

Charis' Excellent Adventure – Part Four: A Sailboat Once Again... August 6th, 7th & 8th, 2008

Waterford, NY is where the Erie and Champlain Canals intersect, and tying up for the night at the town dock along “the Waterford Wall” is a rite of passage for boats traveling either canal system.

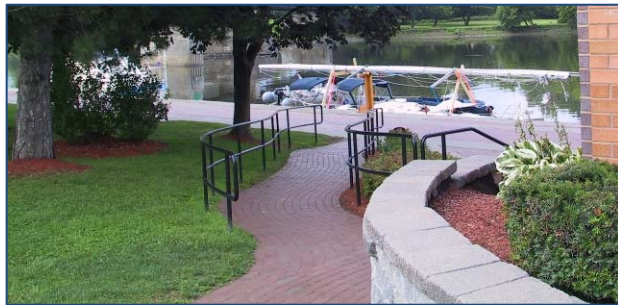


It's been said there are no strangers among cruisers, just friends you haven't met... this was proven yet again as soon as we landed. Almost before we had the docklines secured, we'd been offered a beer, exchanged greetings and home ports & destinations with several other boaters and got the low-down about the best-place-in-town for breakfast.

Our good friends (and intrepid cruisers) Bob & Carol who live nearby came to welcome us to the Hudson River – bearing congratulations, good wishes, flowers from the garden and some of the gourmet concoctions that Carol is so famous for.



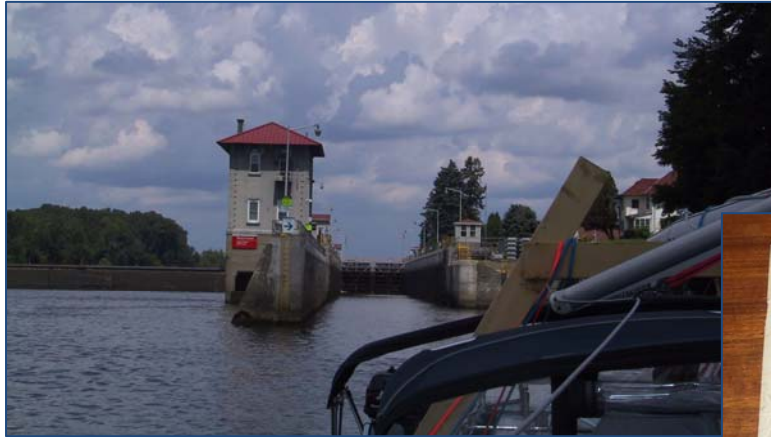
Somehow, between “sundowners” on the boat and a late supper at a local Irish pub, we forgot to get a picture of the party... so here's one instead of the “crew”, wondering when they get to go ashore again.



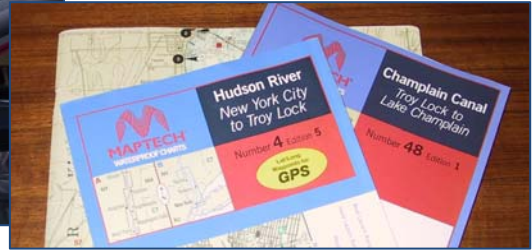
We took a little time the next morning to stretch our legs, and explore the Waterford town landing and the grounds surrounding the 1st lock of the

Erie Canal. This is a massive structure, supporting a 30 foot rise! Right next to it are the remains of the original Champlain Canal, built in the early 1800's. We had a nice chat with the lock-keepers, and the dogs made some new plywood friends!!





After leaving Waterford, we came to the Federal Lock at Troy... where we made one last descent to sea level and the tidal waters of the Hudson, not to mention another chart change.



We left this lock behind with a wistful feeling that this part of the adventure was over... as well as a huge sigh of relief: the mast never touched a lock wall, and Charis came through all twelve locks unscathed!

We quickly realized that we were in a very different waterway... the Hudson River flows right through downtown Albany, and we saw some sights along the river that you will never see on Lake Champlain...



(Yes, that is a U-Haul truck perched on top of that roof, and a Navy destroyer parked out front!)



This next stretch of the river gave us our first serious look at “commercial” traffic... and a real understanding of why they clearly have right of way.



Our destination was Hop ‘O Nose Marina, where we would have the mast raised the next day. As we reached the Hudson lighthouse, just 7 miles or so north of Catskill, looming storm clouds and the ever-increasing rumble of thunder had us convinced we were going to get clobbered, but our luck held out and we made it to the Catskill Creek before the skies burst.

Our arrival at Hop O’ Nose was a bit of a challenge, since at first glance – and second glance, too – it looks *nothing* like you might expect a place to look that is going to raise a 55 foot mast. But we trusted the advice of friends who went before us, urged on by the advancing storm and secured the boat to the dock just before the thunderstorm arrived with a deluge of rain. Our trust was rewarded with an incredibly vivid rainbow.



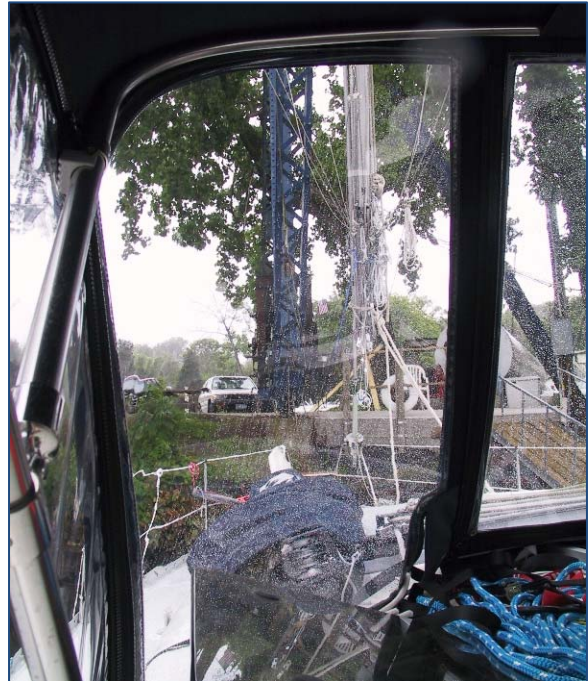
After the rain stopped, Sean, the owner of the marina, came back to the dock to proudly point out the 100-year-old crane, and explain how things would work the next morning. We tried not to think about the crumbling condition of the bulkhead wall, and wondered how the next day would go?



The next morning, it was time for Ted to catch the train back to Whitehall to retrieve his car, and we sent him on his way with hearty thanks for his help keeping Charis safe from harm, and for sharing in a part of the adventure with us.

Next came the raising of the mast. The weather had threatened all morning, as we watched the mast come down on a northbound Caliber.

Sean, the master of the 100-year-old crane, was willing to keep working when it started raining ("What's a little water?"), and up went our mast off the crutches. All of a sudden, progress abruptly stopped, with the discovery that most of the standing rigging (the wires that support the mast) was caught underneath the wooden support crutches. A mad scramble to disassemble the supports delayed things just long enough for a thunderstorm to creep up on us. At the first visible flash ("Rain, OK. Lightning, not OK."), we all agreed it was time to duck for cover..., so there we sat, hunkered down in the cabin, painfully aware of the mast dangling precariously above the deck from the 100-year-old crane. Again, the picture doesn't come close...



The thunderstorm passed and the 100-year-old crane didn't fail. The rain subsided to a faint drizzle, and progress continued. While wrestling with the headstay, the crumbled remains of something called a centering clamp fell onto the deck. Not a critical part, but clearly something to track down and replace. We were just securing the last shroud (a piece of that standing rigging) when we heard a strange sound. Looking up the creek, we saw a squall approaching; the sound was the noise of the raindrops hitting the water several hundred yards away. Another mad dash; we barely had time to get the bridge canvas zipped in place before a literal wall of wind and water hit us. At least this time the mast was securely in place.

The next day dawned clear, we finished the rest of the re-assembly without incident, and Charis was a sailboat once again, ready to continue her adventure.

To be continued...

The crew of s/v Charis: Pam & Bruce..., and Shadow & Shelby

