

Lake Ontario – August 2012

s/v Soulstice

A new adventure begins – Aug 6:

After hoisting the outboard motor on the rail, bailing then raising our dinghy “21” onto its davits and performing the usual pre-trip tank maintenance tasks we left QCYC at 1000 this morning in a gentle 2 to 6 knot north wind. We had ambitions of reaching Cobourg today, but that may be a bit unrealistic unless we fire up the Yanmar for the rest of the day. We'll make a call on today's final destination when we pass Whitby this afternoon. Final destination is another circumnavigation of the lake.

Ya Got to be Flexible – Aug 7:

Sorry for the delay in reporting Tuesday's progress. We did in fact reach Cobourg on Monday evening, and anchored in the pool just west of the marina / yacht club. As we plotted our next day of sailing on Monday night an ambitious plan of sailing 70 miles around the south side of Prince Edward County to Waupoos seemed plausible - until I noticed the bilge pump kicking on and Diane went below to find water spraying from the water heater fitting. Ten years of funneling scalding water to the sink had seriously impaired the barbed fitting connecting the tank to the hose (see picture). I also discovered that our mast-head anchor light was not working.



Wednesday morning we were up early for a trip to the local chandlery, which we discovered did not open until 0900. That gave time for a quick propane fill, a haircut, and visits to Shoppers, a bakery and No Frills, then back to Dean's Marine. Dean did not have the fitting, so cheerfully handed us the keys to his car so that we could drive to Home Hardware where we found what we needed in the plumbing department - quite a wonderful small town experience. I was able to give Dean some business by purchasing an LED back-stay anchor light which can be plugged in to the helm panel DC plug (it only draws a tiny fraction of an amp). By 1130 repairs were effected and we were on our way, but not to Waupoos. I decided that we should take the Murray Canal and the inside passage as we did last year. We had an enjoyable combination of sailing and motoring with mostly westerly winds. As we did last year we dragged a lot of weeds in the western approaches to the canal, but made it through safely.

At 1830 Wednesday night we anchored in Sand Cove, east of Belleville, with 17 other boats. Friends from QCYC saw us come in and came over for drinks (Simon and Amanda on their Tartan 41).

Today we hope to go into Picton.

Picton – Aug 8:

Tonight we are on a Prince Edward Yacht Club mooring ball at Picton where we arrived mid afternoon. In the photo, you can see the harbour with Soulstice on the right.



Both Picton and Waupoos are located in Prince Edward County. Picton is a very popular town, similar but more laid back than Niagara on the Lake. We went for a walk in the town and shared the largest double scoop of ice cream you can imagine. In fact it was so top heavy the cone broke and we had to tip it into a dish and eat it with spoons. Incredible! Am I complaining?

Then we went fishing from the dingy. Graham caught a small bass which we released. No fish for dinner unfortunately.

Storming Sackets Harbor – Aug 8 & 9:

Last night we anchored in a small bay west of Collins Bay called Parrott Bay, very well protected from the north easterly wind, but would not be the place to be in anything from the south or west. We encountered a fair amount of rain yesterday on our way from Picton to Collins Bay and again this morning. This afternoon we moored at the Government Dock in Collins Bay and did our laundry at the nearby laundromat. This dock, which is across the bay from Collins Bay Marina, might be a good option for an overnight stay in future. It is handy to Bella Ristorante, Pride Marine, Tim Horton's, a convenience store and the laundromat as opposed to the Marina which is remote from everything. Our important propane solenoid on / off light on the main panel had also burned out so I was able to find a replacement at Pride (a very friendly and



comprehensive chandlery).

Kate flew into Kingston Airport (the end of the runway is on Collins Bay) at 1500 this afternoon. She arrived by taxi just as we finished filling and emptying our tanks at the Marina.

We are safely moored now in Sackets Harbor, NY after a smooth motor over from Kingston. We ran into some rain but no thunder or lightning. I was constantly checking the radar all day.

The last hour of our five hour trip over to Sackets was completely in the dark, which Diane loved. Motoring slowly into Navy Point Marina to locate our pre-assigned slip was certainly a new adventure and we were happy to have our 1,000,000 candle power torch. Unfortunately the stars did not come out until just after we arrived. We checked in with US Border Security at the video phone and are now relaxing in our screened in "Lake Room" which kept us snug and dry over the last couple of days. It has also been fun thumbing our noses at the flies hovering outside the screens, unlike last year. Across the street from the mooring was this intimidating sight.



We trolled a bit yesterday and Diane cast off the dock today, but no fish since my tiny bass.

Reliving the War of 1812 – Aug 10 & 11:

Sackets Harbor has been a destination I've wanted to visit for many years. It was a key port, ship building centre and garrison for the Americans during the War of 1812. The ships which carried the forces which invaded and captured York (Toronto) on both April 27 and July 31, 1813 were built in the natural harbour basin here over the winter of 1812-1813. In between those two invasions the Battle of Sackets Harbor was fought, one of those quintessential War of 1812 confrontations which could be claimed as a victory by both sides. The British invaded and forced the destruction of much of the local supplies and ship-building materials but withdrew due to the failure of their becalmed squadron to follow up with protection from the lake. For the Americans it was a great defensive victory with many tales of bravery and heroism.

The town has many restored buildings from that age as well as the Madison Garrison, and the well preserved Historic Battlefield. Kate, D and I toured the town and had lunch at Tin Pan Galley, renowned around the lake for its all day breakfast menu. There are also two quite good art galleries in town.

I also did some dinghy patching. We had two tiny scratches just at the starboard aft waterline which looked to be spaced suspiciously like the barbs of a fishing lure. They were producing a slow leak in one of the 3 tubes which needed to be addressed.

All in all a nice relaxing day.



Clayton, NY – Aug 12

What a glorious day of sailing. We beat into the wind for 1.5 hours out of Black River Bay, beam reached for 2.5 hours, broad reached for 1.0 hour and ran down the American Narrows of the St. Lawrence for 1.0 hour, all on a single port tack and 135 genoa and continuously in excess of 6 knots, occasionally touching



8 knots. The engine was on for less than 30 minutes all day. The SW winds were gusting above 20 knots and Soulstice shouldered the 3 to 6 ft waves very well. D and Kate loved it. These pictures are of a Sabre 426 which we crossed bows with beating out of the mouth of the St. Lawrence off Cape Vincent. [Kate took 20 pictures of "Julianne" which we have forwarded to the owner who I tracked down through the Lake Ontario Sabre dealer].



Tonight we are anchored off the town of Clayton and enjoying dinner on board with a beautiful sunny evening.



Thousand Island Club – Aug 13

First off today, thank-you to everyone who sent us Anniversary greetings. A special congratulation to Joyce and Don on their special day also. It was another wonderful day, partly on the water and partly on land. We had a wander around Clayton and then ran downwind along the St. Lawrence for 3 hours to

Alexandria Bay, known to the locals as "A Bay", on mainsail alone to facilitate the occasional jibe due to twists in the channel. A Bay has an annual 10 day Pirate Days festival, and we're right smack in the middle of it. This morning we acquired a "Bring on the Booty" pirate pennant for the flag halyard as well as a very nice new embroidered Stars and Stripes courtesy flag to replace our worn one. Monday is a quiet day after a wild weekend here so we were not boarded or harassed as we sailed into the Riveredge Resort Marina. The Pirate Days celebrate a local marine highwayman who captured a British passenger ship and robbed all off the passengers in the early half of the 19th century - some hero!

After a wander around town (very touristy and not that attractive compared to Clayton or Sackets) D and I abandoned Kate and took the dinghy across the channel to the Thousand Island Club on Wellesley Island for dinner. The TI Club has hundreds of millions of dollars worth of huge power boats moored at its docks and also boasts 2 golf courses. Our meal of 3 appetizers was very nice and the setting sublime, but the college student staff definitely needed some additional training.

Kate has some impressive new camera equipment and has been playing paparazzi since getting on board. Sailing down millionaires' row today, under bridges, past freighters, "cottages" and lighthouses provided lots of subject material which will be fun to review later.

I was up in the night to close the hatches as more rain arrived. It has cleared now but is cloudy.

Castles of the St. Lawrence – Aug 14



We are at anchor tonight behind Harvey Island in the Brock Group of the Thousand Islands, just west of Brockville. We are fairly well protected from the current and main channel but can still see the huge lit up freighters go by about 1/4 mile away.



It was a day of river cruising among the islands and castles of the American side of the river. I drove

D and Kate over to Boldt Castle on Heart Island this morning in the dinghy (picture on left). Even though we visited last year, D thoroughly enjoyed her second visit as did Kate. Nine miles further down the river we docked at Singer Castle at Dark Island (picture on right) and took the very informative 45 minute tour.

The building design was based on the castle in Sir Walter Scott's novel "Woodstock", a favourite of the Singer Sewing Machine CEO who built it. It is currently owned and operated by a group of castle and history enthusiasts out of Germany. It was a fun tour and the masonry was very well maintained. The only incongruous parts were the antique sewing machines scattered throughout.

Surprise, surprise, it is now raining again, but we are snugly zipped up and I was able to finish BBQing before it started. The radar suggests it will blow through in an hour or two so that we can open the ports and hatches again.

In addition to most of the pictures you have seen above, this seagull taking flight is another outstanding example of the photography Kate has been doing. She sits up on the bow with her big lens and probably has 1,000 images already. I'm looking forward to seeing her edited down summary.



Tomorrow we begin fighting the current and heading back west.

Return to Pine Island – Aug 15:

We were fortunate today to find one of our favorite Thousand Islands anchorages open when we arrived mid afternoon. We are anchored in a quiet bay behind Pine Island close to the Thousand Island Bridge.



Our timing was great as several other large boats came nosing in for a look shortly after but there is really only room for one boat to swing at anchor safely.

Today we saw and were passed by a number of large freighters in the narrow channels, including the Capt. Henry Jackman, which we had watched locking through the Welland Canal in a westerly direction back in early July. It is an interesting feeling to start encountering familiar ships on the waterway. When we left the main ship channel and entered the Canadian small craft channel a lot of careful navigation was required.

Diane and Kate fished a bit this morning on 21 and again this evening. We also tried trolling in the channel. Only catch was another small bass by Kate.

It is a lovely peaceful evening on the water, and with Canadian cell coverage strong, we're all sitting in the cockpit tapping away on our phones - go figure.

The Kindness of Strangers – Aug 16:

As Cameron has been learning time and time again during his travels, there is a deep well of human kindness in the world when you approach life with an open mind and attitude. Yesterday we experienced two such experiences, both courtesy of vacationing Americans. Both related to our pursuit of pan fish for dinner in the International Rift, a 30 foot wide channel between Hill Island (Canada) and Wellesley Island (US). We had left Soulstice at anchor near Pine Island and taken 21 for a couple of short runs down to the channel, first time so that Diane could straighten out some paperwork with Nexus at the Canadian border point and the second time to go fishing.

The trip to the border was a Keystone Kops adventure as we inadvertently tied up and the scrambled up the bank into a "controlled area", which is the actual vehicle crossing point. We had several initially intimidating but ultimately fun and successful encounters with fully armed and body armour protected agents. Diane got her Nexus card sorted out and Kate and I rode to the top of the Thousand Island Observation Tower which gave a marvelous view of the entire area. Upon returning to 21 we found her under the careful protection of two agents.

On our way back down the Rift, we stopped to chat with a fisherman on the US bank. He had just landed a nice small mouthed bass and was about to throw it back. Seeing us hungrily eying it, he offered it to us, and we later enjoyed it BBQed for dinner.

Having learned of his secret fishing hole we decided to return later in the day with our rods. Maybe it was our bait, perhaps our casting style, or maybe just the fact that they were American



fish without proper cross border documentation, but we did not catch any.

We did get an unpleasant surprise however when we started back to the mother ship. Just as we reached the top of the long bay where we were anchored 21 sputtered to a halt - out of gas!!!! Less than a minute later Mark and Tina from Sodus Bay, NY came along in their runabout, complete with ski tow bar, and were delighted to help us out with a tow. Two hours later we sent them on their way back to their vacation base in Alexandria Bay after loads of appetizers and a couple of cocktails in the cockpit of Soulstice. Both are lifetime boaters who also own a large cruiser, but had never been on a sailboat before - they were quite pleasantly surprised with the comfort level.

Yesterday was also a day of many swims in the clear waters around our anchorage and a chance to scrub the hull of both boats. We've had rain this morning but it appears to be clearing so that we can proceed through the rest of the Islands and back to Collins Bay tonight. Kate has a flight back to Edmonton tomorrow morning.

Flora and John A. MacDonald – Aug 17 & 18:

Friday night and Saturday morning were jam packed with activities which left me with little time for blogging. We had a 7 hour motor into the teeth of a 20 to 25 knot westerly on Friday which was only relieved briefly when we deked into a few protected anchorages and lee shores to check out future anchorages. One which we quite liked was Mulcaster Island, though next time in I'll have to be a little more careful. I strayed a couple of feet off my chosen channel and had a brief soft grounding in some mud - no damage except to my ego. Diane was also busy in the galley yesterday baking butter tarts and a lemon meringue pie (without an electric beater!).



We decided to dock in the Flora MacDonald Confederation Harbour Marina which is a huge, well run municipal facility right in the heart of Kingston.

Friday night was full of activities all around us. We stumbled onto a John A. MacDonald walking tour of downtown co-hosted by local boy Don Cherry, who lives on Wolfe Island. See picture of Grapes with Kate. A Dixieland Jazz ensemble was playing in the park between 6 and 7, followed by a free rock concert including members of the Tragically Hip in the town square. We had a great final evening meal together at a little Italian restaurant.

Kate caught a cab at 8:00 this morning then D and I spent a very productive couple of hours on laundry, grocery shopping and at a local market in the square where the concert had been last night. We'll miss Kate's great company on the rest of this journey.

This afternoon we enjoyed a glorious 5 hour close reach under full sail at 5 to 7 knots in 10 to 15 knot winds. Soulstice and I could not be more pleased. The sun was shining and Diane was also in her happy place working on one of her marine themed acrylic paintings. I had failed to mention last week that on our way east on Lake Ontario she completed a whole new batch of Flutterby greeting cards which we will use as part of her stock at her booth at the Mississauga Art Show on Sept 23. We also emailed a "get-well Monarch" to my mom who has been a bit under the weather. Diane has started two new series of subjects, one titled "Astractions" and the other "Skiffs and dinghies".



We arrived at Henderson Harbor, which is close to Sackets Harbor where we were docked a week ago, at 1800 and promptly ran aground again, this time smack in the middle of the well bouyed entry channel in front of the HHYC main dock. After I had managed to spin around two apologetic members came out with a runabout and helped us ease back into the bay where we picked up a mooring ball. They mentioned that they are overdue for a dredging given the historically low water levels this year. We had followed the Ports Guide instructions to the letter and had also tried to call in on VHF for guidance without success. Oh well, one more lesson learned without serious consequences!

We dinghied back in to the club later and landed in the middle of the Commodore's Cup banquet with live music, a substantial dinner and friendly members.

It is dead calm now and winds and waves are forecast to be light tomorrow for our possible crossing to Oswego.

Island hopping – Aug 19:

Today was another marvelous, relatively uneventful day of blissful sailing. Forty nautical miles on a single close reaching tack under full sail from Association Island at the mouth of Henderson Harbor, NY right to Waupoos Island in Prince Edward County, Ontario in 6.5 hours. Along the way we sailed through the lees of Stoney Island, Galloo Island, Main Duck Island, False Duck Islands and Timber Island. We are in a lovely anchorage just west of Waupoos Island in the lee of Henderson Point. It was a warm tropical evening so we had Nachos and Coronas for dinner.

More on Waupoos tomorrow. Photo of Soulstice at right is by Ian Trites during July cruise from Toronto to Niagara-on-the-Lake.



Waupoos to Oswego – Aug 20



We awoke this morning to discover the meaning of Waupoos. It is our theory that it must be an ancient native word for "fish flies". Our boat was coated with them, and the wet lockers off the stern were swarming with them. Diane was so grossed out that we upped anchor right away and headed back out onto the lake, idling along for the first hour while we washed down the decks. Fortunately we were zipped up so relatively few made it into the cockpit. Waupoos has a winery nearby and is a lovely anchorage, but we'll wait for another time before exploring it in depth.

Our great winds of the last few days gave out today so we motored the 35 miles due south to Oswego, NY in calm seas. Diane fished for an hour near the end of the crossing.

We've now crossed the lake three times in three days, and enjoyed every moment. Lots of time for reading, painting and contemplation.

In Oswego we rendezvoused with friends from QCYC in their boats Silver Fox and Allure heading down the Oswego River canal system to New York and ultimately the Bahamas. On board one of them was the peripatetic Jim Dow, helping out with the first leg of Silver Fox's journey. We had a great dinner together on shore and Diane then served dessert for eight in our cockpit.

All together, another great day.

Calm Seas – Aug 21

We spent a very interesting morning helping QCYC Commodore Ken Owen and crew unstep the mast of their Catalina 42 - Allure and then secure it in its cradle on the deck. This is an essential first step before entering the canal system. All went well and as they prepared to head south and Silver Fox lined up to have their mast pulled, we headed back out onto the lake. Oswego has a very successful sport fishing fleet who were bringing in some monster sized King Salmon. Inspired, we trolled for an hour without success so then began motoring west with Rochester as a destination. The seas were calm and the wind barely perceptible so we were able to make it to Rochester just after a beautiful sunset and as the trailing boats from the RYC Tuesday race night also returned to harbour. We tied to the wall at the Rochester Yacht Club and awaited the arrival of Diane's cousin Heidi's friend who brought us some supplies. Tom joined us for a butter tart and a chat in the cockpit before heading on his way. Heidi is currently in California getting her daughter settled in for her first year of college.

This morning we took 21 about 6 miles up the Genesee River to the head of navigation at a large waterfall then headed back out onto the lake, again with calm winds and seas. Diane spotted this potential future painting subject as we sped along in the river.



The pleasures of night sailing – Aug 22

After our exciting dark of night entry to Sackets Harbor with Kate last week Diane and I have several times discussed how much we enjoyed being out on the water at night. Today we decided to try it again so pushed right through from Rochester to Niagara on the Lake. I knew from a past visit that the yacht club usually has mooring balls available for visitors in the Niagara River in front of the clubhouse on week days, and sure enough, when we arrived at 2200 we had two to choose from. Our approach was illuminated by a crescent moon and as I look down the river now and out onto the lake I can see the night sky illuminated above Toronto. It is very peaceful on the river at night.

I forgot to mention yesterday a very peculiar observation we made while cruising the south shore. It was repeated today though not to quite the same extent. In the 50 nautical miles we motored yesterday, always within sight of shore, we did not see a single other boat after leaving the fishing boats of Oswego behind and arriving upon the race fleet at Rochester. We passed a number of usually busy small ports, including Fairhaven and Sodus Bay, and it was a gorgeous day, so we really have no explanation. VHF Channel 16 which is used for hailing other boats was also very quiet, other than when we spoke with Dwight and Carol on Tapas, another southbound QCYC boat crossing the lake to Oswego. Today, covering an even greater distance, we saw a few boats but not nearly as many as any normal day on the north shore and a far cry from the flotillas in the Thousand Islands.

Tomorrow we'll check on Diane's paintings in the local gallery then perhaps motor up the river gorge.

Homeward Bound – Aug 23 & 24

We are now half-way across Lake Ontario on our journey back to the GTA. We will moor in front of home in Port Credit and dinghy in to pick up the mail and see to a few minor chores, then head over to Mimico Cruising Club for a Catalina rendezvous this weekend.

We stayed two nights on our mooring ball in NOTL and had a wonderful visit from friends Ken and Karen, who have retired to Virgil, just outside of NOTL. We had lunch on board, tried to sail in very light winds, then had a nice wander about town. We dropped in to the gallery which is displaying some of Diane's art (CGV Gallery on King St in the old Masonic Lodge building) and had a delightful visit with George, the owner. We finished off the afternoon with a light meal and some wine on the Queen's Landing patio. At dusk we took a dinghy ride a few miles up the Niagara River.

We thought you might enjoy seeing our harbour neighbour at the yacht club the last two nights. To Kalon is a custom built 101 feet long Super Yacht based in Florida. We enjoyed Googling it and marveling at the amenities on board. The large crew never rested in their cleaning activities. It has a top speed of 27 knots and is headed next to the Thousand Islands then down the St. Lawrence to NS and Maine before the owners fly home.



We'll be back home Sunday night or Monday morning. This will probably be the last blog of this outing. Below is a picture of Soulstice at anchor in front of our townhouse in Port Credit.



Race Crew – Aug 25 & 26

It's us again! Hello from the sleek race boat Soulstice. She and her able race crew of Diane and Hilary had their inaugural race competition yesterday and came through with flying colours, second in class and fourth of ten overall in the Catalina Rendezvous Fun Regatta. It was a very exciting eight leg race around the marks with a light wind start which built up to a wind of 15 knots at one point. Hilary and Diane had their competitive natures in full display.

The Catalina Rendezvous at Mimico was a blast with great friends and good dance music. Hilary joined us for the weekend. We are now beating back to QCYC in moderate winds with Diane ably handling the wheel and Hilary practicing her tacking skills.



Post-trip Maintenance Work - Aug 27 – 30

With Soulstice safely back in her home port at Queen City Yacht Club, it was time for some post trip maintenance work. We have had to move down the lagoon from our normal dock due to the historically low water levels so are now located in Allure's vacated slip.

One of the reasons we beat back to QCYC on Sunday against the east wind was reluctance on my part to put too much strain on the engine. I had detected a small diesel leak in the fitting which attaches the

#3 injector high pressure pipe to the injection pump. I had wrestled with it in the morning but that just put me in mind of the lyric "used to bust my knuckles on a monkey wrench" from John Prine's "Fish and Whistle" song. I had called my diesel mechanic Buffy for advice and he counseled me to completely remove the line from the #4 injector in order to get a proper purchase on the 17 mm nut on the bottom of #3. That done I reattached #4, bled the lines, and was back in operation. In response to my report of success I was delighted to get a tongue in cheek email back from Buffy commending me on "the world's quickest apprenticeship". Buffy is a very talented marine engineer (and interesting character) who had worked on the valve issue we had encountered earlier in the summer. He not only diagnosed the source of the valve problem (likely caused by delamination and blockage of the exhaust hose and resulting blow-back). The damage to the hose had been missed by my marine surveyor last year and also another Yanmar mechanic consulted earlier in the summer. Buffy replaced the mushy 5 foot long, 3 inch thick exhaust hose with a crisp new one - \$100 at West Marine - then took the engine apart so that I could take the head and exhaust manifold to Crosstown Engines for a valve job and cleaning. It was a great learning experience as he allowed me to observe most of the strip down and reassembly. I also ordered and picked up the gasket and seal kits from the Yanmar distributor, saving time and money.

That done I moved on to another task which I had been planning all summer. The helm engine instrument panel (Oil pressure, Temp, RPMs, On / Off switches, signal lights and horn) was very faded and marked from its time in the Florida sun. In addition, I had been getting some variable readings which indicated some resistance in the electrical wiring to this panel. I had ordered a new panel from Seaward which had arrived while we were away, so I took a day to swap all of the instruments over to the new panel and clean all of the electrical connections. I'm delighted with this cosmetic and electrical upgrade.

I had also ordered two more oval side ports from Lewmar which had also arrived, so swapped them in. The old ones had significant crazing on them. Earlier in the summer I had replaced the other two of the four main salon ports and most of the top hatches with new lenses I had inherited with the boat. They had been acquired from Lewmar by the previous owner as part of a warranty claim, but were never installed (see separate post on the tricky procedure involved).

Any of you who have been onboard will remember seeing the wonderful double fan we have which keeps our aft cabin very well ventilated. Unfortunately, a loose string got caught in one of the fans earlier in the summer putting it out of commission. I was able to source a replacement (and significantly upgraded) fan from the US for \$60. Replacing the old for the new turned out to be fairly straightforward once I figured out the process. Basically I had to unscrew and separate the front cover from the base section of the fan (which is designed to fit into a window opening), saw off a couple of protruding lugs, find some longer screws, then fit the two pieces on either side of the opening below the stairs. All in about a two hour project, not counting time spent searching through my huge home bolt and screw inventory for the right size connectors. This winter I may look into possible 12 volt powered alternatives to this DC powered fan which we currently run at the dock and occasionally off the inverter.