

Crossing Their Wake

by Peter Goodale

Part 1

For more than a year and nearly 5,700 miles after casting off from Peekskill Yacht Club (PYC) on June 6, 2019, Peter and Susan Sanchirico “crossed their wake” on June 23, 2020 returning to their homeport after successfully navigating America’s Great Loop in the Answer, their Kadey Krogen Manatee yacht.

Members of PYC and the club’s first loopers, they wrote on the Facebook page of the America’s Great Loop Cruisers’ Association, “The ‘Loop’ was everything we thought it would be. The journey itself (and) the places we’ve seen have been phenomenal but (cue the cliché) it’s the people!”

The cruise took them up the Hudson River, across the Erie Canal, through the Great Lakes, down the Mississippi River, around Florida, north on the Intercoastal Waterway, into New York Harbor and up the Hudson River back to Peekskill.

“We saw things and did things we’d never see or do otherwise,” said Peter. “And we met a boat load of terrific people along the way. This was the greatest adventure of our lives. It was on our bucket list for years and exceeded all our expectations.”

Their 36’ yacht is a bit small for loop cruising they said, but without walk-arounds, the interior space is more generous than many boats of greater length. Nonetheless, they said that having been happily married for nearly 50 years helped them deal with the challenges – and rare disagreements -- of habitually being together.

“Like it or not,” said Peter, “We lived in a cramped space, almost always face-to-face, constantly together even while underway. While there was not much more to learn about each other after all these years of marriage, we did learn to appreciate each other more.”

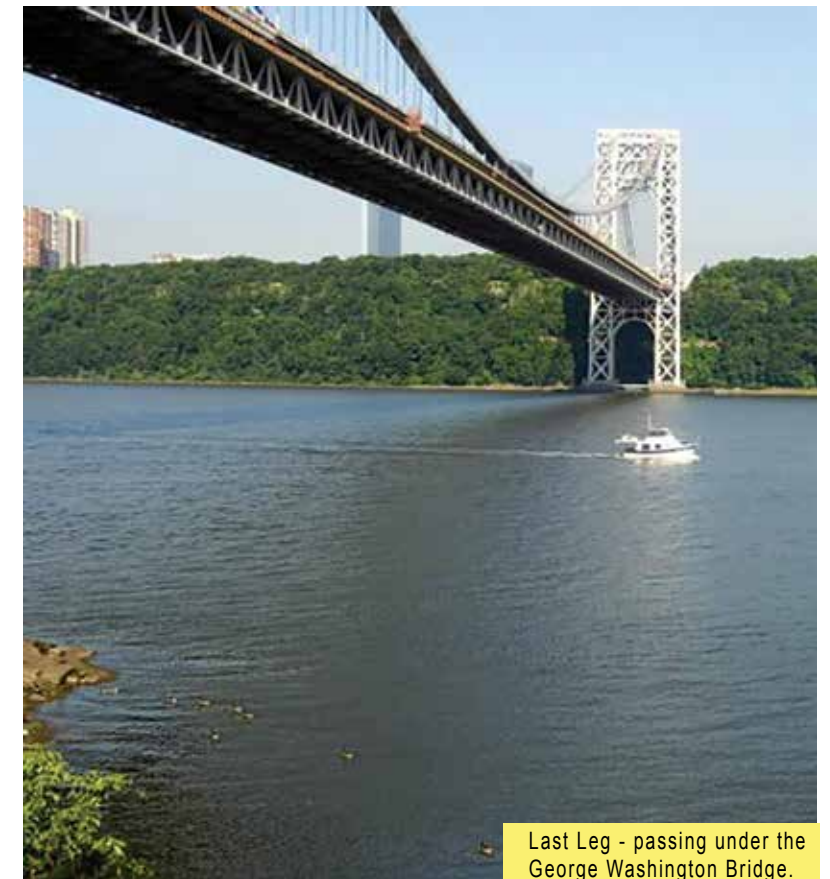


Mike Rabasco’s photo of the Answer approaching PYC’s basin at 12:12 pm on June 23, 2020 came with this caption: “Look what the cat dragged in.”

Susan added, “Quickly letting go of stupid little things was really important. Loopers joke that at the end of the loop, they will need three things: memberships in Alcoholics Anonymous and Weight Watchers, and serious marriage counseling. We made it back not needing any such help!”



Al Scannapieco prepped lines helped Peter dock.



Last Leg - passing under the George Washington Bridge.



Susan Sanchirico wrote weekly re-ports on their progress along the Great Loop. In photo at right, she’s typing her week 11 blog some- where on Lake Michigan.

She did learn one new thing about Peter. “Unlike at home, on the cruise I sat across the table from him at every meal. That’s how I realized how much butter he eats. No wonder we always ran low on butter.”

Peter was quick to add, “But I like butter!” Planning each crew member’s responsibility

during the trip is key to avoiding friction they said. “The wife can’t let her husband do all the work and just relax,” said Susan. “Each must have substantial roles.” On this loop, Susan decided when and where they would travel, made all marina reservations, wrote the ship’s



Waiting not so patiently.

2005 when they bought the Manatee yacht which they believed would be ideal for their Greet Loop. In 2008 they adopted Kodey, then a two-year-old rescue dog. "Kodey is the right kind of dog for this trip," said Peter. "He's even tempered, older now at 14 and not as frisky, about 23 pounds so he's easy to lift and he doesn't shed. And he's adaptable. Susan trained him to use the Tinkle Tray while underway and hold it for other needs until we reached shore."

Then in 2017 they sold their "dirt home" (that's what loopers call private homes) in Putnam Valley and moved to a condo in Jefferson Village. It was much easier to leave a condo for a year and, with their children on their own, they no longer needed all the space of their "dirt home." Also in 2017 Susan retired – Peter retired in 2012 – and when Peter's father passed in 2018, they were free of all obligations and ready to make final plans for the trip.

"For us, completing the Loop would have been near impossible without help." said Peter. "Fellow PYC members became our 'essential workers.'" The condo, truck, mail, even house plants were looked after by Rosemary & Neil Murray, Lorraine & John Macko, and Pam Darref. Many thanks to them.

Susan's weekly blog reports at www.answerloop2019.blog recorded their 55-week adventure in detail. In reflecting on the trip upon their return, Peter and Susan had many insights not found in the ship's log.

Read Part 2 in the upcoming Holiday Issue



The Doctail Fleet.

Finally heading north!



Algae and barnacles.

weekly blog report, and did the cooking and laundry. Peter piloted the boat and managed all maintenance. Both took turns walking the third crew member, Kodey, their 14-year-old Cockapoo whose role was to keep them entertained.

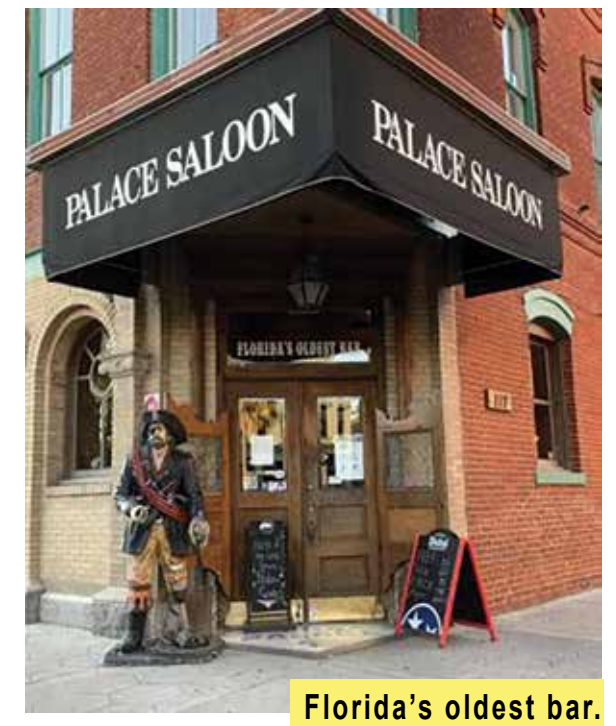
"He was also a good barometer of the weather," said Peter. "If the water was nice and smooth, he would lie down and not move. But if the water was rough and dicey, he would find Susan and cuddle up in her lap."

The roots of their decision to tackle the Great Loop date back to 1974 when they bought a 16' ski boat which they kept on the west shore of the Hudson. One day they took a left turn out of the marina and ventured north to West Point, well beyond their usual comfort zone. That trip prompted them to buy maps, charts and books about the Hudson in which they learned they could navigate all the way to Canada and beyond.

They were hooked and the long-term plan got underway. The first major commitment came in



Downtown Beaufort.



Florida's oldest bar.