

Marblehead Lighthouse Cruise

The long awaited Northern Ohio Wayfarer get together cruise took place June 28th. It was not easy planning as the lack of decent and settled summer weather this year has kept many small boating people off Lake Erie. June 21st, the original date for the get together, was the day northwestern Ohio made national headlines because of damaging thunderstorms and large scale flooding. Needless to say our sailing activity was canceled. A week later the nasty weather pattern persisted hanging over northern Ohio. One of our local weathermen, a gentleman of considerable age and following around here, referred to the condition as a meteorological cesspool. Nevertheless, when the agreed upon fallback date arrived things were looking better even though the weatherman was still offering up the likelihood of afternoon thunderstorms. Be prepared to reef I said.

The 10:00 AM gathering at Dempseys small boat access on Sandusky Bay consisted of Joe & Mary Trepal along with Margie and me. Dennis Figley, who had made the long drive up from Ashland the previous week in spite of the bad forecast, couldn't make it this time. However, he was present in spirit. The Bakers and Palacs were unable to attend. The sky was clear and blue. The waters of Sandusky Bay were ruffled by a light but steady southerly breeze and shimmered reflecting the bright morning sun. Nothing could have been sweeter than the gentle warming of the sun accompanied by the gentle breeze. Not to be fooled by such heavenly surroundings we planned to be cautious.

The original grand plan had been to sail to the beach on the south side of Kelleys Island. There we would anchor the boats, wade ashore and enjoy a nice mid-afternoon meal at one of the island's half dozen eating establishments. Then we'd sail back. However, this was an ambitious cruise that demanded ideal conditions. With the wind being light and the forecast of likely afternoon thunderstorms, we decided it would be wise to adopt a shortened plan. This was quickly and easily resolved as the park at the Marblehead Lighthouse on the end of the peninsula is a delightful and picturesque destination well worth visiting. The 12 statute miles to Kelleys had been shortened to 7 miles to the small stony cove that lies just north of the lighthouse. It was many years since I last landed at the cove while none of the others had ever been there. Everyone was excited with a new sense of adventure.

By the time we were on the water the wind had picked up to around 10 knots and we were making enjoyable speed. In a short time we rounded the southern tip of Johnsons Island and were heading east for the channel bisecting the big sandbars lying between Bay Point and Cedar Point. In between chart reading and searching for channel buoys, watching the high flying rides at Cedar Point Amusement Park kept us well entertained, evoking various exclamations of "Dick--look!" from Margie. Sloughing off on the navigation didn't pay, however, as we found that trying to cut corners at some turns in the channel resulted in a bit of dragging *Blue Mist's* underwater blades in gravel. There was no real danger of damage though. By now the wind was on our transom and sailing was especially pleasant and relaxed.



Joe & Mary sailing *Tomato Sloop*

Having passed Bay Point and out of the tricky part of the dredged channel, we swung onto a northerly heading for the number 2 red nun marking Bay Point Shoal. Clearly visible standing on a distant point dead ahead stood Marblehead Light. Beyond was the south shore of Kelleys Island. One hour and forty-five minutes after leaving Dempseys we dropped our anchors in the rocky cove at Marblehead Light, waded ashore and enjoyed a delightful picnic lunch. The lighthouse and the surrounding grounds are very pretty.



The Trepals off of Marblehead Lighthouse



The cove-- Margie on *Blue Mist*-- Joe & Mary



The lighthouse grounds--Dick, Margie and Joe

After about an hour and a half it was mid-afternoon and large banks of cumulous clouds were building to the west. The nice southerly breeze that brought us there had clearly picked up several knots and was turning gusty. It was time to leave. The sail back was a little livelier and wetter, with an occasional wave over the foredeck, than the ride over but was much fun. It only took an hour and a half to cover the seven miles back, even with a portion of it being a beat. By 5:30 PM the boats were packed up and we were on the road to dinner when Joe & Mary picked up this warning over their weather radio—"This is a weather alert! A severe thunderstorm with winds up to 30 knots is expected to hit Kelleys Island at 6:00 PM. All boaters should get off the lake and seek shelter immediately."

We had just been seated at our table next to the window at the *Red Clay Restaurant* on the Vermilion River when the storm hit. The big yachts in the slips across the way suddenly rolled sharply to the left, as if they were no more than dinghies, and the dirt parking lot disappeared in a thick cloud of red and brown dust. Then, what's this!

Pandemonium breaks out on the pier. One of the yachts has broken loose and is bearing down upon its neighbors. A frantic team of sailors struggles mightily to tame the monster, but they appear to be losing the battle. Now a new scene develops. A beautiful sleek black yacht, a Tartan-10 under bare poles and outboard motor, has run in off the lake and is barreling down the narrow channel at way too much speed. We all hold our breath as the skipper throws the helm over and this race horse bolts into its slip. Several strong arms grab at piles and posts as they whip by trying to break the impact of the bow against the pier. But from our observation point we think there is some damage.

We saw the power of the storm and it's a sobering reminder to us. The four Wayfarer sailors happily raise a glass to toast our good fortune to have enjoyed a great day on the lake together. It is agreed by all that the view from our table was the best way to "enjoy" the storm.

DICK & MARGIE

----- Original Message -----

From: Joe Trepal

To: Richard C Harrington

Sent: Sunday, July 02, 2006 6:38 PM

Subject: **Marblehead Light House Cruise**

Hi Dick and Margie,

Thanks again for planning a wonderful sail. Mary and I had a great time and are looking forward to another Ohio get-together. Good luck to *Blue Mist* and all the other Wayfarers at the Cedar Point Rally.