

The Bullship Log

Newsletter of the Rockford Yacht Club



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Contact phone: Allen 815-874-9604
Website: www.RockfordSailing.org
Meeting Location: Harlem Township Hall
819 Melbourne Ave.
Machesney Park, IL

No Meeting at the township hall this month

RYC Calendar of Events

Sailing Season Kickoff Party

April 25th @ 6:30 p.m.

We will celebrate our "Sailing Season Kick-off" party at Nick and Gayle Scheuer's elegant home - 233 N. Calvin Park Blvd., Rockford 815-398-5640
Bring a dish to share. Pop, wine, beer provided.

Adopt A Road - Saturday April 19, 7:00 a.m.

Meet at Harlem & Arglye Road to help with the clean up of our adopted road.

Contact Ann Aylesworth: annandpreston@yahoo.com
or home: 815-624-6353

Earth Day Celebration RYC will have an exhibit (table & sm. boat) along with many other earth friendly exhibitors at the **Spencer Conservation Area**, N. Appleton Rd., Belvidere, on Saturday April 26th from 1:00 to 4:00. Set up time 11:30 to 12:30. Volunteer to help spread the word and sign people up for A Taste of Sail. Contact Ann Aylesworth or Allen Penticoff.

Flotillas

May 17th @ Lake Geneva with NWSA

Contact Dick Spears 815-923-4374 or rlspears@owc.net

Lake Mendota - Memorial Day weekend, May 24-26

Contact Allen Penticoff 815-874-9604 or apenticoff@comcast.net

A Taste of Sail 2008 **June 14th & 15th @ Pierce Lake**, plan to bring your boat and take some people sailing. This event has been a lot of fun for skippers, passengers and helpers. Do plan on it. We have taken the fact into consideration that the 15th is Father's Day. Some "fathers" might be interested in sailing on "their" day. Maybe you're one of them.

The commodore has missed his deadline. So I'll insert a few words this month.

Some of us have either actually set sail on our lakes between the rains, or on these warm windy days this week, wistfully dreamed of sailing. Well - the sailing season is upon us at long last.

To the left in the calendar are plenty of opportunities to go sailing, help introduce people to sailing or otherwise hang out with sailors. No excuse to miss out.

Heck, I may even get around to working on my boats!

I have been contacted by several people selling boats, upgrading to larger boats, and some looking for boats, so the allure has not waned. Let's go sail.

Allen

Here's one for sale by former RVC sailing instructor Paul Thompson - call 815-218-2784.

1986 Seaward 17 Sloop

8' beam, 175 sq. ft. sails, trailer...\$500
1987 Suzuki 4 h.p. otbd. 15-20 hrs., 2.5g tank...\$250



Ad for Nick's truck:

Chevy 2000 Silverado 1500-LS, 5.3L (328 cid) V-8, Auto Trans, ext cab, short box, fiberglass cap, bed mat, Yakima Roof Rack (removable), 76K, exceptional condition \$10,400, call 815-398-5640.

This tow vehicle has served us well; the only reason I'm selling is because it's not a Diesel, but it get's good gas mileage for a pickup truck that can tow a big boat.

A GREAT SAIL ON LAKE GENEVA

(A COOPERATIVE SAILING EVENT WITH NWSA)

DATE : MAY 17, 2008 SATURDAY

PLACE : LAKE GENEVA ----- FONTANA LAUNCH

BOATS ARRIVE FOR RIGGING AT 9:00 A.M. -----
LAUNCH TIME : 10:00 A.M.

ASSIGN CREW TO BOATS

SAIL TO WILLIAMS BAY - SACK LUNCH
(CAMARADERIE) AT THE LAKESIDE PARK - NEAR
THE DOCK

RETURN TO FONTANA DOCK : 4:00 PM - UNRIG
THE BOATS - PARK CARS & TRAILERS

DINNER (EXCHANGE SEA TALES) : 5:00 PM AT
GORDY'S RESTAURANT AFTER THE SAIL

BRING : WARM CLOTHING, SACK LUNCH, SOFT
SOLED SHOES

DIRECTIONS : ROUTE 173 EAST TO ROUTE 14 IN
HARVARD / NORTH ON ROUTE 14 TO WAIWORTH ,
WIS. // RT 67 OUTE 67 TO FONTANA///TURN
RIGHT TO LAUNCH RAMP ON LAKE FRONT

SIGN UP FOR THIS EVENT AT THE APRIL 2008 RYC
MEETING

CALL CRUISE COORDINATOR
DICK SPEARS AT 815-923-4374 BEFORE MAY 5th

NEW & NON-SAILORS WELCOME

The Sailing trip that wasn't...

by Allen Penticoff

This was supposed to be our first sailing outing of the year as we often do in late March. Peoria Lake was our target body of water, a place I've wanted to sail for years. Dan Medler, our early and late season crew on Thebote had done some research and found that on the east shore of Peoria Lake was a campground and marina, mostly known as Spindler Marina, a part of the Fondulac County park system.

The Rockford daily newspaper, The Register Star had been running a little "Countdown to Spring" on the front page - and I'd sent in something about early spring sailing with some pictures. A photo of Thebote and a photo of her sailing with spinnaker was run on 14 days to Spring. And much to our surprise as we headed south to East Peoria and grabbing the morning paper out of the box, this first day of spring, was another photo of our boat and Eric Mueller's tied up in a cove at Lake Clinton, with some of the words that had gotten left out of the first submission. Also, fellow club member Leo Wehner had sent in a photo and words about sailing his windsurf board that appeared on day eight to go.

Anyway, despite, or because we had so much promotion of this event, Winter refused to take a break and left us deciding it was not going to be worth the fuel expense to tow our boat down to Peoria Lake, only to be too cold and rainy for enjoyable sailing. In fact the forecast for home was for 4-6 inches of snow Friday through Saturday. Not good.

So we headed south on Thursday morning to go camping with Dan on the shores of Peoria Lake in our trusty Subaru, no toys in tow, anticipating doing just some touristy things and hiking perhaps. When in vacation mode we like to drive the two lane roads. The relaxed pace and interesting sights make the miles much more pleasant. So what if you have to slow down in a few towns along the way - that's part of the adventure. Not much to report about the trip down highway 251 other than the traffic was sparse. Down west of Peru, IL., there is a highway 29 that offers a brief but scenic segment to travel on before meeting highway 26 that runs the length of Illinois. Highway 26 passes through my hometown of Freeport, but this section on the east side of the Illinois River is new to my eyes, at least from the driver's seat rather than the pilot's seat.

We'd only been on 26 a few miles when we came upon a sign indicating a turn to go into the burg of Hennepin. I missed the first turn, but before the second arrived I decided we needed to go have a look at this river front town and find a small café to have some lunch. There is almost no "downtown" Hennepin, but what there is of it is rather interesting. Right on the riverbank is a block of old brick buildings with a small grocery/hardware store and a tavern, Ray's Place. Not exactly what we were looking for, but it was soon evident that Ray's was the only eating option.

But much to our surprise, this old family run tavern had a very nice “fine dining” restaurant section. The tavern part was old and comfy too. The hot beef sandwich special was literally melt in your mouth good. After lunch we toured the combination grocery store and hardware store, buying some fruit at a very decent price.

The rest of the drive down 26 was quite scenic. We rather like traveling and hiking this time of year. With the leaves off the trees and bushes one can see much more detail about the terrain one is passing through and by. A view you would otherwise never see.

A tour of the village of Spring Bay found not much there – a possible anchorage and a small restaurant if you can get ashore. More interesting was a auto junk yard just out of town with many rusting hulks of cars from the 40s on through the present. Studebakers, Chevys, old VWs. A rusty, beat up museum. Worth a stop in itself for the car nut.

The remainder of the drive was pretty short. We had no trouble finding the campground/marina and Dan was on a waterfront site – a few days earlier the site was nearly in the water. We found Dan snoring away in his outdoor lawn chair. We chatted and then I had to go find some beer.

The campground is just south of the highway 24/150 bridge and in an industrial strip along highway 150, but the impact is barely noticeable in the campground itself. This time of year the marina had just thawed out and no boats were in their slips yet. For sailboaters, there is a high tension powerline crossing the channel leading to the lake. It should not be a problem for most trailer sailors, but there are plenty of other nearby places to launch where this is not an issue.

In my search for beer, I found that just down the road was Sunset Marine and the large East Port Marina, which wasn't really open yet either. There is a Fondulac County park public boat ramp adjacent to the marina with ample parking – a decent place to launch a sailboat – although the dock was still out at the time. The marina certainly would do for tying up for as long as one would like, but it is but one of several marinas on the lake. And this is the smaller of the two lakes here – Upper Peoria Lake being much larger.

Seeking something to do in the late afternoon we headed over to downtown Peoria. We parked at the Constitution Memorial park where there is a small flag memorial to the U.S. constitution and an old railroad turntable. The long riverwalk passes through with many joggers and bikers. We walked to downtown on the path, checking out the many nice slips available at the riverfront municipal marina. It wasn't open either. But where you to come here, you'd find immediately at hand a nice restaurant, Joe's Crab Shack and other eateries and brew pubs. In need of a bit of exercise, jog on down the path to the beautiful new Riverplex fitness center where there is an indoor water park among many other amenities.

Driving back north a few blocks, we stopped to check out the municipal park run Detweiller Marina. This marina and the private one adjacent had a number of sailboats, even a couple in the water already. Not quite as handy to good eating, but still

on the riverwalk, it would be an okay place to launch (\$4 day) and stay when exploring the area.

A bit further down the road I spotted some more masts. We found another marina that had far larger keel sailboats, apparently because they have a travel lift. This is the Wharf Harbor Marina (Sunset Marine has a travel lift as well.) Quite a few slips here too. Wharf Harbor Marina has a couple dozen sailboats up on the hard. Some may be from the Chicago area. Adjacent to this marina is a big restaurant, Alexander's Steakhouse. This is one of those places where you can cook your own steak on their big indoor grill.

Back across the Highway 24 bridge and completing a loop back to the campground. For dinner, we went again, just down the road to a place “burgers just this side of Par A Dice” – the Burger Barge. Well, it's not actually on a barge, but there is a small harbor with some rather skinny crappy dockage (*the docks may be some good entertainment in themselves come drunken powerboater summertime*). A sailboat could get in. It is a bar/restaurant with several televisions running at once, all on different channels. The TV nearest us was on CSPAN 2's “Book TV” with Tom Wolfe yapping away with no volume. Why? Not sure. Adjacent to our window side booth were napkins with drawings stapled to the wall, our kind of place. I added to the collection. The menu was full of burger and seafood options. We each had a huge fish sandwich, \$7, and a beer. Burger Barge is a fun and funky place that is a must visit in the area. There several other much more upscale restaurants in the area of the East Port marina and the gambling mecca of the Par A Dice too.

While we had wood for a fire. None of us was really inspired to sit outside to cook on one side and freeze on the other, so it was into the trailer we went and enjoyed watching Master & Commander on DVD. Much better.

Friday is cool and overcast. Plenty of breeze, but not really the sort of day that makes for fun sailing. If I already had a boat in the water and going out for an hour or two was a simple option, it probably would be worth going out. I envy the sailors who live here and can have that option – but ironically it is my experience that few avail themselves of this ability to sail frequently.

After a slow start we headed over to Peoria's Oak Glen Zoo. It is a small zoo now, but is expanding from its present seven acres to add another twenty-four acres and much improved outdoor displays. We saw several unique animals that are not seen in even some larger zoos. Normal entry is \$5.95, but we were allowed in free because of construction inconvenience. We saw everything anyway. There is a botanic garden in the same park, but was not open at the time. We then just wandered around Peoria, and ended up taking a peek into the large Catholic Cathedral near downtown.

The weather had been weird. A muddy light rain had messed up the car before and during the drive to the zoo. After being at the zoo a bit, the sun came out and a nice breeze out of the east arrived. After lunch it was quite warm and the wind blew hard out of the south as we watched barges move up river. Then before we finished the wind veered west then north.

Pretty much around the whole clock. Part of our reluctance to bring Thebote was the Friday forecast calling for a rainy 45-50 degrees. We got a pleasant 63 degrees and just the right wind. A pleasant misfortune.

A late lunch at Joe's Crab Shack was quite delicious. Then a bit more walking and exploring of the riverfront area. On the way back we stopped at Alexander's Steakhouse to check it out and went on to explore the many boats in the Wharf Harbor Marina and Boatyard. I asked the yard owner if they had a Fishing Hot Spots or other topographical maps of the lakes. He said there are none to be had. He informed me that there are no topographical maps of the Illinois or any other river down to Mobile, AL. Surface maps only. So I guess a depth finder would be a good idea for sailing here.

Back to the campground, where we went for a walk out the long boardwalk into a wetland wooded area. Kinda trashy looking after all the high water. We even found a nun buoy on the landward side of the walkway. I washed the mud off the Subaru, Dan started a fire, and we settled in for a beer and a bit of relaxed "camping." A large formation of pelicans passed low overhead. There is always something interesting happening near the water.

Saturday, cold, breezy. Definitely not much a sailing day. By noon the temps had only managed to ooze on up to 33. But first, we took off for a breakfast version of adventure dining by going back across the river to Peoria in search of the My Place Café. The quintessential greasy spoon breakfast & lunch diner. Family owned, teenage boys forced to work, mom's the cook/owner. Hardly exotic, but the pancakes were plate sized, literally, and my veggie omelet was among the best I ever had. My Place is on the corner of the street that goes down to the Detweiller Marina. So if you are launching or stopping here with your boat, it is THE only place to eat within a reasonable walk. But worth going to fortunately. We revisited the Detweiller Marina again afterward, and would probably award this place as the best spot to launch a trailerable sailboat. A multi-lane ramp with good long floating docks adjacent to the lane. Fuel if you need it and plenty of relatively secure parking, as it is municipal park and thus patrolled. The north end of the harbor may be okay to anchor in as well. The place does not officially open until May 1st, so there was no one to inquire of about it.

What else to do in Peoria on a cold March Saturday morning? Go for a road trip. We motored on out south of town down Highway 24 to Banner. Why? Because there is a huge wildlife refuge at Banner Marsh. There are several gravel road entrances into the marsh and we chose to go in at one of the southern most ones called Bell's landing. After going in and off roading a bit around the ruts on these lanes between marsh ponds and small islands we found Bell's landing – where there are some modest facilities and a boat launch ramp. Coming back, we went the opposite direction down a very narrow lane between two ponds. In each pond were a number of large white swans. Probably a couple dozen altogether. We turned around at the end of the lane then watched the magnificent waterfowl – fight over females and territory. They lumber into the air and don't climb out of ground effect, with long necks stretched out skimming the water, looking like a jet making an airshow pass. Feet down, skim the top and settle into the water, exactly as a

seaplane does. Oh, but one's landed in someone else's "turf." As one of these was making his hasty exit out of the pond, he did not have enough running space to effect a take off, and going too fast to stop, he did a belly flop, gear up landing and skidded to a halt on the lane right in front of us – OH for a video camera! It certainly would be on World's Funniest Videos, or widely watched on YouTube.

Then the Alpha swan, all fluffed up and asserting himself, stakes out the high ground in the middle of the road for a while. We watched with much fascination. This would be a neat spot to bring the camper, the kayaks and our mountain bikes and spend a day fooling around. Camping is just down the road at the Rice Lake State Fish & Wildlife area campground, a spot we stayed at previously in the VW camper when most of the park was flooded and we could paddle our kayaks through the forest. Today we revisited it to see what was underwater before. Small, but cheap and handy to a lot of water for fishing, paddling and bird watching. Rice Lake is not a back water of the Illinois River, but is a diked in lake that they keep full of water in the summer by pumping water in from the river. In spring it is flooded by it. The lake is large enough that it could be sailed in a daysailor type boat with plenty to do and explore. There is a nice launch ramp removed from the lake that would take a bit of paddling or a small motor to get into the lake proper, but not much. There are some funky country dining establishments in the area a few miles away, but mostly you'll want to bring your own provisions with you and do it right. Camping without electricity is only \$7 per day.

Heading back, a brief side trip into the hamlet of Kingston Mines is undertaken to explore what funky things are going on in this village of small modest homes on the water's edge. A bar or two and a post office are about it. But it might be a nice quiet place to live on a modest income. To return to the Spindler Campground, we take a short cut, sort of, back through Pekin. Nice little Illinois river town, with a big industry of some sort to the south. Following Highway 29 north out of Pekin returns us through mostly suburban areas to Creve Coeur and East Peoria.

Not much more to say about the return trip home, except for some unintentional "exploring" done in leaving East Peoria and wandering the pretty wooded hills above seeking a way to get back on track. That and the snow on the ground at home!



Peoria Area Pictures



Ray's Place in tiny downtown Hennepin



Spindler Marina



Detweiller Marina - several nice launch docks and lanes - a bit under water



Dan discovers why we get lost looking for channel markers!



Detweiller Marina - fuel, transient docks and other services. Possibly some anchorage area too. Seemed to have plenty of trailer parking.



Don't mess with the Alpha swan.