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## Vermilion couple cruise Great Loop

CHANDA NEELY, Morning Journal Writer  
04/20/2008

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**VERMILION** -- Since retiring, Dan and Judy Kernell, of Vermilion, have spent most of their time seeing the world and a lot of water from the deck of their boat.

The Kernells, who have been married for 15 years, spend eight months each year on the water. Their most recent voyages took the couple on a 11,050-mile Great Loop -- around the Atlantic and Gulf Intracoastal Waterways, the Great Lakes, The Canadian Heritage canals and the inland river systems.

The Kernells have been boating for 25 years and traveled thousands of miles; however, their Great Loop adventure is the first time they tracked their mileage.

"We always got boating magazines and read about the people (traveling the Great Loop)," Judy said. "We started reading on the Internet about this great organization where you can just find out a plethora of information."

Judy was referring to America's Great Loop Cruisers' Association, formed in 1999 by a group in Charleston, S.C., to share general cruising information about eastern North America's waterways and to enhance the experience of cruising the Great Loop. The organization has more than 4,000 members.

The AGLCA bestows the unique BaccaLooperate degree on boaters who complete the trip around the Great Loop.

The Kernells started out around the Great Loop in January, 2006, and did it in stages, completing the great adventure on Feb. 11 of this year. They are one of more than 400 recipients of the BaccaLooperate.

"There aren't that many people who complete that trip," Judy said. "We did it over several years. If we would have done it all at one time, it would have taken at least a year."

On their Endeavor 44-foot power catamaran named FantaSea, the Kernells and their cat, Sassy, have traveled across the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean, as well as through 18 states and the District of Columbia. Sassy goes along on every trip.

"Sassy doesn't go outside the cockpit," Judy said. "She doesn't like the wind to blow her fur."

The voyages around the Great Loop also took the Kernells across four bays -- Mobile, Florida, Chesapeake and Delaware. They traveled 95 rivers, 32 lakes (including lakes Erie, Huron and Michigan), 13 canals and 33 creeks. The couple shared the driving duties.

"We enjoyed the Erie Canal the most," she said. "The history. The beauty. It's a small stop along all the friendly picturesque towns along the way."

"It's just beautiful," Dan said. "We stopped at a lot of the small quaint little towns. There's a lot of history along the canal."

Their favorite stop was in Annapolis, Md. Judy said she especially enjoyed her trip to the U.S. Naval Academy and "the history behind it."

"It's a big history lesson," Judy said. "You just learn so much when you go through all those towns."

The Kernells love being on the water, even when they are not boating. The couple's condominium is located right by the water in Vermilion.

"It's just the beauty of being on the water that we love so much," Dan said."

"We see nature at its best," Judy added. "The waterfalls. Birds. We enjoy it all."

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Judy, whose hobby is photography, has enjoyed capturing the beautiful sights on film. She also enjoys collecting lighthouses. The retired nurse has collected 250 souvenir lighthouse on their many trips up and down the coast and the couple has visited 142 lighthouses during their travels.

"We keep real close tabs on the weather," she said. "If there's going to be a storm, we stick close to the shore."

The Kernells recall the only mishap during their years of travel.

"We had one bad experience on the Hudson River," Judy said. "One morning a ball and the chain was wrapped around the rudders. We had to hire a diver to come and get us off."

The Kernells are docking their boat until next summer when they leave for the Georgian Bay and the North Channel in Lake Huron.

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