

Sail Home through the Great Lakes



1. Washburn, Wisconsin
3. Houghton, Michigan
5. Port Sanilac, Michigan
7. Cleveland, Ohio

2. Ontonagon, Michigan
4. De Tour, Michigan
6. Windsor, Canada

The idea of sailing my newly purchased 32 foot sail boat home over approximately 1,000 miles through three Great Lakes was simply magnificent! The satisfaction penetrated deeply into the core of me. Why? I suppose the answer is as easy as: "It just did." Sailing is, I suppose, similar to rock climbing, back packing, flying, and even sky diving at times, "You just have to be there" in order to understand the satisfaction and thrill.

To be more pragmatic, one could argue that I should have spent more time to find a boat closer to home to purchase. Or I should have had the boat I did end up buying far away in Wisconsin trailered home over land. Or I should have waited until July when it was warmer to sail the boat home. But, no, instead, I packed my best winter clothes, bought a good set of foul weather gear and a safety harness, a few charts and books, and drove to Washburn, Wisconsin, and sailed Reminder home to Cleveland, Ohio in late May, 2001.

A few months earlier, I found Reminder (then Paragon) over the internet. A 32 foot sail boat, she is a 1964 Pearson Vanguard designed by Philip Rhodes.



Through the years, Pearson Vanguard had somewhat earned “an American classic” reputation. Reminder was well furnished, equipped, upgraded, and maintained--credit to the owner Paul Koch. After some negotiations with Paul, the bank, dealing with the surveyor, and a trip to see her, she became mine.

You see, I had been thinking about someday sailing around the world, including stopping in my birth land, Taiwan. The right size for a boat for two people to take this journey would range from 28 to 40 some feet, according to some experts. And if you travel with the trade wind in the Pacific as you would if you head west from America, a full-keeled boat would track well, also said the experts.



So Reminder, this sturdy, spunky, aesthetically pleasing, and in general well reputed sail boat came into my life.

Following is a recount of my journey sailing Reminder home from Washburn, Wisconsin on Lake Superior to Cleveland, Ohio on Lake Erie.

Thursday, May 17, 2001

In the afternoon, I packed everything into the van and started driving from Cleveland to Washburn, Wisconsin--a town on the southwestern shore of Lake Superior—where Reminder had been purchased. There I would start sailing Reminder home.

Friday, May 18

After driving all night from Cleveland, Ohio to the State of Wisconsin, at around 4 A.M., I pulled into a truck stop to take a nap. The nap was short but restful, and I woke up to sunshine feeling totally refreshed. The call from my wife Kim on the cell phone was what woke me. How fortunate to have someone who needed me and cared about me, I thought.

Looking around, this area of Wisconsin was clean, tranquil, and beautiful. “Today I am going to be peaceful and free,” I made a

wish. I prayed for awareness, strength, power, and guidance.

I drove past Ashland and arrived in Washburn in just a few minutes. Parked by the bay, looking at the water glittering under the rising sun, I sat listening to the gulls while gathering my thoughts. Again I prayed, visualized the journey home, and then planned the day.

Saturday, May 19

After my first night sleeping onboard Reminder, in the morning, we launched her.



Paul, the previous owner and I took her out on motor for one hour of brief sea trial and shake down. She was responsive and relatively easy to handle under power. After returning to the slip, we spent the rest of the day working on the rigging. Paul knew the boat well and we progressed at a satisfying pace. In the evening, I went with Glen Erickson to Pat's Bar around the corner from the marina. He was a new acquaintance I met earlier at the breakfast in a local restaurant. Over a couple of drinks, Glen told me all about his previous lives and his run-in's with the Republican heads in the State of Iowa.

Sunday, May 20

Paul and I continued to work on the rigging, mostly on the boomvang and the mainsail.



After a whole day of hard but interesting work, I went to a nearby port, Bayfield, for a bowl of delicious chili while watching sunset in a restaurant on the water. The sceneries were serene and surreal looking.

I began to miss Kim, children, friends, and my business.

Monday, May 21

I got up in the morning tempted to start the journey home immediately, as funds were getting low and pressure was mounting. But I already promised Richard Rosolek to go sailing in the afternoon. And sailing with Richard later, however, did turn out to be educational. We sailed to the nearby Madeline Island--good sailing in 5-15 knots of wind under an overcast sky. First time sailing Reminder, she behaved majestically under sail.



But on the way back the engine stalled out about 100 yards before the marina entrance. Anchored, we worked to bypass the fuel/water separator, restarted the engine successfully, and managed to get back in the marina safely.

After securing Reminder to the dock, Richard and I went out for drinks and conversations.

Tuesday, May 22

It was rainy and cold, and the lake water temperature was slightly above 32 degree F. But it was time to get underway. Feeling excited, I brought onboard the dock lines, put the engine in gear, and headed out of the marina.

The wind was a persistent 17 knots mixed with rain. Veered to port, into the wind, I raised the mainsail and jib. Then I turned to starboard while letting loose the sheets to head for the open water. But I did not loosen the jib sheet soon enough, Reminder continued to turn away from the wind. I hurried to let go the jib sheet entirely. But it was too late. The momentum continued to turn Reminder around into a jibe. The club footed jib swung forward of the bow and returned on the other side. We were in an accidental jibe! The boom swung hard

across cockpit and on its way it rammed into the boom gallows with great force. I heard a loud bang and saw the damage done to the wooden cross piece of the gallows. Worse yet, now I needed to bring the jib around the front and return it to the correct position by jibing in the opposite direction. Inexperienced and slightly panic, I allowed another forceful and uncontrolled jibe that damaged the other end of the gallows cross piece. Enough already!

Then, finally brought under control, Reminder sailed downwind through the misty channel between the islands into the open water. Speed was around 5 knots.

Soon, sun and blue sky peeked out which brought comfort. I tidied up the mid-deck and cockpit, and got a GPS fix of my location.



In the open water, with no sight of a human being within 15 miles of me, I suddenly had the urge of singing and shouting out the loudest I could. So I did. It felt silly but relieving.

Then I noticed a rainbow on the southern horizon, and, leisurely, I photographed it.

If you focus in at the center of the photograph below, then scan slightly lower past the skirt of the thicker cloud, perhaps you can see the rainbow.



It felt luxurious knowing that there were about one thousand miles ahead for me to sail and to explore. Yeah!

Soon night arrived, it grew colder. After all, the temperature of the water was barely above freezing. The moisture in my inner clothing began to feel cold. Meanwhile, the breeze was calming down.



Leaving Reminder to the auto pilot, I went below deck to find something to eat.

Wednesday, May 23

We sailed through the night, but towards early morning, wind laid down entirely. I centered and lashed the both sails, went below, and with all the clothes on including the foul weather gear, I curled into the doubled-up sleeping bags in the pilot berth. Warmer and tired, I fell deeply asleep.

Not long after--about three hours later, the popping and banging sound of the rigging awoke me. The wind picked up! I struggled out of the berth, unto deck, and set the sails.

It was sometime in the afternoon, wind turned more vigorous, and Reminder heeled over 15 degrees. Having been awake sailing and keeping watch almost all night last night, I decided to get into a safe harbor for a good rest and to make phone calls to let the folks know I was alright. So, from the charts, I picked Ontonagon, Michigan, on the southern shore for landfall.

After setting Reminder on the heading towards Ontonagon and left her to the auto pilot, I went below into the cabin to take a break from the watch. But, just as I felt relaxed and refreshed and took a peek forward over the companion way hatch, I was startled by the sight. We were headed straight towards a sandy beach! The water around the ship had already changed from blue to a yellowish color. Immediately, I jumped into the cockpit, disengaged the auto pilot, and quickly tacked away from the approaching shore. Once done, feeling relieved, I investigated the error and found the cause: A folly of mine--I had entered into the GPS chart plotter an erroneous waypoint for the auto pilot. We almost "steamed" aground. How embarrassing!

After correcting the heading, we returned to the port tack. Reminder heeled again approximately 15 degrees.

But, one thing after another, the excitement just kept on coming...I soon discovered water running on the cabin floor inside the boat. Why? Where did the water come from? But I hadn't time to find the answers as the water level in the bilge was rising at an alarming rate and I needed to do something about it fast. So I grabbed a bowl and began bailing. I bent over the bilge access, quickly and repeatedly scooped water out of the bilge, into a bucket, and emptied the bucket into the galley sink drain. Water was still running over the floor into the bilge, and the bilge continued to fill. The bilge pump was turning but no water was being pumped away. Meanwhile, Reminder was headed too close to shore again. I tacked to port, away from shore in order to buy time for solving the flood problem below. To my surprise, once tacking was done and Reminder heeled to the opposite side, the water accumulation below slowed down significantly.

I soon decided to start the engine and just head straight for the harbor. But now the engine hesitated to start. At times it would start, but it would run rough and soon stall out. Panic began to set in. But I concentrated on the tasks at hand in order to stay calm. I radioed the Ontonagon Marina to verify the availability of guest dockage and also requested assistance in case I needed it. "Yes, we have transient slips, and someone will be here," was the answer.

It took me a few more tries while uttering out loud desperate prayers before the engine finally started and stayed running. Relieved, I put the engine in forward gear, pointed Reminder into the wind, brought down the

sails, and then eagerly motored into the Ontonagon River that led to the marina.



By the time I entered the marina I was exhausted. Thankfully, with the guidance of a fellow sailor on shore, Reminder coasted safely into an empty slip and thus completed the first leg of the home bound journey.

Coincidentally, the helpful fellow sailor who guided me into the slip turned out to be another Pearson Vanguard owner, and his boat, identical to mine, was docked right next to me. You can see a portion of his boat just beyond Reminder in the photograph below.



Even more fascinating was that he, Jeff, only bought his Vanguard after visiting Reminder when Paul still owned her. In fact the two hulls were manufactured at about the same time.

Now in safe harbor, with 70 miles behind me, there is a lot of work to do before I cast off again, I thought to myself. When all the docking chores were done, I went below and turned on the soft music to relax. There, touched by the warmth of the music and security of the harbor, I caught myself beginning to cry and soon crying hard uncontrollably. Suddenly I realized how scared I had been in the last hours, and how much I now missed my familiar home.

In the marina, besides making phone calls, I made a plan for trouble-shooting and servicing Reminder tomorrow. Then I cooked myself a warm meal, took a much needed and invigorating hot shower, and turned in for an un-rushed night of deep sleep.

Thursday, May 24

Today was a day for boat work. I tightened all the thru-hulls that I thought may be causing the flooding yesterday. Then I took apart the bilge pump and removed a wood chip that clogged the intake valve. Now the bilge pump worked again. Next, the engine: I replaced all the spark plugs and changed the oil. It ran much better now.

By the time all the work was done, it was late already. I decided to stay in the slip one more night for another night.

Friday, May 25

I awoke feeling well rested. In the mid-day, after fueling up, I happily cast off despite the dense fog. Reminder and I motored and

motor sailed for an hour or so beyond the harbor into the calm and misty lake.



When the breeze picked up, we set sails to a following wind. Destination: Keweenaw Waterway of the Michigan Upper Peninsula, about 35 miles away.

We sailed through the night, and it was cold. In order to warm up, once I went below to the cabin, cooked a pot of instant noodles, and ate it immediately after removing from the stove at near boiling temperature. It did warm me up, for about half an hour anyway.

Not yet knowing celestial navigation, GPS was my only means for fixing the ship location while sailing at night far from shore. I had two GPS's for redundancy and error checking, great for the situation.

Saturday, May 26

After the long and cold darkness, I watched the eastern sky turn fish-belly white. Dawn was energizing, and to me it had always represented hope and security. Looking through the binoculars, the Keweenaw Waterway light house appeared in sight. Although fatigued, I was delighted with my progress and also looking forward to experiencing the waterway. In addition to a

potential rest stop opportunity which I needed, the waterway would bring a change of navigation environment to break from the monotony of the far-from-shore sailing.



I brought down the sails and motored past the entrance light into the waterway. I carefully marked off the buoys and lights on the charts as I progressed through the sometimes rather narrow river. The water was 20 feet or deeper inside of the markers, but would quickly become dangerously shallow otherwise. Having been sailing on the open water up to now, and having seen virtually no other boats on the lake for the last four days, I was touched by the scenery of the river banks lined with cozy looking houses, cabins, and cottages.



This would be the right place to find a dock and rest until my energy and restlessness surge again, I thought to myself.

After passing through the opened lift bridge which connected Hancock County on port and Houghton County on the starboard, I pulled into a transient slip in the Portage Lake Marina. I fueled up and connected the shore power. Here I would make telephone calls to the people awaiting my status update. Also, I needed to replenish my dwindling provisions and take care of couple of maintenance items. I missed Kim, Lian, Han, and Sister tremendously, much more than I ever thought I would. I couldn't help but choking up talking to Kim on the telephone.

Concentrating on the boat, I first worked on the cockpit scuppers, replacing the temporary duct tape repair I did while underway. The hoses for the drains had both cracked due to aging, and they were the primary reason for taking on water. Then I cleaned the bilge pump again and installed a strainer at the mouth of the bilge intake hose to prevent debris from entering the pump.

Then I went to shop for groceries. Without a means for transportation, I walked about 5 miles round trips on the hills for the bags of groceries. Walking felt good after the days on the water. When all the groceries were put away in the cabin, although exhausted, I was content. And after celebrating our progress with the taste of a Heineken beer, I fell into a deep and sweet sleep.

Sunday, May 27

Soon after rising in the morning, I caught a ride to a Kmart store for some additional supplies. To return to the marina, I was able to catch another ride from strangers. It was interesting that even the familiarity of the

Kmart store warmed my heart today. I guess I felt very alone, as though I was in a foreign country unable to return home. I prayed in order to feel better.

I was often emotional and tear filled when I thought of the people to whom I was close: Han, Lian, Jan, Brother, Sister, and Kim. They became symbol of warmth, security, nurture, peace, and regeneration. People that I missed tended to become perfect in my mind in my deep loneliness. I enjoyed the images of them because they were a sure source of positive energy to me--a treasure of solitude.

When ready, I left the marina around noon. Motoring downstream in the waterway, I again carefully checked off navigational aids on the charts as I passed them. But some channels had become narrow and in need of dredging. At one of the channel bends, Reminder went softly aground. But it's was alright, We were able to immediately back off into the deeper water and proceed on. Larger vessels did not use this route much anymore, according to the Coast Pilot published by the US Coast Guard.

In the waterway, I did sail past another sailboat going in the opposing direction. The person at the helm, presumably the skipper, waved warmly and deliberately to me. I naturally returned the same.

By the time we left the waterway and said goodbye to Keweenaw Bay, sunset spread her tranquil and colorful drama in the clear sky beyond stern.



We spent quite some time going north to avoid the shallow water which seemed shallower than the charts indicated. Then the darkness fell, wind picked up, and I raised the sails and shut off the engine.

Reminder and I sailed downwind through the night under a clear sky. Moon was bright and kept us in good company through much of the distance. I tried to capture it with the camera, but the image turned out to be a smudge because of the motion of the boat.



Monday, May 28

Dawn came and gone. Breeze was vigorous and the following seas were energetic. Still

going downwind, the ride was mostly comfortable, except that the auto pilot did require intervention in order not to wander into a jibe.



In the afternoon, we were headed for White Fish Bay. I was getting tired and engine would soon need refueling. So I looked for a marina along the southern shores and made radio contact to them. But none responded, either because they were out of the VHF range or simply no one was there.

At dusk, we rounded White Fish Point.

Finally, someone responded to my calls to the marinas. A Coast Guard Auxiliarist from Station Paradise hailed for me, about the White Fish Point Harbor. He told me that, contrary to what was said in the Coast Pilot, there was no longer fuel available in the marina, and no attendants either. "The marina had been overtaken by fishermen," he said.

So, no marina. I didn't know what to do now. I was tired and needed to rest. Engine fuel was low, and I wondered where I could find gas.

I didn't want to enter Soo Locks at night, especially it would be my first time entering a lock, and with no crew.

I thought about anchoring in protected water, get some rest, and then deal everything. But good anchoring spots seemed too far away, and wind was picking up and promised to continue to pick up according to the forecast.

Eventually I made up mind to just go ahead and go through the lock. I would trust and do my best, I thought to myself. I felt cold and tired.

So, in the Bay, by the Ile Parisienne Island, I turned around and dropped the sails, carefully staying out of the way of a freight ship. Then, charts and flashlight handy, Magellan GPS chart plotter zoomed in, Reminder and I motored toward the locks beyond the myriad of navigation lights.

All those navigation lights, seemed like hundreds of them, all meshed together in the darkness. The long channel leading to the locks was impossible to follow using the navigation lights. Sighted light numbers did not match the paper chart, which did not match the electronic chart.

But ships were gaining from behind, I had no choice but forging ahead. Sure enough, soon I lost track of the light numbers and could only rely upon the plotter display. Now my hunch became my primary guide.

Soo Locks' bright lights appeared increasingly brighter lighting up the skies and water. I felt safer. But guess what? Just as soon I was feeling relieved, Reminder gently came to a stop. Gee, we ran aground!

Although the lake bottom was soft, I just couldn't back her off the mud.

I know. I know. There were many tricks I could have tried to free myself from grounding. But all of them seemed monumentally difficult at this time--I was exhausted after 39-straight hours of sailing.

I was sort of happy with the break. After all, the boat was firmly cradled by the mud below, not going anywhere soon.

So, after alerting the lock master and Coast Guard about my situation, I crawled straight into my sleeping bags and dropped fast asleep, leaving the VHF radio on as requested by the coast guard.

Tuesday, May 29

About three hours later, soon after daybreak, I woke to the sound of someone knocking on Reminder. Three Coast Guardsmen arrived in a small Cutter. After trying in vain to tow me forward off the mud, they succeeded to pull me stern-wise off from grounding. Before leaving, they ensured that Reminder's rudder was not damaged, performed a quick vessel inspection, and filled out the paperwork. These guardsmen were courteous and helpful. Now free from the lake bottom, feeling grateful, I followed the Cutter into Soo Lock in the direction of the morning sun.

Over the radio, the lockmaster asked me of ship's nationality and then demanded that in the future an advanced notice be given for using the locks. Then he granted the entry.

In the lock, as the water level dropped through the twenty plus feet, I paid out the line while going fore-and-aft on deck to keep Reminder from hitting the wall. Shortly after, at the level of St. Mary's

River, the gate of the lock opened. I happily let go the line and motored out of the bck, completing my first passage, ever, through a lock.

Naturally, my first needs were the engine fuel, a paid phone, and a fire extinguisher that the USCG deemed necessary to avoid a citation. Right outside the lock, I pulled into a marina on the south side of the river, fueled up, and then hopped onto dock. Boy, did it feel good to step on land after underway for two straight days!

The marina manager was a former coast guard captain. A hospitable fellow, he drove me to the hardware store for the fire extinguisher that I needed. Then I talked on the phone with Kim's mom and again choked up several times. Come on. What's going on? I hadn't been that emotional for a long, long time. Was it loneliness, home sickness, fatigue, fear, gratitude for being alive, or all of the above? The strong emotions were similar to those of a soldier returning from a long war, it seemed.

Before casting off from the dock, I briefly exchanged greetings with some sailors who were passing through transferring a forty-plus feet sailboat north. It was a morale booster for me to see other sailors around.

Going downstream In St. Mary's River, I again stayed carefully in the dredged channel and visually checked off buoys against the charts. The route I took would become rather narrow at places. And at other locations, especially in the connecting lakes, choppy waves grew to four to five feet which made buoy sighting difficult. One of those waves even managed to splash into the cockpit from astern.

In this major commercial route, there were many large freighters crowding the channel

traffic. These freighters were immense and majestic.



Going in the direction of the current and wind, Reminder and I spent a reasonable ten hours motoring to the mouth of the river system where De Tour Village, Michigan sat. Beyond the village, Lake Huron could be seen. Wow, we were about to enter the second Great Lake of the journey!

Arriving at the De Tour Village, we aligned square with the marina entrance—this put us broad side to the incoming waves--and waddled our way into the De Tour Harbor Marina.

Inside, docks were largely vacant except the handful of boats. There was no dock master in sight. But a man & a woman moving on the dock asked out loud across the water “What do you need?” I told them I needed engine fuel and a transient slip. The breeze was quite alive, but with their assistance, Reminder was safely made fast to the gas dock.

The couple introduced themselves as Art and Beth. They complimented and marveled over Reminder and then warmly inquired about my trip itinerary. At the end, they generously invited me to enjoy dinner

with them onboard their sailboat, (name? length). I accepted the invitation and was quite touched by their hospitality.

I originally got into sailing for the aesthetic values: beauties and relaxation; and for the fact it could physically take me places. In any rate, the associated stress was not what I had in mind. But at this moment all I felt was stress and fatigue. Ever since casting off in Wisconsin, I had been feeling stressed about my personal finance and limited time in which the boat needed to be brought back to Cleveland. On a single handed sailing trip like this there was just no room for stress. So, since stress is a product of fear, I admitted to myself that I had to work harder managing my fears. I was humbled by the trip.

After washing and changing, I walked to Art & Beth's boat, named Diversion, a 34 feet Catalina. She was beautiful and roomy. Beth prepared the dinner in the galley while Art and I sat in the main saloon each entertaining a beer. I learned that they were from Grand Marais, Minnesota on the northwestern shore of Lake Superior. Art retired and Beth still taught in a school. They sailed the Great Lakes and now they were on the way to Chicago at southern end of Lake Michigan. Together they displayed such a comfort level towards cruising which I found pleasant and precious.

The dinner and conversations were just what I needed. The camaraderie gave me a sense of purpose again. After exchanging the contact information, I bid Art and Beth good night and was instantly ready to snuggle down in my berth and get a good sleep before sailing out to Lake Huron tomorrow morning.

Wednesday, May 30

Sun peeked through the thin clouds when I awoke in the morning, and the marine weather forecast presented no "show stopper" to my sailing plan. So I studied the charts slightly, fueled up Reminder, then happily cast off for the new leg of the trip.



Diversion followed me out of the marina as well. Her sails were up almost immediately whereas, with a crew half the size, I waited until well into open water on Lake Huron before pointing into the wind & hoisting the sails. Then I hailed for Diversion and exchanged the farewells.

Downwind, southeastward, over the clear and somewhat turquoise colored water under the occasional sunshine, sailing was smooth & relaxing. I even got to lounge a bit on the foredeck while the auto pilot steered.



Sailing was good all day, but eventually, sometime after midnight, the wind disappeared. So I centered both sails and crawled into the pilot berth to shed the fatigue.

Thursday, May 31

At the first sight of the daylight, I woke up cold in dampness. And it was still windless. So, in the interest of time, I dropped both sails & started the Atomic Four engine.

I went along a straight line towards the southern exit of the lake, Port Huron. But this put me closer to the freight routes. Sure enough, just as I really needed to excuse myself to the head, one freighter appeared at the starboard quarter. The potty run was urgent, so I had to manage that activity while maintaining the watch. The situation was ridiculous but funny, and it brought a smile to my face.

In the afternoon, wind finally picked up. Reminder first motor-sailed, and then became under full sails majestically.

Evening approached with rain as I tacked towards shore and contemplated a port to dock overnight. By examining the charts, Port Sanilac became the final choice. Quickly, I studied the depths, made radio

contact with the port, dropped the sails, and entered the harbor in the strengthening breeze. In the marina, we tied up at the fuel dock and filled up the almost empty fuel tank. Then, after a refreshing hot shower, I sat back and savored a tasty bottle of Heineken. Finally, while the wind and rain swirled outside, I fell into a deep sleep.

Friday, June 1

I woke up at around 6:40 A.M. According to the forecast a low pressure system was transiting through the area, bringing southeast wind to 25 knots and 6 foot waves.

Just as I finished up re-tying the dock lines to avoid rubbing against the piling, a 50 foot Hatteras pulled into the marina to wait out the rough weather. In order to accommodate this large power yacht, I moved Reminder to another slip.

My hands had been hurting. Many skin cracks had developed as the hands were put to vigorous deck work in the cold temperature and dampness. I decided to stay in the dock and hold over for a day before heading for Port Huron.

Located on the southwestern shore of Lake Huron, Port Sanilac was a small and charming town with a nautical heritage.



Because of the messy rain, I stayed inside the cabin. With the fire burning in the stove and music playing softly through the stereo, I rested and did house cleaning alternately.

Meanwhile, Sister Cindy & her son Lee drove one hundred-plus miles from Toledo to visit me. They arrived in the late afternoon as I longingly waited around the parking lot for them. Between hugging and kissing, I noticed Lee had grown taller again.

I couldn't wait to show Reminder off to them. Rain had stopped but the air temperature was still cool. So briefly we toured the deck before all stepped into the cozy cabin to visit inside. In my observation, Cindy liked what she saw and Lee was curious yet slightly claustrophobic being inside of a sailboat. Then, since it was dinner time, together we drove three miles to indulge ourselves with a Chinese buffet. Dining Chinese cuisine with Cindy was one of my top pleasures. I enjoyed the food, conversation, showered in the homey feelings & soaked in affection. But all these made the farewell afterwards a very reluctant one as it was getting late and they had to drive home. I knew that this visit would stay fondly in my memory for a long time.

When I got back into the warm cabin, sleepiness overtook me immediately. Resisting the faint urge to rekindle the heating stove, I climbed into the pilot berth and, with James Taylor's sentimental songs playing, fell into a peaceful sleep.

Saturday, June 2

In the morning, the marine forecast predicted rain and a head wind for me all day. Too impatient to sail, which would require tacking in the zigzag fashion, I

decided to just motor straight towards Port Huron.

Still James Taylor playing over the stereo, I started a long leg of motoring against the wind and 5 foot chops towards Port Huron, the southern exit of Lake Huron.

With the wind and waves right on the nose, Reminder moved ahead hesitantly, and from time to time, her speed would be stunned to near zero. So, to overcome the monotony of this long journey, I let the auto pilot take over the helm and began catching up with my journal entries in luxurious amount of detail.



It took us eight hours to arrive at Port Huron. Now 3:30 in the afternoon, I was tired, but uplifted by the fact that I had completed two out of the three Great Lakes in the itinerary. We were now in St. Clair River and its current carried us downstream. I diligently checked off the buoys & markers along the way in order to avoid grounding and going off to the wrong branches of the river. Soon, a thunder storm swept through which sent me scurrying to tug away the books, put on the rain gear, and zip down the center panel of the dodger. And I contemplated on a mooring on the river.

While enjoying the sights and pleased with the distance thrown behind, suddenly I found us about to push into Lake St. Clair in the late afternoon. As night would soon fall, I hesitated to go on because this would put us in the narrow and unfamiliar channels ahead in the darkness. Nevertheless, with spirit flying high and motivation to go home pushing hard, I pressed on and we slid into Lake St. Clair.

The lake was shallow except inside the dredged freight lane within which I carefully stayed. The lane was marked by navigation aids, the usual markers, buoys, and lighted buoys. But these aids were spaced far apart from one to the next. As dusk and light rain set in, it grew increasingly strenuous for me to sight them. To overcome, I stood up on the cockpit seats to scan farther over the waves for them. I did this plus referencing the depth finder reading in order to stay in the deep water lane. When darkness came I noticed two tall and bright range lights far ahead. These lights were extremely useful to me because they were tall and bright, plus most importantly, when I aligned them in a single line of sight, my position would be in the middle of the straight channel. My eyes cling onto these two lights and my attempt became a lot easier task to stay inside the channel.

Though, all of sudden, I felt the stern lifted and a towering, dark, metallic wall approached my starboard stern. Glancing aft along this wall I quickly realized that this immensity was a freighter ship whose bow was now so close up to me that I couldn't even see her stern. My mind forgot to panic but, instead, it concentrated on steadying Reminder and moving away quickly from the giant. No harm was done. The ship, a few hundred feet long, steam passed me on the starboard side. As she moved ahead of me, her towering bridge plainly blocked

those useful range lights from me. That left me with no option but reverting back to standing on the cockpit seats and straining to find the next lighted channel markers. The depth finder quickly became my life line at times such as this.

I cautiously entered the Detroit River in the darkness and occasional rain. My energy began to dwindle. According to the chart, there were shoals everywhere. But now it was too dark to read the numbers off the buoys, and I lost the ability to locate my position precisely. So I stayed in the middle of the river as much as possible as I continued my way into the river with Detroit on my starboard and Windsor, Canada, to port. Million lights from both cities overwhelmed my vision. Most memorable of all, the big, lighted, red "CASINO" sign was relentlessly bright on the Windsor side.

What should I do? I was indecisive between continuing on through the river towards Lake Erie and finding a marina nearby to tie up for the night. Weather forecast on the radio called for a maximum of 25 knots wind blowing upriver. I had heard that wind in this direction--going against the river current--could stir up high waves at the mouth where the river flows into the lake. I didn't quite feel energetic enough for this potential roughness. But on the other hand, where were the marinas nearby? I had tried to contact them before entering the river but received no replies. I contemplated and circled in the river stalling for more time to figure out what to do next.

I radioed the coast guard to get a recommendation for a harbor of refuge. But who would have guessed that, long and behold, while distracted by the radio communication, I steered too close to the Canadian shore and wandered onto another

grounding--right in front of that relentlessly large, bright, and red "CASINO" sign.

And once again I was dog tired to try to get myself off the grounding. Not wanting to be an obstacle to the busy freighter traffic, I hailed on the radio for assistance.

Soon a tow boat obtained my position and showed up a few minutes later. The captain skillfully and swiftly dragged me off the mud and then led the way to a dock in Windsor where, in relief, I tied off for the night.

Sunday, June 3

Waking up in good spirit because of the anticipation of entering my home lake--Lake Erie--soon, I replenished the engine fuel & cast off. Detroit River would be the last body of water before Lake Erie. Home, home, home, home!

The weather and the river current were both good, so Reminder happily steamed into Lake Erie before noon. Hooray! I felt at home the first time in two weeks.

As soon as we got far enough away from the river mouth and into the deeper water, I pointed Reminder into wind and hoisted the mainsail. The mainsail was fully up alright, but something didn't look right--the boom had popped out of the track on the mast and began to bang on the mast in the wind!

In horror, I quickly dropped the sail and tried to return the boom to its track. But I knew that in the direction we were heading there wouldn't be much time left before the water became too shallow. Reluctant to change course, I moved fast to remedy the problem. As the water color changed and my inner layers of clothing soaked in sweat, I managed to finally return the heavy

wooden boom back to its track. Quickly, next, I tied down the boom to prevent the problem from repeating, hoisted the sails, and jumped back into the cockpit. Then, one after another, I un-latched the steering from the autopilot, turned Reminder to the desired heading, put the engine gear on neutral, adjusted the sheets; and just as the water turned dangerously muddy color, ah, with a gentle sigh of the bow splash, Reminder majestically sailed towards the deep.

Smoothly, we glided through the many islands and headed for Cleveland.



The breeze was optimum and constant, so the autopilot soon feed me to below deck for cleanups in preparation for landfall. I straighten up the saloon, wiped down most surfaces, and I even had time for a personal grooming session in preparation for arriving in Cleveland—a home never sweeter!

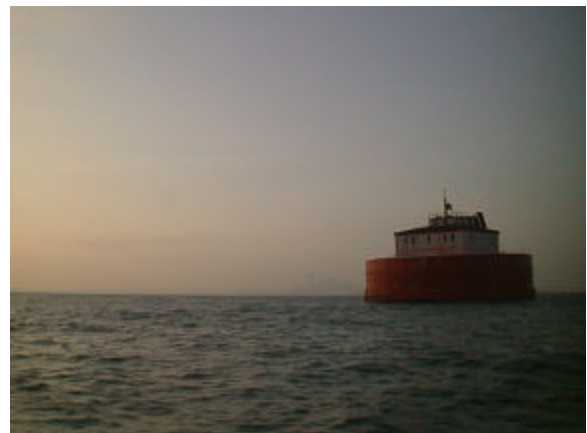
At twilight, the City of Lorain appeared at the bow. And when the mirage-like, thousand points of light lit up on the shores, wind picked up. We went as close as we comfortably could towards the city of Lorain before tacking north. Exciting and playful sailing! Reminder heeled a comfortable ten degrees to port while I manned the helm.

Catching each scoop of wind, Reminder would break the water and rushed on at a speed of near six knots. In the darkness of the night, Reminder and I joyously played with the wind and water. Later, deeper into the night when the breeze lightened, I went below to cook a satisfying hot meal to energize and warm up myself.

Monday, June 4

In the early morning hour when the wind calmed down to none, I reefed the sails and turned on the engine. Tired but spirit held high, Reminder and I headed straight in towards Cleveland. Initially, in the morning fog, I had to keep a steady eye on the profile of the city in order to stay on the right heading. But soon, the rising sun evaporated the fog, and I could leave Reminder to the autopilot and go on deck to get things ship-shape for entering the home port--Edgewater Marina.

Going past the city water intake, called, “the crib,” I began to feel as though I was passing the last telephone pole before the door to my long missed home.



I radioed the marina and, after practicing backing up Reminder in the adjacent, more

open water, we entered the Edgewater Marina.

We pulled up to the empty gas dock and tied securely to the piling. Standing on deck, in the slightly damp and nippy morning air, I let the notion set in that we have finally arrived home after two weeks of sailing through the three Great Lakes.

I phoned Kim to surprise her with my arrival. With a cry of cheer, she hung up the phone and quickly drove to the dockside. Holding her in my arms was one of the most satisfying moments of my life.

Here in Edgewater Marina of Cleveland, we would be home resting and playing for awhile before the next long voyage.

Now, two years later, in the Edgewater Marina, we have made many close sailor friends.



We sail together nearby and farther to the islands. We fish in the lake for the steelheads, walleye, and the delicious perch. We help each other on matters of wide spectrum, and furthermore, together we dream and plan for the future.

Wife Kim has been learning to enjoy sailing.



And, despite the two thunderstorms in which we were caught sailing, she is slowly becoming more and more relaxed and knowledgeable of the nautical and sailing life.

For us, activities on the lake include the plain sailing to enjoy the peaceful and powerful interaction of wind and water, we also gunk hole to enjoy the many cruisers' funs such as visiting dock side restaurants, pubs, and concerts. Another activity that we enjoy is fishing off Reminder. I remember the good time when Daughter Lian spent the whole day fishing with me for Perch.



The catch was good that day and time alone with her on the water was dear, peaceful, and fun.

Again, here in Edgewater Marina of Cleveland, we would rest and play for awhile before the next long voyage, perhaps to the tropics, or perhaps to the entire world.

Note:

I want to thank Dick Sharp for teaching me sail, Paul Koch for instilling my confidence to sail Reminder (then Paragon) home, Bob Paulin for tracking my progress during the journey, Jenise Veris for reporting the feat at the work place, and all the friends and the family for the endless encouragement and patience.