

The bul l sh i p l o g

Newsletter of the Rockford Yacht Club

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Website: www.RockfordSailing.org
Meeting Location: Harlem Township Hall
819 Melbourne Ave.
Machesney Park, IL



NO MEETING AT THE HALL THIS MONTH (16TH)

SOCIAL EVENT - Sat., APRIL 28th

"Flotilla Kick-off Soirée"

6:30 p.m. until

Charlie & Jennifer's Home:

10871 Chicory Ridge Way
Roscoe, IL (815) 623-5529

Bring: an appetizer to share, favorite booze

RYC: provides soft drinks & dinnerware

Directions:

North out of Rockford on Hwy 251 to Bridge Street on the south edge of Roscoe. Left on Bridge, which crosses the Rock River, becoming Roscoe Road (Winn. Co. Hwy 63), 1/2 mile or so, Chicory Ridge Way will be the first Right (north) into a large subdivision. Further down, the street parallels the Rock. Their house is on the west bank of the river on the Right several blocks down the street.

★ Anyone receiving this newsletter is invited to attend. ★

Commodore's Corner

Hello All! With the warm weather I got the crazy idea that sailing season was just around the corner! Boy was I wrong. We considered doing some ice skating on the newly formed ice from the last rain. The good news is this crazy weather should break soon and we can all start prepping our boats for the new season. I look forward to seeing all of you at the Flotilla Kick -Off party at Jennifer's and Charlie's home. This is always a great event and please feel free to bring anyone along who might be interested in sailing this season.

Evans Walker
Commodore - RYC

Adopt-A-Road

April 28th, 7:00 a.m.

Harlem & Argyle Road

Please make every effort to help out, as the first pick-up is always the worst. Breakfast together at the Riverside Maid-Rite. Perhaps you'll win the free breakfast on Sam.

Questions: Ann @ 815-624-6353

Flotilla Nuze

Memorial Weekend Flotilla - Lake Mendota
A Taste of Sail - June 9
RYC Picnic - Pierce Lake - June 10
North Channel - July 16 (7 days)
Lake Mich. - Saugatuck - Late July

May Meeting

Chili Cook-off, Harlem Township Hall
Monday, May 21st - 7:00

Lake Clinton March '07

by Allen Penticoff

Many calls were made throughout the week coordinating rides - and with Dan Medler, Skipper T, as well as trying to find a solution to getting Ruth a ride down with someone at a reasonable time on Saturday so I could leave a day early.

The weekend previously – I'd been iceboating on Lake Mendota – that was still frozen with 18" of ice. Lake Clinton's nuke plant uses the lake as its cooling pond – so it does not freeze like other lakes in our area – and such it has become our season opener lake – and because it is a very nice lake to sail on before it swarms with power boats once it warms up.

Friday Weather and forecast didn't look so great, but I decided to go for it anyway. I had a late start, 11:30, but only encountered light rain enroute. Despite a back that was acting up, I was lucky to have Dan to set up the heavy stuff on *Thebote* when I arrived. Winds were light but still some good sailing left in the day. We got rained on lightly a couple of times briefly but it was warm and of little consequence.

I dropped Dan off at the marina at about 6:30 p.m. and raced under power to the cove near his campsite, but it was so dark that I could not see his lights, despite calling him on the phone and asking him to turn them on. I could sort of make out the indentations in the shoreline and saw the bluff where I thought the camper was, then I saw a low spot in the tree line and entered what I thought was the cove nearest his campsite on the bluff. I tied up to a nice dock and could see a "new" dock across the cove. Thinking I was in the right spot – I started on the trail but my flashlight was running low so I bailed out and went up to the campground road. Meanwhile Dan had come looking for me and could see I was not in the right spot. A phone call between us – he informed me of my mistake and that he would come over in his truck to pick me up. It was quite a ways by road, but relatively short along the shoreline – not counting going around the end of two deep coves – even less distance by water. In the morning light, I could see why I missed my turn and had ended up in the next, larger cove to the north.

Dan and I went on into the town of Clinton and had a nice dinner at a Mexican restaurant on Route 10. We stayed up drinking and talking to 1:30. Didn't bother to go back to the boat for the night and crashed on his couch.

Saturday Being good campers, we watched the Saturday morning cartoons on his tiny television and had a nice hot breakfast. Expecting a day in the 70s with moderate wind of 5-10 mph and for Eric Mueller, Harley Johnson, and Ruth to be down around 9:30 – 10:00 with Eric's MacGregor 25, *Knots of Fun*. There was nice wind already and the skies were clearing. No word from Skipper T who was supposed



Knots of Fun - finally sailing on Saturday

to have met us at the campsite Friday night in his RV. While Dan and I were getting *Thebote* ready to sail – Ruth called. They were driving in the fog back to Eric's to get the rudder. For some reason Harley had said "all you need us a rudder and a sail" and that made Eric think – hmm, I don't think I brought the rudder. A quick check confirmed this. I assured Ruth it was well worth pressing on. So they ended up taking six hours to make a three hour drive – but it was worth it.

Dan and I made arrangements for him to drive to the park boat ramp where I would pick him up. We sailed some and got a little rain on us – again just a brief sprinkle and sailed into a power off landing at the new courtesy dock at the marina ramp. I'd made arrangements to only pay \$5 for one launch and free parking rather than the normal \$5 per day fee. Eric, Harley and Ruth were there and started getting rigged. Everyone was so happy to finally be at the water after their ordeal on the road which included driving in a bad thunderstorm north of Bloomington. I wandered around while they rigged, and discovered the marina now has a restaurant of sorts and sells package beer and wine coolers – so the marina is no longer "dry." It was nice just to hang out in the sunny warm marina waiting for them to launch.

There is also a restaurant at the state park boat ramp called "Boondocks" that is run by the same people who run the nice restaurant at Weldon Springs State Park. But Boondocks does not open until April 1st and the marina café until May 1st. Remember this is late March and not even the leaves are out yet – but a few daffodils and wild flowers were already out.

Thebote crew then sailed about half-way to the dam before turning back toward the other end so as not run out of daylight this time. *Thebote* had been sailing with working jib & main and easily outran the M-25 using main and genoa as it was close reaching into a 10-15 mph breeze on the way back. We sailed to a landing at the park ramp to drop off Dan, then Ruth and I sailed out; only hoisting the jib for the short sail to the cove – which was all we needed. Harley and Eric were in sight now. But as we approached the cove we had a problem. There was a fishing boat tied up to "our" dock.

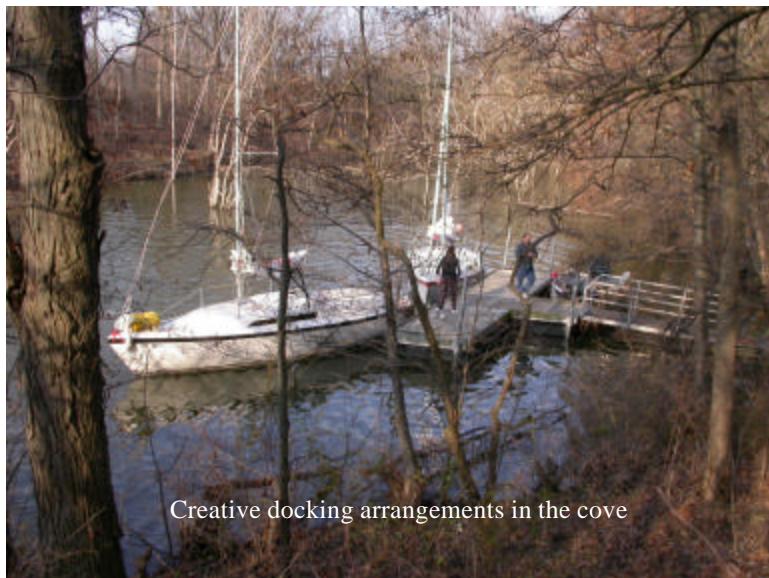
I tried calling Eric – no luck. I tried calling Dan – no luck. So we had to go in to figure out a plan. We dropped our anchor close to shore then I backed up to the corner of the dock and tied a line off from the stern to the dock – sort of an angled “Med Moor.” By time Eric and Harley came in I’d found the fishermen at their campsite and got permission to move their boat to the inside of the dock. E & H had a short but enough chunk of dock to tie up to now. We tied the fishermen’s boat up much better than it had been after untangling their skinny line.

I decided to leave *Thebote* moored as it was – adding tossing a mushroom anchor off the side to hold us away from the dock and a forward fender to prevent the anchor chain from chafing on the bow. During the night I added a fender to the corner near the dock. *Knots of Fun*’s bow was two feet from our stern.

All settled in. I had been in contact with Leo and Judy Wehner who were down with their Montego 20, but staying the night at the Day’s Inn in Farmer City. Dan drove Ruth and I to the Dewitt Country Store where we met Leo and Judy with boat in tow from their inspection of the marina. The five of us dined in the very funky store/bar/restaurant while Harley and Eric dined on their boat. We were the only patrons in the place, and as such got much attention from Doris, the owner, cook, waitress, bartender. She calls us guys “honey” (or some such thing) giving Leo a funny look for ordering no dressing on his salad. Dan reported his pork tenderloin sandwich was awesome, not your typical breaded slab of ground up pork – but a true tenderloin.

After dinner we all went back to Dan’s campsite for a nice fire that he built. I had hiked over to the cove and invited Harley and Eric over for the fire. Harley came over while Eric stayed behind to retire early – having arisen that morning at 4 a.m. (*He also heard a couple of people on the dock eyeing his camp stove in the cockpit – but they saw a red light on in the cabin and apparently assumed it was an alarm!*) When it was time to retire ourselves, Dan gave us a ride to the campsite near our boat dock on the other side of the stump filled cove.

My friend from Peoria, Skipper T, is someone I met at Strictly Sail last year working at the Good Old Boat booth. He has a 23 foot sailboat so we have vowed to get together sailing sometime and this looked like a great opportunity for that – but just before leaving home his mother-in-law had a health issue arise that found them in the emergency room. While she was found to be okay eventually – this and other things made this attempt to go sailing together not work out. We certainly would have liked to have him and his wife aboard for some fine sailing and wood burning.



Creative docking arrangements in the cove

Sunday Breakfast of biscuits and gravy on Eric’s boat with Dan hiking down to join in. It was sunny and quickly warming up to the expected high of 80 degrees with 15-25 mph wind. We got both. Tucked into the small cove surrounded by wooded bluffs, we were out of the wind and it was gloriously nice. We double reefed *Thebote*, our ‘89 MacGregor 26, right out of the hole – which was just right and occasionally too much. Soon we met the Wehnens coming the other way in their boat as we sailed to the marina to meet Dan who was packing up camp and taking his rig to the marina for a quick departure after sailing (*he’d been camping there all week*). Ruth and I made a perfect motor-less landing at the courtesy dock... and Dan was witness to it. After picking up Dan, we motored down through the mooring field to check it out.

While at the dock – the Lake Clinton Yacht Club commodore approached us and gave us color brochures. They have their own open pavilion and “private” porta jons. A sizable Flying Scot fleet and many cruiser members. One can dry store a boat in the marina’s field for \$150 per year with the \$70 club membership. If you sailed often here you have options ranging from slips to mooring to dry storage mast up. The dry storage looks most appealing and economical. Their commodore reminds us of our club member Dick Spears – same boat too, (McGregor 25) “Blue Belle.”

Back out sailing we saw Harley and Eric to the north and Leo and Judy to south and west – it was quite blustery. It was so sunny and warm, that despite the wind, I was comfortable in nothing more to wear than my swim trunks! Until late in the day, for three days, the only sailboats on the lake were us three from Rockford.

Eric’s genoa lead blew out and they returned to the marina to see if they could buy a new fairlead. We would not see them again until we pulled out.

Leo and Judy sailed right up to the big blue nuclear plant. Since Leo is an operating engineer at the Byron plant, he’s was (*not seriously*) thinking of asking for a transfer to Clinton once he saw the plant’s nice beach!

We blew into a cove on the east side of the entrance to the west arm. Dropped the hook and found it was still quite windy in here – but a nice warm spot nonetheless. A leisurely lunch ensued. Leo and Judy spotted us, dropped sail and came in to raft up. Later, as it ominously clouded up, I thought it prudent to leave. As the Wehnens wrestled with getting sail up in the strong breeze, we wrestled with an anchor chain wrapped around or caught on an invisible submerge tree or large limb. Pulling on the anchor rode did nothing. Backing around to 180 opposite the set did nothing. Finally a violent running side attack with boat speed broke it free.



Dan Medler, Eric Mueller & Harley Johnson enjoy a chat while breakfast cooks.

For all the knarly places we drop our anchor here and at Kentucky Lake - we were due for this to happen. Very glad to not have to dive into the cold muddy water to free it.

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Just before we had arrived at Lake Clinton, they had found the body of the boy who was killed when the fishing boat he was in had gone over the dam one rainy night when it was on its maiden voyage. The owner and his uncle, plus the boy were all killed. A sad thing – but it still points out that boating, like flying is very unforgiving to the unprepared. If they had a life jacket on or even had an anchor the disaster may have been averted. But the spillway over the dam is a narrow concrete slot that I don't think is lighted at night, and there is no cable to prevent an errant boat from going over. Once you're over, you may be tangled, as they were in much debris downstream of the spillway. Since there is a launch ramp just north of the dam along the shore, we think they launched, the engine wouldn't run, the wind, and perhaps a little current silently moved them toward the unseen spillway – too late to do anything...although a 911 call had been made declaring an emergency that they were out of gas.

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Leo and Judy were still struggling with sails and use of their trolling motor against the strong wind, causing difficulty in exiting the west arm as we came out of the cove. We had our own trouble, the jib went up too early, but we were able to power out far enough before fully hoisting it and setting a sailing course to clear the entrance to the west branch of the lake. Under jib alone, we cruised comfortably at 4-5 knots! Leo and Judy caught up under full sail by time we reached the east arm.

Not quite ready to call it quits on such a fine day, we tacked back and forth across the east arm near the marina entrance. Now there were other sailboats, several screaming windsurfers and a kite-boarder – who we got to see up quite close.

Upon deciding to head in, my outboard decided to be difficult to start – and I managed to take a small chunk of skin off the end of a finger on a hose clamp. Blood spat-

tered all over as I pulled the starter cord. Eventually we were forced to retreat in a tack back across the lake to deal with the engine and stop the bleeding. Bleeding stopped – engine started. Fortunately no waiting at the boat ramp dock. Harley and Eric greeted us, ready for the road. Leo and Judy had beat us out too.

Everyone was on the road before any adverse weather arrived. It was still swimsuit weather as we de-rigged *Thebote*. But trials and tribulations of this weekend were not over for everyone.

Heading north on 51 out of Clinton we observed Dan heading south. He'd gone as far as Bloomington when he saw a Family Video store and realized he had not returned his rented DVDs to the store in Clinton!

We had a dandy tailwind, so the driving was easy. Leo and Judy passed us, but after we stopped for cheap gas at the Mendota exit – we passed Leo and Judy's rig on the shoulder of the interstate two miles north. We stopped to see what was up – could we help?

It turned out that the left trailer wheel bearing had self-destructed. A tow truck and flatbed trailer were on the way. Dan showed up and stopped too. I left – having already heard the story. (*Their boat and trailer were taken to Oregon, IL for repairs.*)

Despite all the things that happened – nobody complained. It was a great weekend to be out sailing in the Rockford Yacht Club “icebreaker” tradition of taking a chance on late March weather to enjoy this and other area lakes before they get so busy.

- Allen



Leo & Judy Wehner's Montego 20
on a close reach heading south

More photos on our website:
www.RockfordSailing.org