

The 2004 Flying Scot Thousand Islands Cruise by The Albani Family



Frank Albani's account (father)

Trying to plan for a family vacation for two adults and three teenagers wasn't easy, especially when we are the type of people who always like to do something different. We aren't "rut" people who take the same vacation every year. We crave adventure.

When I read on the FSSA open forum about a cruise in the Thousand Islands by Graham Hall, I knew this was it. Planning was difficult. Never having cruised before and being a new Flying Scot owner to boot, at first I wondered whether I would need an engine, GPS, VHF, two anchors, extra sails, and boat parts, and on and on. The list was quickly shortened by limited funds and trying to keep the boat as light as possible and as roomy as possible for five people for five days. We bought the suggested charts (don't say maps) and studied them. For fun, everyone highlighted the buoys on the planned route so we all knew what was needed to get from point A to point B. We kept our clothes dry in heavy-duty plastic bins with covers for each of us and one for the boat. We called them lockers.

The day finally came and we were off on our first part of our vacation, "The Saratoga Invitational Regatta". It was a fun race with lots of tips from all the people.

Next came the trip to the Thousand Islands area. We didn't make plans to stay anywhere the night before we launched on our adventure. So we just drove into Sackets Harbor looking for a place to sleep and park the trailer over night. While driving around and checking out hotels, I saw a man with a sailor hat walking. I asked him where I could park my trailer and he suggested his property. He turned out to be the unofficial town mayor, Mr. Diggins. His stories were great.

Launch day came. Hallelujah! I got to Wescott Beach at 7:30 a.m. I wanted to be first and take my time setting up and loading everything into the boat. I was amazed that everything fit and we had plenty of room for the five of us. I programmed everyone's cell phone numbers, all the dock names and phone numbers, and hotel

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numbers into two cell phones (yes I'm the cautious type). I checked my new VHF radio for the first time with the four other skippers. Two boats only had walkie-talkies so I needed to monitor two different frequencies-VHF and FRS. Some of the other boats were delayed in getting started, so some of us left early. The other boats having more experienced skippers would catch up later.

Once out in the water with two other boats, I thought we would stay together. Don and Barbara went one way, while Charles and Sarah went another. I thought it would be a good time to look at my charts and go my way. Got my course, wind picked up, waves got big, and I started to wonder whether I had bitten off more than I could chew. Got my crew and the boat under control - Flying the Scot like there was no tomorrow. Everyone yelling like we were on a roller coaster, waves splashing over the bow, we were wet and loving it, I was thinking it doesn't get better than this. Then all of a sudden, near disaster hits. The outhaul broke (my fault). The sail was just flapping and getting ready to rip. Luckily the newly installed reefing line on the boom saved us (me being cautious again). I installed a temporary outhaul while in irons in 20-knot winds, riding 4-foot waves with the main sheet, trying to lasso my lifejacket and me into the water. Back in order and on course, we came around Grenadier Island and the beat turned into a run. All five Flying Scots were together now. One by one the brave ones (not me) were putting up their spinnakers. It was still great riding the waves and running with the wind. We landed in Cape Vincent and had a great dinner exchanging stories with the other skippers. We did it safe and our boat lockers were dry.

Day 2, heading for Clayton, all of the boats started together. Westerly winds and currents were in our favor. Helping Whitney do a crossword puzzle over the radio was different. It was so smooth that Graham was on his beach chair on his foredeck taking movies of all of us. As we rounded a point with all the spinnakers up, I noticed groups of people running to the shore to watch and take pictures of us. Vanessa, Michael, and Patrick took turns being pulled through the water like water skiers. We landed, went to the Boat Museum, had dinner, and exchanged stories.

Day 3 going to Gananoque Canada. Navigating many small islands looked impossible on the chart. Our leader, Graham Hall, planned the way to go with certainty. We took off and again flew there with new confidence. Landing was another story. The only slip available was pointed directly upwind with no room for error around the million dollar yachts. Somehow I made a 180-degree turn in the slip without hitting anything and pointing upwind. Wow we did it! Canada was great. We stayed in a bed and breakfast that was like home and saw a play that evening.

The next day it was raining and the wind was blowing hard, making it difficult to get out of our slip. Luckily, a motorboat came by and towed us to the break wall. We now had to catch up with the others who left an hour earlier. Charting our way alone through a narrow channel while avoiding large ships, I thought it would be a good idea to pass outside of the green buoy. Wrong! The only rock our centerboard found. Still plotting on our own, trying to catch up, we were in Eel Bay. We took out the waterproof charts (GPS didn't make the short list) to find "The Narrows" (a very thin channel with high cliffs). Looking at the compass, it pointed to what appeared to be a solid mountain. Doubting the compass reading, we all pointed in five different directions. Then, all of a sudden, our VHF radio called out "we see you". The others guided us to where my compass originally pointed. Never doubt your compass. With a great spinnaker run up the St Lawrence, everyone switched positions in the boat. Landing in Alex Bay, all five Scots parked in a row in front of Fisherman's Wharf. Graham's boat was in front with three flags flying. Memories you can't describe. Only disappointment was that it was over, but was quickly erased when I heard of plans for next year's cruise. Thanks to all who helped us make this a memorable adventure.

Diane Albani's account (mother)

When my husband Frank bought the Flying Scot, I knew we would have a lot of fun learning to sail, but I never imagined we would take exciting adventures like the one cruising the Thousand Islands. As soon as we made the decision to go on this vacation, the planning started. What would we take? How would we keep our clothes dry? Would our family of five be comfortable enough on a small sailboat to enjoy the vacation? Where would we stay each night? Finally, the long awaited departure day arrived.

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Our first stop was a regatta in Saratoga, NY, where we met Tom and Laura who would accompany us on the cruise. Graham, Whitney and Baby Morgan were there also, to be accompanied by Moppy on Monday. The other Flying Scots with Don and Barbara and Charles and Sarah arrived at our launching place on Monday.

Monday started off cloudy, but turned to sun by the time we set sail. Reading the charts was my biggest obstacle, but by the end of the trip, it all made sense. You must read everything accurately or you'll end up on rocks! The sail started off with calm waters and light winds. By the time we rounded the first island, the winds picked up tremendously and the sky turned cloudy. My nerves soared with the wind. With each bounce on the waves, we became wetter and wetter. It was then we heard a loud snap and Frank said our outhaul broke. At first, I thought the shroud holding the mast broke, and, of course, I went crazy. With Frank's expertise, we managed to run a new line in heavy winds & choppy water and continue on our way. Finally, we arrived at Cape Vincent, where I breathed a sigh of relief. Tomorrow had to be calmer, I thought, and my prayers were answered—a wonderful spinnaker run to Clayton in smooth waters with sunny skies.

On Wednesday, we sailed to Canada, a nice trip in fantastic wind. We even sailed with our spinnaker until my son Michael alertly noticed sea gulls sitting on rocks directly in front of us. We should lower the spinnaker this quickly in a race!

The weather on Thursday began with rain and dark skies. With winds at our bow, we had to be towed out of our slip. The others were at a different marina, and they set sail before us. Our navigating skills were really put to a test because our leading Scot wasn't in our field of vision. At one point, our crew debated which way to go. Again, my nerves took over since I was sure we were going the wrong way. Finally, we heard the other Scots on the VHF and were lead in the right direction through the "Narrows" and into the channel down toward Alexandria Bay. Up went the spinnaker (we were getting really good at this by this time). We joined the others at Boldt Castle where we enjoyed an ice cream. To quote Sarah, "Crew needs ice cream."

This ended our fantastic adventure on the Flying Scot with new friends we will cherish and hope to see at future regattas and cruises.

Michael Albani's account (son)

Though the sailing trip to the Thousand (actually, 1855) Islands region was not my first or only trip of the summer, it certainly was the most exciting. Each day ushered in new experiences. My sailing experiences limited, I was nearly swept off my feet, or rather out of the boat, when confronted with the windy conditions and choppy waters of Day 1. Among the casualties was Whoosh's (our boat) outhaul. A loud "ping" accompanied its give-out under pressure. A makeshift replacement lasted the rest of the trip. Following our triumphs over hefty seas, our boat relaxed during a long spinnaker run accompanied by the surfing of waves. I was elated to discover at dinner that the sail ranked among Graham Hall's "top 10 all time sails". What a treat to begin the trip!

Day 2 consisted of a spinnaker run during which Patrick, Vanessa and myself took turns body surfing behind the boat, which was moving so quickly that it was difficult to hold on to the rope. We visited the Boat Museum in Clayton.

During Day 3, we followed Tom and Laura the long way up to Gananoque and had an interesting time finding our slip in the marina. That night we saw a play that shed light on the experiences of a con artist.

The last day together, we set out late due to a storm and found ourselves behind the group. Some difficulties navigating accompanied by rocks chewing up our centerboard contributed to a difficult morning. After navigating through the "Narrows" and another spinnaker run, we joined the group at Alexander Bay. There the group enjoyed a farewell dinner and the presentation of a thank you gift to Graham for leading us on this expedition.

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The sailing was great and the accompanying group was just as fantastic, a vacation I will never forget.

Patrick Flanigan's account (nephew)

The sailing trip to the Thousand Islands was a blast. I had lots of fun. The first day was unexpected. The wind and the waves picked up. We were getting hit on all sides by four-foot waves. In the end, we were all drenched with water. A couple in another boat got the worst of the waves. All their clean cloths were soaked, but luckily for us we had waterproof tupperware boxes. Another unexpected thing happened when we were sailing along nice and fast. I heard a "ping" and all I thought was, "Don't flip.". The outhaul snapped but we fixed it.

On the second day I was prepared for the heavy winds and big waves again as we cast off on the longest sail to Clayton. We flew the spinnaker most of the way. This was when I got to fly it for the very first time. It was fun but frustrating at first but I eventually got the hang of it. About an hour in, all of us were beginning to feel the heat of the sun so we took a dip. We had the boat drag us. We were going so fast that the rope hurt my hands but it was so much fun! We eventually docked at Clayton and went on to the boat museum. I saw lots of cool race boats that I wanted to take a ride in. My favorite one was Dixie II.

By the third day, all the early mornings were starting to catch up with me but I was ready for the sail to Canada. This was the first time I have ever left the USA. Aside from the accents, Canada is just like the US. Graham Hall, the head of the expedition, bought the crew some hors d'oeuvres that turned into dinner. Afterwards, we saw *Love and Larceny*, a musical. I liked it. It was very funny and the music was great.

Finally, on the fourth and final day, we sailed back to the US to Boldt Castle where I had the biggest ice cream cone that I ever had. Before we all ate dinner, we presented Graham with a map of our trip signed by all of us.

Altogether, I liked the trip. It was a great experience for me. I learned a lot about sailing and had fun doing it. I also can't forget the group we went with. They made the trip just that more enjoyable.

Vanessa Albani's account (daughter)

My family and I took a trip to the Thousand Islands in August 2004. Before we set sail, I didn't know what to expect. Was the water going to be calm, or was it going to be like "The Perfect Storm"?

The first day was one of my favorite days of the voyage. The sun was out for most of the day, and there were waves that reached up to 4 feet. Some of the waves went over the bow of the boat and splashed us. We even rode some of the waves. By the end of the day, we were all drenched and needed a new clean pair of clothes from our sealed Tupperware boxes.

I enjoyed learning how to steer the boat and figuring out how to catch the wind. During the day, I jumped into the water and took a swim holding onto a rope that was attached to the stern of the boat. Using the spinnaker was difficult because I didn't know what I was doing. After my father gave me an explanation, I was able to do it all by myself. I loved sailing from town to town, but I thought that we should have spent more time in each town rather than one night.

Without the other people on this adventure, this trip wouldn't be as fun. I enjoyed talking to the people that went and hoped I would see them again in the near future. As a teenager, I thought this expedition was an excellent learning experience for me and I would definitely go on another cruise like this.