

THE ROPE INCIDENT

Our destination for the day was "The Sample Room" in Minneapolis. We planned to have lunch and a glass of wine, then head back to the marina. Bill, me, Sharon & Bruce Nelson and their two granddaughters were in our Gibson. Mark & Sue Raiche were in their cruiser. We went through all three locks and were about as far up river as you can safely navigate in a houseboat.



Approaching the tiny dock, we realized the water was too shallow for a houseboat and decided to turn around. I navigated to the middle of the river and started to turn "on a dime". Half way through the turn the engine stalled. We could start the engine again but it stalled each time we engaged the gear. The guys soon figured out there was something in the propellers and this was serious. We radioed Mark and he came back to assist. Sharon and the girls rode back to the marina with the Raiches after we were anchored and safe. Gotta stay with the ship!

Bruce stripped down to his shorts, put a life vest on his back and a knife in his teeth and dove in. That is when we realized there was a 40 foot barge rope wrapped around both props. The sky was green as there was a storm on the way. Bill and Bruce had to re-secure the anchors for the wind. Our marina and Boat US confirmed they were unable to come for us until morning. So, a local fisherman pulled us to Boom Island, one mile down river. We secured the houseboat to the wall and went to the local tavern for dinner and drinks. Bruce's son, Tom, was going to come and pick him up. Two hours later, Tom called to say he'd been in a car accident on his way there and was in the hospital. I remember falling to the ground at this point – what else could happen?

Fortunately, an off-duty police officer was there and offered his assistance. He gave Bruce a ride to the marina so he could go to the hospital to see Tom. Bill and I went back to the houseboat, grabbed a bottle of wine and sat on the fly bridge. It was a gorgeous night and we watched the charter cruises come in. We were set for the night.

The next morning we walked to town to get some breakfast and some gas for the generator. Bill then hopped in the water and tried to cut the ropes off of the props, without success. Zach from Bill's Bay Marina arrived to rescue us around noon. We made it back through the three locks and to the marina without incident. We are still able to use our houseboat and intend to keep using it 'till it sinks.

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