



*Photograph by Candice Kohut
and Amanda Grooms*

By Mike Bracket

The sailing season is winding down, and I have recovered from our 2025 Great Lakes cruise at the end of June. This year we sailed Green Bay/Door County, Wisconsin.

Everyone started arriving on Sunday morning around 10 a.m. I think the first folks were Geoff Endris with crewman Nick along with Rich and Denise Fox. The rest of the nine boats arrived throughout the day. The temperatures and wind stayed above the comfort range all day. The marina in Sister Bay is a very nice facility. They have expanded since our last visit and now can handle over one hundred boats of all sizes. Around 6:00 p.m. as the sun and temperatures moderated a bit, we all gathered in the shade at the marina for our welcome picnic. We renewed acquaintances from past cruises and welcomed Dave and Lynn Irvin from Lawrence, Kansas. It was good to have Douglas and Amanda on "Magnetic North" join us after missing 2024. They came over from East

(Continued on page 31)

(Continued from page 30)

Jordan, Michigan, only about thirty-five miles as the crow flies. They elected to trailer over instead of sailing across Lake Michigan. After about nine hours on the road, they finally arrived in Sister Bay. Geoff's grandson Nick got the award for coming the furthest to sail with us. He lives in Utah!!

During dinner, we discussed the dates and destination possibilities for next year's cruise. It did not take long to decide the week of June 21 to 27, and our destination will be Lake Huron, through Lake St. Clair, and south to Lake Erie. Total sailing distance is around one hundred miles. Mark your calendars now. Details to follow later this year.



Monday was a repeat of Sunday. Temperatures in low 90s, and wind in the low 20s. Everyone elected to stay at the dock and check out the town of Sister Bay. If you want to eat at the world famous Al Johnsons restaurant with the goats on the grass roof, you need to get there early! The restaurant has expanded since we were there last and now has an outdoor Beer Garden and a separate gift shop. In spite of the expansion, the wait for breakfast was still an hour

plus. There is one large bar/restaurant and many smaller establishments. And there were two upscale restaurants for those that wanted their wine in an actual glass!

On Tuesday, everyone got out for some spirited sailing in Sister Bay and out to the Sister Islands. This is when I discovered the chart I purchased from Nautical Charts on-line did not have much for marginal notes – and what was most prominently missing was the chart Plane of Reference (low water datum). So, while the chart reflected the 'depth' of the water, there was no baseline to determine how much water we had. I called the company, and they sent me a QR Code to a NOAA website that "should have all the necessary data." When I went to the site, a pop-up said this site is no longer in service. I wonder if that is a result of the Department of Government Efficiency?

(Continued on page 32)

(Continued from page 31)

The winds on Wednesday were good for sailing, and everyone got in some tiller time. Olivia Power on “Old Blue” brought her fishing pole and proceeded to catch her dinner that evening. Sitting at the dock, she caught a four to five inch “keeper” sized walleye, the biggest one was three pounds. Mom Melody cleaned them, and Andrew fried them up for dinner! A lot better than fried fish at the local bar! We held our Annual Christmas in July (June) White Elephant gift exchange on Wednesday evening. There was quite a bit of strategy and ‘stealing’ going on for a couple of gifts. I think Patrick O’Neill ended up with the six-inch Catalina 22 half hull and I ended up with the Summer Solstice burgee. A storm front was predicted to come through around sundown, and it arrived right on time. It rained off and on all night, and I found a leak in my ‘new’ boat under the mast step.

But Thursday dawned with much lighter conditions. Everyone headed out sailing north to Port de Morte or “Death’s Door.” This is the passage at the tip of the Door Peninsula that separates Green Bay from Lake Michigan. The light (and dying) winds made for slow sailing and most opted to motor sail back to Sister Bay. At least a couple of boats found the water depth to be less than expected but no damage was done.



Friday had good winds again and everyone went out sailing around the Sister Islands and around the point to Ephraim, Wisconsin, the next town immediately south of Sister Bay. By mid-afternoon, everyone was back at the dock and beginning to prepare for haul out on Saturday. We all met at the Northern Grill in Sister Bay for our farewell dinner. We sat outside and a great time was had by all. It was due to the Cherry Bomb Cocktails that were on special that night.

We all agreed that the best choice for Ice Cream in Sister Bay was the Ice Cream Factory, and we were all surprised that the main bar/restaurant in town did not carry Leinenkugel’s beer. And it is a local beer! Three boats took home more parts and treasures than they came with, and everyone said they are already looking forward to next year.

Return to



By Rich Fox

The 2025 Catalina 22 Great Lakes Cruise was the third time that my wife Denise and I have trailered our Catalina 22 Sport to Sister Bay / Door County, Wisconsin for a week of sailing fun, camaraderie and a little sight seeing. This year's cruise was organized by Mike Bracket. The cruise was held the last week of June that brought very long days with a sunrise starting shortly after 5:00 a.m.



Sister Bay, Wisconsin is located in Door County, Wisconsin. Door County is that thin peninsula located northeast of Green Bay and separates the waters of Green Bay from Lake Michigan.



The drive to Door County is a long-haul from many parts of the country. If you go there, you may want to avoid going through the bumper-to-bumper traffic in and around Chicago.

Denise and I departed Indianapolis on Saturday morning and we found driving up Interstate 39 through the middle of Illinois to be an easy route up to Rockford, Illinois. Upon reaching the Wisconsin border, there were many state roads to choose from to reach Sturgeon Bay and Door County.

(Continued on page 35)



(Continued from page 34)

My very good friend and fellow Indianapolis area Catalina 22 MK-II sailor Geoff Endris also participated in the cruise. Geoff got an earlier start, so we met up with him and his nephew Nick on Saturday evening in Oshkosh, Wisconsin for a pizza dinner and a good night's rest at a hotel located next door to the Oshkosh Airport.



From Oshkosh it was a 2-1/2 hour drive to Sister Bay where we would catch up with Mike Bracket who organized this year's event.

The temperatures on Saturday and Sunday were near 90 degrees. We kept our traveling speed at or slightly below 65 mph to minimize a tire blow out. Note—Geoff and I both had two spare tires. Our lower traveling speeds helped us avoid having to use the spares for this trip.

(Continued on page 36)



(Continued from page 35)

After arriving at Sister Bay at Noon on Sunday and rigging and launching our boats, Mike made arrangements for a catered dinner at the park located next door to Sister Bay Marina. I believe we had eight Catalina 22 sailing family and friends in attendance.

That evening, I had the pleasure of presenting Mike Bracket with the Catalina 22 National Sailing Association Lifetime Achievement Award. Mike has spent over 30 years promoting and supporting organized Catalina 22 racing and cruises. He also served as the C22NSA National Cruise Captain and is currently an active member of the C22NSA Rules Committee.



Mike alone has kept the Catalina 22 Great Lakes Cruise going year after year for over 20 years. When we did our first Catalina 22 Great Lakes Cruise to Door County in 2003, Mike and I both looked much younger than what you see in the photograph.

(Continued on page 37)

Photograph by Candice Kohut



Photograph by Candice Kohut

(Continued from page 36)

Located half-way to the North Pole, the sunsets over the open waters of Green Bay are often quite stunning. Throughout the week the weather and wind were all over the place. Monday brought some



relief from the heat and featured an overcast afternoon of healthy wind and cooler temps. Anxious to get in some sailing, the group spent a few hours enjoying the big waters of Green Bay with minimal tacking required.

(Continued on page 39)



Left to Right: *Old Blue* (Andrew, Melody and Olivia Powers), *Magnetic North* (Douglas Doring and Amanda Grooms) *'Smoke* (Mike Bracket), *Knot Fast* (Dave and Lynn Irvin). Photograph by Candice Kohut.



Left to Right: *Smoke* (Mike Bracket), *Knot Fast* (Dave and Lynn Irvin), *Old Blue* (Andrew, Melody and Olivia Powers). Photograph by Candice Kohut

(Continued from page 37)

Throughout the week of the cruise, Denise and I cheated! When we first participated in the 2003 Great Lakes Cruise to Door County, we slept on the Catalina 22. However, as we have grown older, we have found ourselves to not be as nimble and flexible to work our way around a small Catalina 22 Sport cabin. Instead, we booked a condo at the Yacht Club of Sister Bay that was only a five minute walk to Sister Bay Marina where everybody else was staying. We enjoyed a view of Sister Bay from the condo, as well



as a very comfortable bed and air conditioning. This was also the only way that my wife Denise would agree to participate in the cruise. The days of spending a week aboard a Catalina 22 were in the distant past.



Located in the Sister Bay Marina was a nice powerboat that Denise said would be more “much more appropriate for weeklong cruising and overnighting.”

(Continued on page 40)

(Continued from page 39)

The wet slips at Sister Bay Marina included fresh water and an electrical connection. The marina was clean and very well-maintained.

If I correctly recall, the daily charge for a wet slip was approximately \$400 for six nights. This fee also included access to restroom facilities, onsite boat ramp, and long-term trailer and tow vehicle parking at a large paved lot located about a three-minute walk from the marina. It is Catalina 22 friendly marina.

If you are interested in visiting Door County and staying in Sister Bay with your Catalina 22, I recommend booking your wet slip reservation early in the year.

Sister Bay is a popular tourist town and wet slips at the Sister Bay Marina can fill up quickly.

(Continued on page 41)



(Continued from page 40)

A popular place to enjoy breakfast, and located across the street from the marina, was Al Johnson's Swedish Restaurant and Butik where goats roam the grass covered roof. The goats even have their own Goat Cam accessible from the <https://aljohnsons.com> website.

The food at Al Johnson's was fantastic! My favorite breakfast selection was the Swedish pancakes with ice cream. I was expecting maybe a small scoop of ice cream. Instead, the Swedish pancakes arrived with nearly a full bowl of ice cream..

The grass on the roof is real and requires a little mowing and upkeep.



Photograph by Amanda Grooms

The goats were not out during the first few days of the cruise due to the heat. But once the temperatures went down, the Catalina 22 groups was excited to finally see the goats!

(Continued on page 42)



Photograph by Door County Maritime Museum

(Continued from page 41)

If you decide to go to Door County be sure to take a few hours to visit the Door County Maritime Museum located in Sturgeon Bay. The museum features interactive exhibits and offers tours of the restored tugboat ***John Purves***, along with the Jim Kress Maritime Lighthouse Tower.

Recently, Door County Maritime Museum expanded their main location with the landmark Jim Kress Maritime Lighthouse Tower. Exhibits within the Tower use state-of-the-art interactive designs to capture the imagination of visitors.

The Maritime Lighthouse Tower visitor experience begins in the first floor Theater. Guests then take the elevator to the top, and make their way down through each of the ten floors of exhibits. Each floor feature a nautical theme such as navigation, commerce, shipbuilding, recreational building, ship wrecks, and a few more.

(Continued on page 43)

(Continued from page 42)

On a day when there wasn't enough to go sailing, we enjoyed overlooking Sturgeon Bay from the viewing deck located on the top of the DCMM Jim Kress Lighthouse Tower.

The forecast for the next day (Wednesday) looked more promising, and we anticipated the Catalina 22 group might set sail north towards Death's Door.



Known for its 275+ recorded shipwrecks and taking the lives of many sailors, one of the highlighted sailing destinations of this year's Great Lakes Cruise in Door County, Wisconsin was the day sail trip to Death's Door and back. My wife Denise and I were up to the challenge.

The authors of the Destination Door County website write "located between the northern tip of the Door County peninsula and Washington, Pilot, Plum and Detroit Islands, is the passage known as Death's Door. On any given occasion, boaters and sailors can run into challenging conditions like strong currents, unpredictable winds, hidden shoals, sandbars, and rocky shores, all elements that make navigating the waters even more difficult. And all reasons why many boats have lost their way.

The origin of the name traces back to the Native Americans inhabitants who referred to the passage as the Door of Death after losing many men and canoes in a battle against the Winnebago tribe. The French adopted the name and began to label their maps Port des Morts, which roughly translates to Death's Door in English. The name stuck and inspired the title for the entire county. Native inhabitants and early settlers crossed the treacherous waters on canoes, while larger boats followed, but the rough waters made it difficult to maneuver, sinking schooners and sail boats during storms. Some ships sank, some were run aground, and others have seemingly disappeared altogether."

(Continued on page 45)



(Continued from page 44)

With good wind (approximately 12 to 15 mph) coming out of the north/northeast, the plan for Thursday began promptly at the 9:00 AM skipper's meeting where Cruise Captain Mike Bracket announced the destination was Death's Door and back. Departure time was 10:00 AM.

Our Catalina 22 Sport "Sporty" was already rigged and we were eager to depart. Following the brief skipper's meeting, Denise and I departed early from Sister Bay Marina at 9:15. Motoring for about 10 to 15 minutes, we raised the sails as soon as we were clear of the shoreline that was blocking the northerly breeze. The mainsail and 150% genoa quickly filled and we set our course north. The rolling waves were one to two feet and made for fun sailing. After clearing the Sister Shoals, we had the option to sail further away from shore towards the middle of Green Bay or hug the shoreline. We decided to sail along the shore as the wind provided a greater lift to our destination. We also avoided the larger wave action by sailing closer to the shoreline.

As we approached the most northern tip of the Door County peninsula and Washington Island from, the Green Bay side, I kept a closer eye on the marine chart on my tablet due to a few not marked hazards below the surface. I observed that the water and wind were becoming a little turbulent. We have entered Death's Door! Now what?

Having reached our intended sailing destination with plenty of time available, we had a decision to make. We could continue sailing east onto Lake Michigan or make our way back to Sister Bay. Looking at the weather.com radar on my tablet, I observed rain entering the western shore of Green Bay that was headed our way. Not being sure if the rain would suck away the wind or make for a more challenging windy ride back to Sister Bay, Denise and I agreed to play it safe and head south back to Sister Bay. We set the sails wing-on-wing for a very fast (sometimes surfing the waves) downwind ride.

As we turned "Sporty" around for her downwind sail away from Death's Door, we sailed closer to shore and admired the tall, rocky cliffs. We felt quite small in comparison. I later learned that these cliff and rock formations are part of the Niagara Escarpment. An Escarpment is a steep slope or long cliff that forms as a result of faulting or erosion and separates two relatively level areas having different elevations.

(Continued on page 46)

(Continued from page 45)

The Niagara Escarpment we were observing from the water begins south of Lake Ontario and circumscribes the top of the Great Lakes—see red line in the photograph from Wikipedia. The Niagara Escarpment is also the cliff over which the Niagara River plunges at Niagara Falls, for which it is named.



So, we made it to Death’s Door. We did not hit anything. We did not sink the boat. We did not break anything. We did not vanish into thin air. We can say that we “knocked on death’s door” and survived, uneventfully!

As we continued on the return trip to Sister Bay, we could see a few of the other Catalina 22s from the cruising group in the distance making their way to Death’s Door.



On Thursday evening, the group participated in the Catalina 22 Great Lakes Cruise “Christmas in July” white elephant gift exchange. This was held outdoors at a pavilion located next to Sister Bay Marina. Unlike the hot temperatures that we experience when arriving to Door County, the Christmas in July evening was much cooler and required us to wear jackets and sweat shirts.

(Continued on page 47)

(Continued from page 46)

Immediately following the Christmas in July, we gathered for a group photograph with Green Bay and Sister Bay Marina in the background. There was no hope for a beautiful sunset this cool, cloud-covered and brisk evening.

Friday was a free day to sail or do whatever we wanted. Denise went shopping and I went sailing. The 20 mph wind with some rolling waves made for a few fun hours of sailing. My destination was the bay near Ephraim, located south of Sister Bay.

On Friday evening the Catalina 22 group gathered at the Northern Grill for a fun and farewell celebration of a week of enjoyable sailing and camaraderie.



Photograph by Candice Kohut and Amanda Grooms

Below Photograph by Melody Power.

