T* a couple of miles south of home. We went past out home to marker 1, "crossed our wake" at 4:55 pm, where we put up our Gold Looper flag. Steve Simon paddled out in his kayak and met us in the harbor with a large "Welcome Home" sign. We were then greeted at the dock by our youngest son Jay and his family Ryan and Lindsay, and many friends, as we backed *C-Life* into the slip for the final dockage of the trip. The Champagne cork popped!

Holly Cow... What A RIDE! WOW!!!!!!

Life is not measured by the number of breaths you take; but by the things that take your breath away!

The whole Great Loop trip was one big breathless adventure. WOW!

Robert & Kay
C-Life

Photos: Jay's Family, Champagne toast, Kay & I with gold flag
Friends at the dock, Robert changing flags (white to gold), John's Family