



Puddle Duck leaving Port  
Credit Yacht Club

# PUDDLE DUCK

## Maiden Voyage - ICW to Florida

*When did the love of boats begin? Was it visits to small harbours in Wales as a small boy where vessels lay on their side in the mud at low tide only to rise again as the tide changed - or was it the smell of tar and fish that accompanied the fishing fleet at the dock? Perhaps it was the adventures described in Arthur Ransom's "The Swallows and the Amazons." As a child, a wooden box in the garden was the boat and the lawn was an ocean to be explored.*

Ken Harry and Jean Walker

In the sixties and seventies "the box" grew into a 30 foot Trojan kept in Lefroy Harbour where a young family explored Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay. Pressures of business and teenage children with their own interests put an end to boating - or so I thought. Forty years later in 2010 a son now in his fifties went and bought a boat and asked his 75+ father and stepmother to visit the 2011 Toronto Boat Show with him. The Ranger Tug caught our eye and we spent an hour or so reminiscing about my boating days with the Lefroy sales representative. Oh if only that boat had been around 40 years ago because it offered everything one could ask for. Oh well, with age one can still dream. Eight months later and out of the clear blue sky, my wife Jean suddenly turned towards me from her arm chair (by the

way she had never boated in her life) and announced that we should buy that Ranger Tug and take some cruising adventures! It would stimulate our minds, bodies and social interactions. Three weeks later in Oct 2011 we were committed to buying a Ranger 29 for Spring delivery. The winter was filled with study and research and many visits with the folks at Lefroy to prepare the boat for the coming season. This was to be a cruising boat, NOT a floating cottage. Oops an umbilical hernia and a total knee replacement put a small crimp in our plans but the objective was that we sail our boat, The Puddle Duck from Toronto, Ontario to Stuart, Florida in the Fall of 2012 and nothing was going to stop us. We knew that we must travel some 2300 miles to get there, but with good planning and the



Lefroy and Ranger Tug people to back us up, it could be done.

Thanks to Ryan Stovold, John Dawe and Stan Messenger at Lefroy, Harbour Resorts Boating Instructor Dusty Miller in Toronto and Andrew Curtis at Ranger, we gained a working knowledge of the boat during the summer, but quickly realized that The Atlantic Ocean and the ICW may require a little more knowledge than we possessed.

Enter Captain Patti Moore of Sea Sense, a Florida company specializing in boat handling instruction who we engaged to provide us with a teaching delivery. We handled the boat and she was there to ensure we did so in a safe and professional manner. She also took a fair share of the watches because we were on a fast track to Florida and would not normally push a six to seven hour day on the water day after day. We rotated duties from the helm to the navigators seat to a break on the back deck every one and a half hours amongst the three of us. The break on the back deck usually involved providing refreshments to those on the bridge as required. On our own we would shorten our travel hours, or take days off to explore the many places we visited on our route.

We left The Port Credit Yacht Club on Sept 10 2012 and headed for Coburg to overnight before crossing Lake Ontario to Oswego NY and the Erie Canal. Everything was new and the challenges of handling the boat in current and wind while waiting for locks to open, holding it in a lock when other boats lost control, steering around construction barges and dredging equipment, quickly taught us to become one with our boat. With no previous experience at the helm, Jean soon figured out the differences between a car and a boat and her wake became straight when it should be and followed the curves in the canal when it had to. We were having fun!!!

Six days and forty two locks later, we entered the Hudson River through the Troy Lock and encountered our first bout of bad weather. We spent the night in Terrytown, and then made a quick run down the Hudson to Liberty Landing Marina in New Jersey just before the weather really deteriorated. The sights on the Hudson, including West Point and our first encounter with seagoing cargo ships left us in awe that we were actually sailing our own

boat in this exciting new world.

The date was now Sept 18 th and we had been traveling for eight days. We then returned to Toronto to attend to the home front and Patti went on to teach and give seminars in Baltimore. We will all rejoin the boat two weeks later to continue on our way, looking forward to tackling the New Jersey Coast - but we were in for a surprise with what the sea would throw at us and our new Ranger Tug!

We set out from New York on the morning of October 6th bound for Cape May. The weather forecast was good and we believed we could get to our destination in comfort. Ellis Island

and the Statue of Liberty passed by our window as we dodged the various ferries crossing the Harbour. Suddenly we are in the Atlantic with nothing between us and Europe. We are alone in a very big ocean, and our only connection with the North American continent is centered on our GPS Chart-plotter and a pre configured set of waypoints. This is it. The New Jersey coast sinks into the horizon as we head south.

In the late morning, we noticed that the sea had taken on small waves and soon larger white caps began to appear as the sky was darkening rapidly to the north. As the sea built, we quickly



Sunken shrimp boat on the way. Jean casting off, wondering what the heck are we doing?





*Sites along the ICW: Clockwise;*  
Tybee Island Lighthouse, near Savannah Georgia, the Erie Canal Lock with owner, Ken Harry at the helm. Palm trees and reflections, in Titusville Yacht Basin, Titusville Florida; docked at Chesapeake Inn, Chesapeake and Delaware Canal; Christmas tree on board the Puddle Duck, and what's left of the lobster!



changed our destination to Atlantic City. By now the sea was producing seven foot waves and The Puddle Duck seemed to be enjoying herself. We were not !! Anything that was not firmly tied down, including the passengers, quickly made way to the deck. Can a Ranger 29 handle 7ft seas – yes it can. Can the crew aboard – no it can't.

Head for a safe haven if the forecasts go sour. Always have a plan B in your mind should you need it. We were learning fast; gaining the confidence to accommodate mother nature's whims and fancies which forecasts can't always predict. It was hard going to get to the dock that day, but we certainly experienced what it takes to handle a boat in a heavy sea!

We crossed the Delaware Bay and transited the C&D Canal on Oct 11th and cruised down the Chesapeake on Oct 13th and 14th. Although we had studied our charts and read several cruising guides prior to the trip the sheer size of these bodies of water couldn't be anticipated. Plotted courses on the Chart-plotter, waypoints, a periodic record of our position kept on paper charts and checked off visual sightings of navigational aids cut "water water everywhere" down to size, and we realized we knew where we were *and* where we were going.

The weather improved to the point where the sun was shining and the winds were light. We entered the Inter Coastal Waterway (ICW) in Norfolk Virginia on October 14th and looked in amazement at the vessels in the Naval yards as we passed them by.

On the horizon, still yet far away, lurked Hurricane Sandy. It sat in our minds and the planning began. We studied every weather and hurricane source we had at our disposal. This is where the NOAA VHF broadcasts and the many weather Apps available on the iPad and internet come into their own. It appeared that

*On the horizon, still yet far away lurked Hurricane Sandy. It sat in our minds and the planning began.*

anywhere north of Georgia, and anywhere south of it could spell trouble for us, so we headed for a safe haven in Georgia and found it at Thunderbolt Marina. We stayed at the dock for 7 days and Hurricane Sandy passed us by.

Thunderbolt Marina has a wonderful tradition – every morning boats in residence receive a morning newspaper *and* a box of Krispy Kreme donuts compliments of the house. Now that's hard to beat!!!

We took the time to explore the city of Savannah, enjoying an abundance of southern hospitality. This may be the right time to comment on the Ranger Tug as a cruising boat with three people on board, one of whom, Patti, we had only just met. Of course the chemistry must be there in close quarters, but none of us felt confined within the boat's 29 feet. Jean and I occupied the forward cabin and Patti, the aft stateroom. We each could find a corner to retreat to at the end of a day for some private time. Sharing one head was never a problem, as the boat has been well designed to live on board for long periods of time. She trundles along quite happily at 8 to 12 knots, but can get up and run at 17 knots when it is called for! Of course it is a fuel/time trade off but when you "gotta go" she will!!

Oh by the way, when you own a Ranger Tug, be prepared to have lots of visitors at each dock you visit. They all drop by to see that neat looking boat and want to know more about it. We began to think that we should produce a video that describes its attributes that we could play each time we were asked about it. Many of our visitors commented that with

passing years they were beginning to think of downsizing their boats in order to extend their boating lives in comfort. Two seventy year olds and a well designed boat like "Puddle Duck" heading for Florida seemed to convince them that anything was possible, given the right equipment !!

The miles slip by each day and our destination comes ever closer. Our lifestyle has changed. Up and underway with the sun, find a marina for the night which can be reached in six to seven hours of cruising, dock, fuel, check the boats vitals (oil, coolant etc), decide what and where to have dinner, plan for tomorrow and off to bed. By the way, again, we always kept our eye on the weather. Quote from Patti as founder and President of Chickens of The Sea. "We won't get ourselves into trouble if we respect Mother Nature's weather patterns."

By now we have had dolphins swimming along with us and crisscrossing our bow, we have seen manatees, bald eagles and pelicans. We even had a nuclear submarine (well escorted ) pass by our cabin windows. We are alive and challenged, and quite enjoying ourselves!

We reached our destination, Stuart Florida, on November 6th. This will be our home base for the winter of 2012/13. Our plans are to visit the west coast of Florida through Lake Okeechobee and perhaps even The Bahamas before heading north again in the spring.

Best of all Captain Patti Moore now believes that my wife and I are well qualified to handle our Ranger Tug as a team and she is confident that we have acquired the skills to bring the Puddle Duck back home or wherever we may wish to cruise in the future. We must thank and compliment her for being such an excellent teacher. We must also say, yet again that our security on the water is enhanced by the ongoing support *continued on page 17*



CRUISING APPS

During the winter of 2011 we undertook extensive research, as boating neophytes, to determine what additional equipment we might need to increase the odds for a safe passage. The Ranger 29 came equipped with a Garmin 5215 chart plotter , a Garmin radar unit , and a Garmin auto pilot. To this basic equipment, we had Lefroy Harbour add a Garmin weather satellite antenna and a Garmin AIS transceiver, both of which feed information to the Chartplotter. The chartplotter is driven by Garmin Bluechart G2 vision chips. We also chose to carry the appropriate Waterway or Ports cruising guides, and paper charts or chart books.

Long before we started boating, we were great fans of iPads and made use of them in our daily living. Much to our delight we found that there was a wealth of marine applications available at the Apple store. We use the wi-fi + cellular version of the iPad supported by a Roger’s Sierra Wireless Air Card LTE Mobile Hotspot, to provide connectivity while under way. This worked well throughout the cruise.

General



The GOODREADER APP - Downloaded and carry all boat manuals

Weather and tide information

- INTELLICAST HD APP - provides excellent North American coverage including detailed NOAA Marine forecasts for coastal and Great Lake waters
- On line GOVERNMENT OF CANADA Marine Forecasts

The following iPad apps and sources have become an integral part of our cruising life on the water - Ken and Jean on “Puddle Duck”

NOAA RADAR PLUS APP (provides some Canadian content )

- AYE TIDES XL App



Navigation

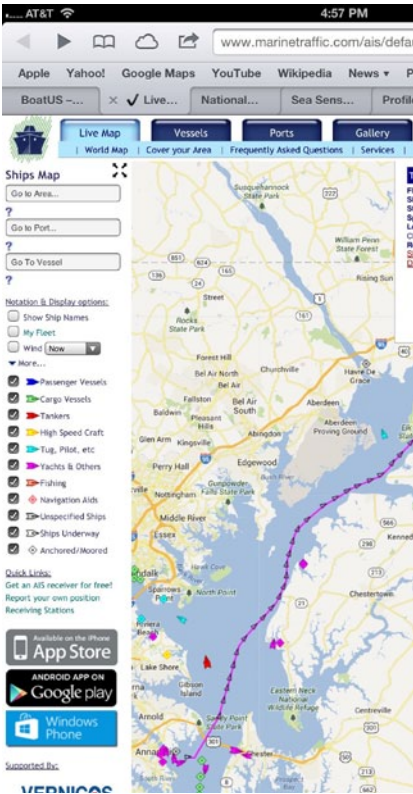
• GARMIN BLUE CHART APP which can be wirelessly connected from iPad to Chartplotter. The App permits access to ‘Active Captain’ a ‘can’t live without feature’ and which integrates with displayed charts and acts as a interactive cruising guide



INAVX APP which permits the purchase and display of all charts published by the Canadian Hydrographic Service. These charts are purchased on line from Fugawi X-Traversal and viewed in the App on the iPad

- CHARTS AND TIDES APP which also provides access to Active Captain information
- NOBELTEC TIME ZERO NAVIGATION APP, which provides seamless access to Raster Charts Canada Mega Wide and Raster Charts NOAA USA Mega Wide.

• DELORME EARTH MATE APP which is driven wirelessly by a Delorme Inreach Satellite Communicator. This device provides SOS capability as well as limited messaging service for family and friends. It can track your course and provide those whom you have invited to find your position upon request which is displayed on a map. This provides a useful method of “keeping in touch” as well as a back up SOS capability.



• MARINE TRAFFIC SHIPS AND WIND APP, which can receive position data from [marinetraffic.com](http://marinetraffic.com). You can set up your boat under the heading of “my fleet” which will provide critical information for your boat as well as its position. The information is gathered by Marine Traffic from the onboard AIS transceiver via a network of shore stations. It is possible to provide you own position via the internet in the absence of such stations.

we receive from the Ranger Tug team – from the manufacturer to the dealer network – they are always there for their customers.

Not bad for two, well over seventy year olds, would-be newbie cruisers, eh!!!

Unfortunately our cruising plans in Florida during the winter of 2012-13, were cut short by an urgent knee replacement for Jean in February 2013. Nevertheless, bionic Jean was back on Puddle Duck to begin our trip north on April 7th, 2013. Jean was still in recovery mode, so Captain Patti Moore, accompanied us to compensate for the healing knee. As the trip progressed Jean was able to pull her weight on ALL on board duties. We arrived back in Lefroy Harbour on June 27th 2013 However, that is another story. Jean required more major surgery in 2013 so our cruising plans were put on hold for the season.

We are bound and determined to complete the Great Loop and intend to depart Lake Simcoe in late July 2014 heading for Georgian Bay and the North Channel. We will attend a Ranger Tug Rendezvous in Little Current in early August. Then onto Lake Michigan, Chicago, and the

Mississippi system. We will use the Tenn-Tom to reach Mobile and we will “cross our wake” in Stuart Florida sometime during the winter of 2015. Given our age, the weather and our continuing health, that is our plan. See more on the Lefroy Ranger Tugs in this issue.



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