

CLOUD NINE's CRUISE TO CANADA

In the spring, the St. John River courses down through New Brunswick, Canada, full from the winter snow melt-off, preventing normal access by pleasure craft. By summer, however, the St. John River becomes a quieter stream and its beautiful banks may be cruised with pleasure to Fredericton, NB and into numerous bays and tributaries.

On the other hand, the river exits into the harbor at St. John, NB where the harbor level surges up and down twice a day in tune with the infamous Bay of Fundy tides, a vertical distance of up to 28 feet, leading to raging torrents of water flowing either into the river, or out of it, four times a day. This torrent occurs at a narrow opening in the granite walls of the river near Split Rock.

To proceed up and down these waterfalls seemed like the ideal thing for a CANE fleet boat to do, so *Cloud Nine* (Catalina 350) with Captain Brian McCarthy, Cathy, Cathy's diminutive and pleasant companion Rosie, and Sophia and Peter Fowler proceeded down-east out of Ipswich on July 3, 2007 to make for St. John, NB.

The ports were chosen, carefully, so as not to be far off the rhumb line to the destination or to require overnight passages, but also so that Cathy and Brian could return to their jobs in MA in less than three weeks. The ports planned-on were Wood Island Harbor, Christmas Cove, Isle au Haut Thorofare, Corea Harbor, and Cutler Harbor in Maine; and thence, utilizing the substantial current up through the Grand Manan Channel, a rather long sail to St. John, in order to catch the ten minute period during which the level of the Bay of Fundy matches that of the St. John river. We then would motor-sail up the St. John River through Grand Bay and into Kennebecasis Bay to dock at the Royal Kennebecasis Yacht Club (R.K.Y.C.) at Milidgeville.

Our departure from the Thread of Life after leaving Christmas Cove provided a rude shock to the crew, where we were met by very large swells (12 to 16 feet) with peaked tops, apparently from a passing storm out at sea. This made an uncomfortable passage across Muscongus and Penobscot Bays to our next port at Isle au Haut.

However, everything went well and according to our plan from then on, with a couple of exceptions. The lobster cooperative in Corea informed us that their harbor moorings were full and there was no place to anchor in the harbor. *Theodora* had once anchored there in those conditions and found itself, in the morning, at a 30 degree angle at low tide with its rudder caught between two ledges, so *Cloud Nine* diverted to an anchorage in Prospect Harbor, up beyond the sardine cannery and outside the lobster boats. After Brian had returned in the dinghy from the normal visit on shore to walk Rosie, he had both the leash and the dinghy painter in his hand when climbing back aboard, whence the latter slipped away. To make a long story short, Cathy and Brian decided that Brian should take a swim in the 62 degree water to retrieve the dinghy.

All hands came on deck and a skiff with two lobstermen that Brian had befriended on the dock set off from shore, all prepared to retrieve a chilly and overexposed Brian;

however, by a very inventive series of knots tied in a stern line on the dinghy, Brian was able to climb aboard and row back to *Cloud Nine*. During the next cocktail hour (where all things of importance are decided), we were surprised to discover from information found on board, that the average person can survive more than two hours immersion at that temperature!

The other exception to the planned schedule was with regard to the dearth of diesel fuel facilities for pleasure boats along the Maine coast. We had known that Christmas Cove and Isle au Haut would not supply diesel so we had planned to fill up at Cutler Harbor as *Theodora* had done several times in the past. On the other hand, we did not contemplate that Deano at the Cutler fuel dock was going on a Fourth of July holiday with his family at their lakefront cottage on Saturday, July 7 at 12:00 noon. We arrived at Deano's dock at 3:30 pm!

After adding our five-gallon emergency container, which was lashed to the stern stanchions, into the tank, we went ashore to find that the whole village of Cutler appeared to be deserted except for an elderly, lame man. However, we did hear some hammering going on somewhere up the hill behind the village and tracked it down to a man who was building a porch onto his new home. We provided him with enough economic incentive to drive the ten miles to Machias to get us another five gallons of diesel from a gas station (making the equivalent cost come to \$16.00 per gallon).

After adding that fuel, we set off in the morning for St. John and our Waterfall.

By the time we had motor-sailed to beyond Point Lepreau, NB, the fuel gauge was approaching E and we realized the serious consequences of proceeding into the Reversible Falls at St. John and losing engine power there or in the significant whirlpools that we later encountered above the Falls. So-o-o, we made a telephone call to **TowBoat U.S.** and were pleasantly surprised to be connected by them to an officer of the Canadian Coast Guard in St. John, there being no TowBoat U.S. vessels in Canadian waters. The even bigger surprise was to be further connected to the cellular phone of Captain Bob Donnel onboard the Canadian Coast Guard patrol boat in St. John Harbor. Captain Donnel obtained permission for he and his crew to motor out to meet us near the St. John outer buoy with a five-gallon container of diesel to exchange for our empty container. All this was done for our "Thank You", plus Cathy's idea to give them all of our brownies, chocolates, and some peanuts in Sophia's favorite Christmas cookie tin. We later contemplated the unlikelihood that one of our U.S.C.G. boats would provide an equivalent service for us.

Well, *Cloud Nine* made it through the Falls at the time of the brief slack water and up to the R.K.Y.C. where we fueled and cleared Canadian customs. We spent the next two days taxiing into St John to shop, eat seafood, stroll about, and visit the excellent museum. We also got a view of the Falls flowing turbulently into the river at high tide.

Since the weather pattern had changed to mist and light rain on the third day at R.K.Y.C., we cancelled the scheduled trip up the beautiful St. John River to Gagetown

and, instead, we proceeded down the outflow and through the Reversible Falls at slack water (challenging the Falls by lingering there for a few minutes to slowly drift by Split Rock). Thence we sailed on through St. John Harbor where we made the unsettling discovery, in foggy conditions, that the radar had stopped operating. So we sized up the navigation capabilities of the two captains and the excellent equipment on board and decided to push on to make for Campobello Island, NB. After being welcomed to East Quoddy Head by the sound of its fog signal, we moored in Head Harbor alongside a Nova Scotia lobster boat that was tied to the dock pilings since the lobster season had just concluded for them. Brian and Rosie took their walk ashore and came back with the incredible news that an enterprising, local boat builder, Steven Newman, was converting the large, substantial salmon pen that we had noted to port as we entered the harbor into a new marina. We contacted Steven and were asked to come alongside for overnight for a very reasonable charge of \$25.00.

While moving to the “marina” we saw, on a dock, a badly damaged Watkins 23 sloop with ME registration. Brian found on his walk with Rosie that a local fisherman had found the sloop floating off Wolf Islands in May; he hoped to hold it over winter and sell it! Brian contacted the Maine State Police when we reached Mt. Desert Is. They had the Eastport owner contact the Campobello R.C.M.P. to tell of the drifting-off of his boat.

In the morning we departed Head Harbor to sail down the Grand Manan Channel toward Northeast Harbor, Mount Desert Island, ME where we would clear U.S. Customs. After picking up some very strong tidal current as we crossed the inlet into Lubec, Eastport, and Pasamaquoddy Bay just short of West Quoddy Head, (the northeastern-most point in the U.S.), a sharply increasing wind added to it to make for a rocky passage for the next few hours; plus the absence of radar kept us straining our senses to the maximum. We finally arrived, in Force 4 winds, to the sound of the Moose Peak Light fog signal at the main channel leading into the Jonesport area. We passed in beyond and around the welcome banks of Knight Island and nuzzled *Cloud Nine* in between Knight and Mistake Islands to spend a wonderfully quiet night at anchor. Needless to say, Brian had some adventures in finding good landing spots on the banks and cliffs of Mistake Island for him and Rosie that evening and on the next morning.

In the morning we retrieved the anchor to leave the comfort of our two island friends and upon poking our nose out beyond Moose Peak we found the wind had abated to Force 3 and visibility was a good ¼ mile. As we made for the end of Great Wass Island we were pleased to see a forty-foot yawl appear off to starboard proceeding westward with us. However, before we had reached Petit Manan, she had veered off to starboard into the fog and toward the mainland.

As on the trip east, we avoided the strong tide rips around the tip of Petit Manan Island and, instead, passed through the 13 foot hole in the Petit Manan Bar ledge to make for Schoodic Island and thence for the buoy off Seal Harbor to round Bear Island and attain the entrance to Northeast Harbor on Mt. Desert Island.

After easily clearing customs, we spent a pleasant lay day enjoying lobster stew and popovers at Jordan Pond, visiting the Thirsty Whale and the Parkside in Bar Harbor, having a wonderful carriage ride around Day Mountain where we learned all about the very interesting purchase and makeover of the southern part of Mt. Desert Island by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. (did you realize that the whole reason that the Rockefellers went to Mt. Desert Island was for Abby Rockefeller to obtain the services of her obstetrician, who was summering there, so that he could attend to the birth of Nelson Rockefeller?!).

We were able, also, to get the radar repaired on Mt. Desert Island in preparation for our sail on the next day through Casco Passage and up Eggemoggin Reach to cross the width of Penobscot Bay, for a very pleasant visit to Camden, ME which included a visit to the top of Mount Battie to enjoy the encompassing view, from there, of Penobscot Bay as far as Isle au Haut and Matinicus Island.

Our next sailing leg was a more leisurely passage down through the very busy Muscle Ridge Channel to Tennants Harbor where, on the deck at Cod End Marina, Brian and Peter opened six hard-shell lobsters using rocks; Sophia made the meat into innumerable lobster rolls consumed on-board over the next three days. The next few days' sails took us to Boothbay Harbor, Great Diamond Cove, (with a ferry trip into Portland via Casco Bay islands), and to a resort marina on the Kennebunkport River.

The next day's sail took us to *Theodora's* dock in Plum Island Sound, Ipswich in order to unload the boat. On the last day, in a sail with an added crewmember, Sophia's and Peter's grandson John Whitman, Brian and Peter moved *Cloud Nine* to it's mooring at Salem Willows Yacht Club in Salem, MA. This was the conclusion of a memorable cruise, completed on schedule in just nineteen days.

PF: 8/1/07



The St. John River, NB Reversible Falls at low tide.