

Anchored in a foggy bay, sailors Paul and Betsy Marti — on the cruise of a lifetime — find friendships as much with other boaters as with beluga whales and various types of sea life.

HOME at SEA

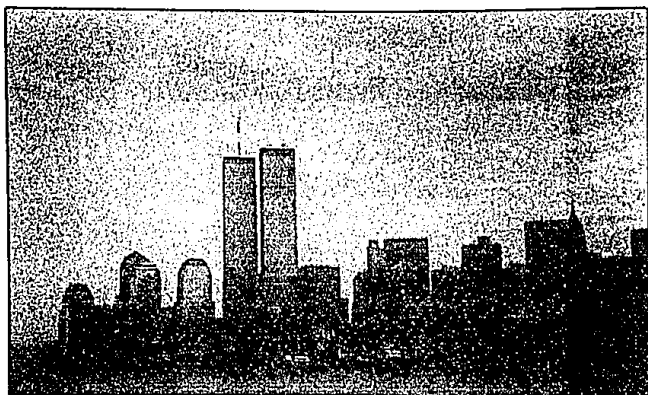
Sea life far from serene
but sailor has no regrets

"Enjoying the reality of life on a small boat is a practice in adaptation."

— Paul Marti



Sumptuous seafood feasts are the exception, not the rule, aboard the Keema, where peanut butter and jelly dinners are far more common.



On Aug. 19, the Keema sailed into New York Harbor, where Paul Marti bristled with goosebumps at the sight of the Statue of Liberty.

Paul Marti, 38, recently set off on the trip of a lifetime with his wife, Betsy. Marti, who teaches history and geography at Rochester High School, plans to sail around the world. From time to time on his epic journey he will be pausing to pass on his experiences to Street Scene readers.

CIRCUMNAVIGATION -a journal

A fair breeze gently carried the sun-drenched sailboat onward, ever closer to the night's anchorage.

The happy crew whiled away the hours lying in the sun's warm glow, reading, relaxing and watching the historic scenery of the St. Lawrence River unfold before them.

In the galley the day's fresh catch baked in the oven, filling the cabin with promises of another sumptuous feast. Sailing, indeed life, couldn't be better!

YES, THAT'S the way I pictured it too. My dreams are always optimistic. The reality was different.

July 26, 1987, 13:30 hours: The wind blows hard out of the northeast, a Labrador current wind, cold and biting, brewed to test the determination of boat and crew. In the cockpit, dressed in foul-weather gear with layers beneath and stamping my feet for warmth, I fight the wheel, forcing my boat, Keema, into the four-foot waves.

The outside temperature is 56 degrees, and the water is a frigid 42 degrees. Every wave brings a bone-chilling spray across the deck. Low, dense clouds obscure the coastline as we slowly plod eastward.

In the galley, Betsy struggles to keep her footing, juggling jars as she prepares another peanut butter and jelly dinner. Seven more hours until we make port, and the pounding ends.

Yes, sometimes reality is just a tad different than what dreamers conjure up in their dens on snowy nights. Living with and enjoying the reality of life on a small boat is a practice in adaptation.

ALTHOUGH all our days are not like that cold Sunday in July, few of them are like the day-dreams of winters past. Now 16 weeks into our journey we chuckle at the dreams as we adapt to the reality of cruising life.

One of the basic realities is that we are on a voyage that when completed will have covered more than 29,000 nautical miles. For you math majors, it won't take long to realize that at an average speed of five knots we have a lot of sailing time to log. In my planning I have broken the journey down into nine major legs. All of these legs are subdivided into shorter passages and the time allotted to complete each segment.

Leg One is from Detroit to the Panama Canal, approximately 5,200 nautical miles. Since we took that first step 10 weeks ago, we have covered more than half of that distance. From Lake St. Clair to New Jersey's Barnegat Bay, we sailed the coastline of the great peninsula formed by the St. Lawrence River, the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the Atlantic Ocean. Ten states and five provinces claim shoreline in this historic portion of Canada and the United States.

It has been during this first passage of lakes and great rivers, ocean gulfs and open sea that we have come to terms with life afloat.

LET ME preface the realities by saying that I'm loving it!

So far, no regrets. It's been an opportunity to see and learn about so many new places.

The people of the United States and Canada have been friendly and helpful all along the coastline. The coast itself is spectacular, from the bustling shoreline of Toronto to the lonely bluffs of the Gaspé. There is an endless array of landscapes and lifestyles to explore.

We have been very fortunate so far. Along this coastline so often shrouded in fog and buffeted by adverse winds, we have passed with no major problems or damage.

Along the way our days are spent mostly in passage-making. When looking for an anchorage for the night, we prefer anchoring out to sea over marinas for several reasons. Cost is a factor: We

have paid from \$5 Canadian to \$28 U.S. to tie up at a marina for the night.

Serenity also is another reason for anchoring. Floating in a quiet bay, the stars above . . . well, it's beautiful, and free. Also, the lack of marinas in some of the remote regions of eastern Canada leads to a lot of nights off the hook.

Consequently, it's just the two of us, and that also takes some adjustment. Thirty-one feet of boat keeps you quite close 24 hours a day.

What we don't have and do miss are our families and friends. We've had to become better friends to take the place of our extended families back home. For a good relationship, the closeness is a real challenge. For a shaky one, I'd suggest a big dinghy.

Of course, we are not totally alone. There are the new friends we have met along the way. People from all parts of the United States and Canada are part of the migratory fleet making its way toward southern waters. The floating community is helpful and friendly, and like ourselves usually anxious to share an evening's conversation and sometimes to cruise together for a while.

We currently are anchored just a few yards from four other Michigan couples, including Case and Mary DeLange from Southfield and Dick and Diane Weaver of Troy. All of us have separate cruising goals but share the camaraderie of the sailing life.

NOT ALL OF our visitors, however, are homopetals. One of the true delights has been the variety of the sea life. On July 16, some 100 miles east of Quebec City, we spotted our first whale, a beluga. Belugas are small as whales go, 15 feet long and about 3,000 pounds, and white in color. For the next few weeks whales visited every day.

They spend their summers in the St. Lawrence River giving birth to their young and delighting the tourists with their antics. Besides the numerous belugas, the St. Lawrence is alive with the great whales. As these gentle giants swam past Keema, dwarfing us in size, I gained a new respect for them and made a promise to help support efforts to save the whales for future generations.

Seals also abound in these waters, and these clowns of the sea are curious and playful. Along with the dolphins that play in our wake, the seals, whales and occasional sharks keep us scanning the waters, knowing we are never alone.

Aug. 1 was an important day for us. Early that morning, before the sun had hit the horizon, Keema entered the Atlantic Ocean. Now, for the first time, we were in the open sea and heading south — 1,484 miles from Metro Beach!

Betsy was asleep. Alone on the deck, I looked at the seascape. This is my home for the next two years, I hope we become good friends.

AUGUST HAS been a delight and also frustrating: a delight in the beautiful towns and harbors of Nova Scotia and Maine; strong, southwesterly winds have provided the frustration. Many hours have been spent listening to the rumble of our diesel auxiliary.

We made our way south, past Cape Cod and to the highlight of East Coast ports. On Aug. 19, a perfect summer's day, we completed our sail down Long Island Sound and entered the East River and the waters of New York City.

It was mid-morning, and the city was teeming with life. Work boats, tour boats and pleasure boats all shared the busy waterway. That afternoon we sailed by the Statue of Liberty, the refurbished guardian of the harbor and symbol of our country. I must confess my arms were bristling with goose bumps as we gazed upon Miss Liberty.

A few more miles down the coast and into Barnegat Bay marked the end of the first segment of our journey. More than 4,500 miles of voyaging are behind us. We have adapted to the confines of a small boat and are coping with the moods of wind and sea.

It has not been perfect, for there have been times when the comforts of home and the companionship of family and friends have been sorely missed. But it has been a challenge of navigation, of self-reliance and of sense of humor.

Next we head south along the coast to the waters of the Caribbean and the open passages of winter.