



2022 Catalina 22 Great Lakes Cruise - Lake Erie

By Mike Bracket

It all started in mid-May when I got an email from Joe McFarland, a previous Catalina 22 cruiser extraordinaire. He said he was in Virginia coming back from the Bahamas and thought he would be in Lake Erie about the same time as our cruise. Fast forward to Saturday June 25th and “Gunsmoke” just arrived at Sandusky Sailing Club to launch for the 20th Annual Great Lakes Cruise. Joe was there already and greeted me with a cold beverage and an offer to help rig the boat. He was onboard his C&C 30 “Wild Irish”. Turns out, Joe was in the Bahamas for the past 10 months and was just returning to home waters and wanted to join up with our cruise.

On Sunday, the crowd gathered slowly. A Catalina 22 skipper from Sandusky had contacted me about a spare rudder so I brought that with me. Joe linked up with Roger Balser and took him out on his Catalina 22

(Continued on page 55)

Photograph by Andrew Power family showing Andrew Power and their children George and Olviia showing all the stuff they off-loaded when they got home.

(Continued from page 54)

for some instruction. Roger had only sailed his boat once with a broken rudder. After several hours of personal instruction from Joe, I believe we will have a new National Association member and Great Lakes Cruise next year!! Geoff Endris called to say he had trailer problems and might not make it. "Viking Dream II" showed up around two o'clock and we got their mast up and got them in the water quickly. "Ocean Jasper" arrived, and we all got acquainted with Brock and Liz and helped them get the boat ready. One boat was not there yet but we met them at the restaurant for dinner. Andrew, Melanie, George and Olivia got their boat launched that evening and were ready to sail on Monday morning.

Our initial sail was from Sandusky to Kelly's Island, a distance of about nine miles. Course was about 10 Degrees (M), and the wind was at 340 (M) at about 12-15 kts. It made for a wet ride, but everyone made in good shape. Leaving Sandusky Bay, the Cedar Point Amusement Park was off to starboard about mile out. You could hear the screams from the roller coasters over the wind!! At one-point, "Old Blue" with Andrew driving and three backsides riding the rail, flew past "Gunsmoke" like she was on fire. The boat was flat and sailing fast! It was good to arrive at Seaway marina to find Joe and "Wild Irish" marking the dock spaces for us. "Wild Irish" was motoring since exiting the Erie Canal as the cost to step the mast for the relatively short sail across Lake Erie did not make sense.

We all did our best to put a dent in the perch population with a wonderful dinner at the Village Pump. Joe was late as he stopped along the street for some fresh produce (tomatoes). Both Brock/Liz and Andrew/Melanie shared their experiences with their first sail on "big water." We intended to have a bonfire on the beach, but the marina management told us NO due to the high winds. Everyone slept well, in spite of the long walk to the restrooms.

Tuesday was a beautiful day for the sail to Middle Bass Island. Another 9-mile day but almost no wind. "Gunsmoke" stayed back for a Neuro-Muscular Therapy treatment (massage) but caught up with the fleet later that afternoon. After threading the channel around Ballast Island Shoal, we arrived at the Middle Bass Island State Park Marina. It is a new facility and shares space with the Middle Bass Island Yacht Club. We walked a short distance to 'Hazards' Island Restaurant for dinner. After dinner, the crew of "Old Blue" got out the fishing poles and proceeded to fill the stringer. Olivia caught the biggest, a very nice small mouth bass. They had 5-6 nice bluegill and a bass. We wanted to have a bonfire that evening but the park had a rule against open fires and there were no firepits!

Wednesday was a short sail to Put-In-Bay on South Bass Island. But first we had to drop the mast on "Old Blue" to retrieve a halyard. This would not be the only time. Put-In-Bay is only about three miles away but there are a couple options for adding in some distance. Unfortunately, the wind did not cooperate. Another motor-boat ride. Immediately upon arrival in PIB, Brock and Liz commandeered a six-passenger golf cart from the marina and started touring around the island. Between Wednesday and Thursday, everyone got to see the Gemstone cave, Winery, the Perry Monument and Museum and made the necessary trips to the village store for provisions. Andrew had a new (to him) Asymmetrical spinnaker he wanted to try so we took it out on Thursday for a trial. The wind was under 10 mph, so it gave us some relaxing conditions to rig it up and try it out. "Viking Dream II" and "Ocean Jasper" also went out for a sail around Rattlesnake Island. We did find a good ice cream store and attended a presentation at the Perry Memorial Museum on the Battle of Lake Erie.

(Continued on page 56)

(Continued from page 55)

For the sail back to Sandusky on Friday, the weather finally cooperated. 17 mile run on a close reach in 10-12 mph winds. Sailing around Marblehead point and passing Cedar Point amusement park on port gave us a clear path into Sandusky Bay and the Sailing Club. On Friday evening the Sailing Club hosted us for Philly Cheesesteak sandwiches and cold beverages. The Sandusky Sailing Club is a very nice club with very friendly folks.



Saturday was busy getting the boats hauled out, unloaded and tied down. Andrew and Melanie continued to set the standard for over achievers by getting Old Blue hauled out before anyone else was even up! Everyone was hauled out and headed for home by Noon. Another highly successful Great Lakes Cruise complete. Two new cruisers indoctrinated, and both were excited about how much they learned this week. Plans were discussed for 2023 and the general consensus was a trip to Grand Traverse Bay was in order. Watch the *MainBrace* for more details.

