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## Setting sail from Huntsville

Sunday, November 11, 2007

By **CORTNEE BLAYTON**  
Times Staff Writer

Couple cruise Great Loop across America, in Canada

"Looper flotillas, this is Second Wind ... we've got water coming in!" Liz Stagg repeated the tale about the Staggs' one and only misadventure while sailing the yearlong America's Great Loop Cruise after setting out from Huntsville in October 2006.

Fortunately, within hours the mixture of water and soap suds that destroyed much of their food supply and filled nearly 17 inches of their power catamaran Second Wind was pumped out with the help of fellow boaters and Canadian mechanics.

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Despite their ease at handling their minor setback, the cruise was Bob and Liz Staggs' first attempt at sailing across America and through Canada in just under a year. They returned

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from the approximately 62,000-mile trip Sept. 13.

What began five years ago with the purchase of Ron and Eva Stob's book "Honey, Let's Get a Boat: A Cruising Adventure of America's Great Loop," turned into what the Huntsville retirees call "an adventure of a lifetime."

Great views and favorite cities

Beginning in the Tennessee River, the Staggs and other members of America's Great Loop Cruise Association averaged 60-90 miles per day and at night docked in some of the country's most recognizable harbors including the Gulf of Mexico, Shark River, the Florida Panhandle, Chicago River, Hudson River, Crystal River and Lake Michigan.

When asked which of these sites were their favorites, Bob and Liz Stagg agreed, "Where you just left becomes your favorite."

For the Staggs, that included sailing between skyscrapers on the Chicago River, passing the Statue of Liberty on the Hudson, swimming with manatees in the Crystal River, viewing the rolling green hills along the Gulf, relaxing in the Panhandle with egrets and other uniquely colored birds of prey, and coasting through pink, gray and black granite in Canadian waters.

"We even saw mink in Canada, which look like big furry brown animals," said Liz Stagg.

On board with a blog

Although the Staggs were blessed with rare natural scenery, Bob Stagg admitted, "The small towns along the harbors had the most personalities and character." The couple's meetings with these people along with a synopsis and pictures of their complete adventure are documented in their blog: [www.secondwind-greatloop.blogspot.com](http://www.secondwind-greatloop.blogspot.com).

When they first discussed the idea, Liz Stagg wasn't completely on board.

"It sounded horrible in the beginning," she said of living on a two-cabin boat with her husband for nearly a year.

But back home soon after their return, she said, "We had a great time."

She added with a smile, "We're still married."

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