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## Pandemic Boating Summer— yes or no?

With COVID-19 restrictions in place and most people being shut up in their homes for months, the boating season has been unusual to say the least. Reactions to the pent up urge to go boating tend to fall into three categories. One group left their boats in storage and went no where, another group put their boats in the water and used them as a getaway cottage, and the third group went out cruising and visiting other ports like nothing had changed. Here are the details.

Group one was somewhat constrained not only by COVID, but by the big storm that blew through last January and left some marinas and yacht clubs needing major repairs. South Shore Yacht Club's members were in this bucket. With all of the finger piers destroyed

and COVID placing restrictions on the amount of work that could be done to make repairs, they were between a rock and a hard place to get their boats in the water. Most of them left them in storage or had to switch to other marinas. These folks just let the 2020 season slide by and stayed out of the water for a year.

Another group put their boats in the water and used them as floating retreats to get away from their homes to a place of relative safety. Some switched marinas or went to safer areas to slip their boats for the season and had limited contact with other boaters on their docks primarily. Not 100% safe, but more safe than traveling around

by planes and trains. It's a place that restores our sanity when we are home bound for such a long time. "Without our boat we would have gone insane".

The third group went out and used their boats more than ever this year. They may have been a little restricted by some of their favorite travel spots being closed or limited by contact rules, but they went out and found ones that were still operating and enjoyed getting away from the home port and out on the big lake. The Illinois boaters on the Illinois River were confined to the pools where their boats were docked this summer by the lock closures, but many boated around their pools anyway just

to get a little exercise for their engines and their spirits. It felt good to burn a little gas in those engines even if the trips were shorter than normal. Some of the Chicago boaters changed their summer slips to the Indiana yacht clubs and marinas and that gave them an opportunity to see new ports and facilities.

This was a year of challenges. We had to overcome isolation, closures, no social gatherings, and lock repairs, yet the need to go boating was as great as ever. Boat sales were brisk. Lets hope that 2021 is a whole new ball game and we can all get back on the waters.

## The Islands I Have Come to Love

### Special points of interest:

- Pandemic Boating Summer
- The Islands I Love
- Pollution Lawsuit
- South Milwaukee Anniversary Story
- Repairs for South Shore Yacht Club
- Annual Meeting Scheduled

While I traveled around to state parks and campgrounds this summer, I had the opportunity to see a lot of islands from the shores that I used to frequent by boat. It made me think back to those places of mystery and remember all the fun of exploring that I once had there. Here are a few of the special islands on my list of favorite places to see by boat.

Chambers Island (Green Bay) is probably my all time favorite. It has one of the finest beaches this side of the Baha-

mas, and on a good day in summer you can see literally hundreds of boaters from all sides of Green Bay at that beach. There is a road-way across the island to the airstrip and the lighthouse, and the other way it leads to the inland lake within the island, with another island in the center—the island in the lake, on the island in the lake. Some houses along the shores, but not too many. Great beach for a picnic or just to do boat and people watching.

Horseshoe Island (Eagle Island in Nicolet Bay) A cute island with a nice refuge harbor and some

campsites but not too many. The path around the island is fun to hike, and there are a few stone foundations visible from old houses. The harbor is a great place to fish and swim. (See Picture on page 2.)

Beaver Island (middle of the lake) Only got to visit there once and stayed a couple of days. It has a nice marina that we visited and enjoyed the town by foot.

Washington Island (Door County) take your boat to the marina or the ferry boats that run every half hour. Take a car or bikes if

you want because the island is 6 miles across and you can really explore. Great views, an airport, fishing village, golf course, old settlements, round stones at Schoolhouse Beach, and the Bitter's Bar which sold shots of bitters during prohibition for "medicinal purposes". Spend a day to enjoy.

Rock Island ( Door County)  
Across a narrow strip of shallow water from Washington Island this is a must see. You dock at the Boat House dock which is below the great boat house and library built by a famous inventor named Thordarsen, He invented several electrical machines in the early 1900's and became very rich. He bought the whole island and started to develop a retreat for his friends to come and stay. There is a beautiful beach on one side, and a trail to the lighthouse on the other. It has rocky soil as the name suggests. There is a ferry boat that

comes over once or twice a day. Some campsites are available if you can backpack your own equipment along.

Mackinac Island—what can I say, it's a great place to explore. It has a fort, shops, hotels, the Grand Hotel, and a road around the island used only by bicycles and horses. No cars are allowed on the island. The marina is the end point of the annual Mac Race each summer which goes from the Chicago Yacht Club to Mackinac about 363 miles.

Last on my list is the Apostle Islands in Lake Superior. About a dozen islands featuring light houses, trails, beaches, shopping, sea caves, or just hiking trails. Plenty to see, but watch out for the bears if you decide to go berry picking. You can do a different island every day with new experiences each time.



**Horseshoe Island in Door County**

## Major Pollution Spill Lawsuit Holding

Two large steel mills in Indiana, ArcelorMittal Burns Harbor, LLC, and USX Steel, have been found to have illegally discharged large amounts of cyanide, ammonia, and hexavalent chromium into the Little Calumet River which feeds into Burns Waterway and then into Lake Michigan. These "forever chemicals" are part of the steel making process and were supposed to be collected during plant operations.

The cyanide spill poisoned about three thousand fish and some birds which died and floated into the Burns Waterway from the Little Calumet River. The incident led to

a one week closure of four public beaches, marinas and yacht clubs, one state park, one national park, and other public places. Vessel traffic at the Port of Indiana was also paused until the oil spill could be cleaned up. The plant also has a history of other ammonia liquor spills and oil spills dating from February of this year.

Dogan & Dogan law firm has been preparing a suit to address claims by over 100 plaintiffs to require a better discharge monitoring system be installed to protect the area from future spills. The spills went unreported for four days by the steel companies.

At the moment, the suit has not been filed and is waiting until the courts begin to take hearings in person once again. The virtual type of lawsuits have been very slow and mostly ineffective so we are in a holding pattern. LMYA has joined in sponsoring this lawsuit and made a major contribution to the fund to hire expert witnesses who can testify at the trial regarding the toxic effects of the discharged materials. Better monitoring systems must be developed to keep this problem from reoccurring. The LMYA feels that it is important for our association to take action to protect our lake and beaches from dangerous pollution and to encourage lawmakers

to make changes to the existing system of "self-monitoring" which allow industries to escape detection on spills or cover up the results of their actions.

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## South Milwaukee Yacht Club 70th Anniversary Interview

South Milwaukee Yacht club is marking its seventieth anniversary by collecting the memories of some of its long time members. Linda Daly recently interviewed Howie Oudeans who has been a member since 1970. In the 1940's, Howie who was a young boy at the time, remembers sledding on the hill above where the yacht club was built in the 1950's. The club was actually built by the labor of its members from digging the basement of the club house to erecting the walls and adding additions over the years. They even built the harbor. In the last couple of years, the hands-on tradition has continued when members laid a new floor in the bar and put in a new ceiling in the hall. Howie participated in many of these projects.

Howie remembers the days when each club member built their own pier. They took their piers out of the water in fall because they wouldn't make it through the winter in the ice. Back then the boats and piers were made mostly of wood. In February through April boat owners would repair and caulk their boats with some members building sheds to work in to keep out the worst of the cold.

In the summer, there were alewife problems. If the wind blew out of the southwest, the dead fish would pile up in a corner of the harbor a foot deep and stink. On the beaches they would bring in end loaders to clean up the alewives, otherwise you couldn't swim. Off the green

bridge over Oak Creek near the club, you could haul up gallons of smelt. Perch were more plentiful too. In those days you would clean fish and flush the guts into the water at the club. Some people would clean their fish out in the lake where they caught them.

Years ago, all the yacht clubs had open houses. Fifteen to twenty boats from South Milwaukee would go off to another club's open house together. Most weekends in the summer the boats were off to an event somewhere. They'd go south to 5th Street Yacht Club, Harbor Lights, or Kenosha. They'd go north to South Shore, Port Washington, and Sheboygan. More club members were

LMYA members back then. They always went to the rendezvous which was held in Sheboygan with twenty-five boats going up there. According to Howie, membership in the LMYA fell off when boating fell off. Gas prices went up and there was less club camaraderie. When Jim and I joined the club fourteen years ago, membership in the club was down and many pier spaces were open. But in the past four years or so, new members have joined, especially younger families. So, all the 128 pier spots are now taken in the club harbor. Hopefully we will be able to get some of these new members to join the LMYA.

## Breakwater Repairs Needed for South Shore Yacht Club

South Shore Yacht Club in Milwaukee is still under repair from the January storm damage. There were no slips available for members this summer. Getting the club back in operation next season depends on getting the breakwater repaired as soon as possible. The club has learned that a FEMA determination letter has been issued concerning providing some federal funds to repair the breakwater and they are waiting to hear the outcome. Once that is released, there will need to be state of Wisconsin funds and equal

funds from the County of Milwaukee toward the project. New larger stones will be needed to repair the holes and add more height to the existing wall to prevent future storm damage.

The Milwaukee County Parks Department has submitted a capital improvement budget to reconstruct the breakwater over the next three years. They are asking for \$1 million in 2021, \$9.2 million in 2022, and \$6.5 million in 2023 to complete the project. South Shore has asked

the county to begin the project by repairing the damages to sections that protect both C and D docks so that the slips can be safely replaced and the boaters will be able to use the docks once again in 2021. It is not known when the reconstruction will actually begin, or the time frame needed.

This year, members and construction workers were able to rebuild the horseshoe area for transient boat traffic.

Some new structural steel girders were replaced in order to put the main docks back in service.

Wave boards have been removed from the docks in preparation for the rebuilding of the finger piers next season. Hopefully the water levels will not be so high next year which means the wave boards will no longer be necessary.

### Annual Meeting Scheduled

The Annual Meeting of the LMYA has been scheduled for November 21st, starting at 1:00 pm. In keeping with COVID-19 restrictions, the meeting will be held using Zoom virtually. Anyone who wants to observe the annual meeting should contact Jim Mergener, LMYA secretary, at [jsmergener@gmail.com](mailto:jsmergener@gmail.com).



The Bridge for 2020

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