

# RMSKC PADDLERS

IN

# THE APOSTLES

AUGUST, 2017

By Jud Hurd



## The APOSTLE ISLANDS:

A National Seashore off the northern corner of Wisconsin that juts into Lake Superior, northwest of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and southeast of northern Minnesota

Brian Hunter brought up this idea about four or five years ago but it was one of those trips that the RMSKC talked about but never got around to doing.

Finally last winter, David Hustvedt and I put our heads together and decided to make it happen in 2017. We spent some time researching what would be involved and laying out a preliminary paddle plan with all the usual information people need to decide if this would be a trip for them: a trip description; dates and tentative daily paddle plans; safety information; mandatory preparation for each paddler; participants' primary assignments; and some other general info and cost estimates. This rough plan with an invitation to join the paddle was sent out to all the club members.

We got immediate responses and filled the roster with Jud Hurd (as Trip Coordinator), Marsha Dougherty, Joy Farquhar, Tim Fletcher, Brian Hunter, David Hustvedt, George Ottenhoff and Clark Strickland. We then continued to work on the trip plan as a group to identify and answer various questions. One of the things I really enjoy about the RMSKC is the willingness of people to work as a team in planning and executing a paddle.

The first issue we had to tackle was getting camping permits on our selected islands and dates, as you can camp only in designated areas. The individual sites hold from one to seven people and you can't get these until 30 days before the beginning of your trip. We originally had limited the group to seven people but we felt pretty iffy about the 30-day time frame, and nobody wanted to buddy up in tents, so we opted to add one more person to our group and go for group sites which hold eight to twenty-one people.



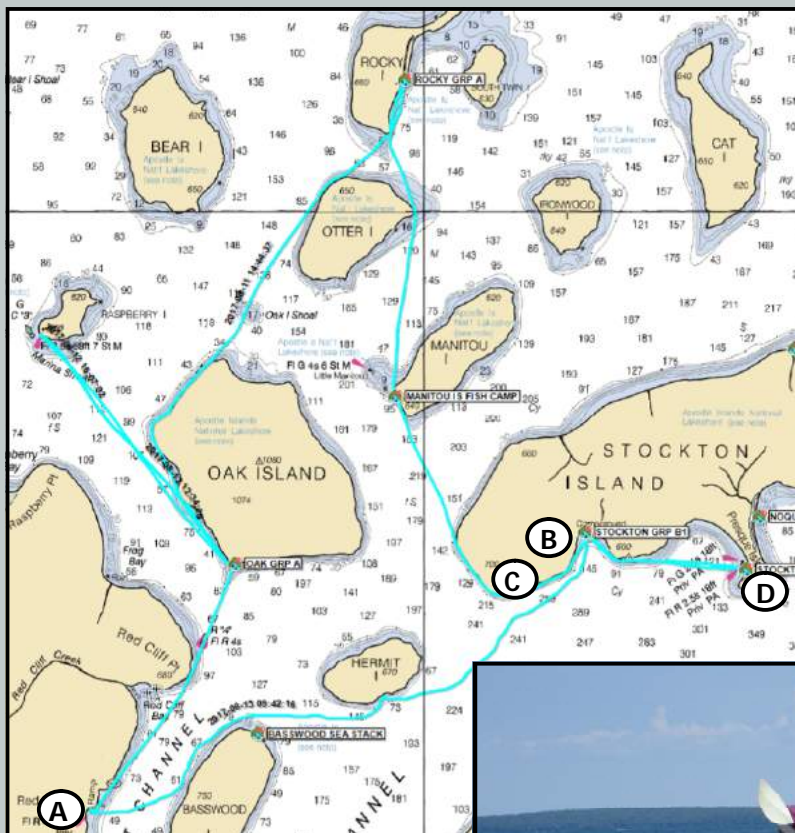
One of only a few sunny campsite photos

Since there are fewer group sites, the National Park Service allocates these by lottery, which you apply for between December 1 and January 10. In order to optimize our chances for getting selected early in the drawing, seven of us called and registered for the lottery (a practice that is probably frowned upon by the NPS). Surprise! The first name drawn for the lottery was Clark. We had agreed upon what islands, campsites and dates we wanted so we got all our first choices. The other six names all got called and just had to tell them a member of our team had already been selected and we had our permits. Okay, now we knew we had a trip.

Our first target was for everybody to arrive at the Buffalo Bay Campground and Marina [A on the map on the next page] in Red Cliff, Wisconsin by Sunday, August 6. We would launch out of the marina on Monday the 7<sup>th</sup>. Teams of two traveled north at different times. Joy and Marsha went early to do some sightseeing. George and Clark also left early because George has family in the area. Tim and Brian drove together as did Jud and Dave. They both left on the 5<sup>th</sup> and it turned out they were traveling only about an hour or so apart. On our drive we hit a visitor center rest stop and there was a car there with a P&H *Cetus* on the top. We met the driver who was Lauren from Austin, Texas. She was on her way home after paddling the northern shore of Wisconsin by herself as she has a hard time finding people willing to paddle up to 20 miles a day. We had a nice chat and she gave us some crystal ginger which is good for an upset stomach and some dried zucchini wafers she made. I find that all serious kayakers are always nice people willing to talk paddling and share information.

Anyway, everybody showed up as assigned and we all set up our tents in the campground on a bluff above Lake Superior and then set about exploring and going to Bayfield, three miles south of Red Cliff, for dinner. While the smoke-filled casino didn't appeal to any of the group, the handmade birch bark canoe in the lobby of the casino did draw admiring inspection.



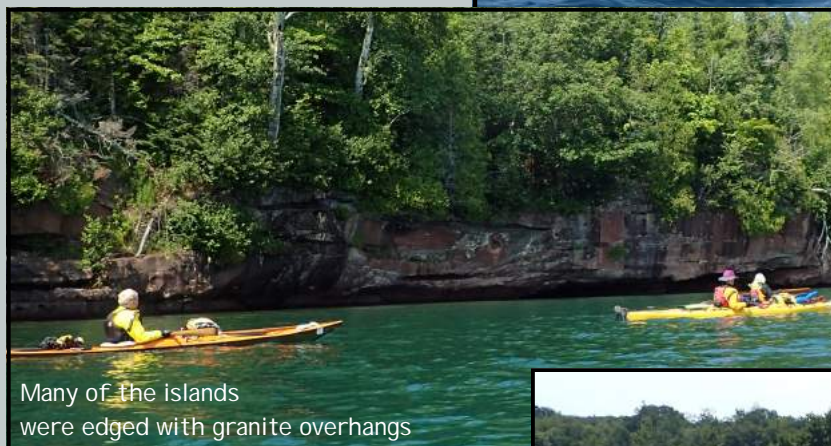


**MONDAY, AUGUST 7:** We had a good night's sleep and went into Bayfield again for breakfast. Back at Buffalo Bay we paid to park our cars in the casino parking lot and prepared to load up our kayaks. This is always a fun time to see if you can get everything to fit. We did! We had clear weather with a slight wind as we launched around 11:00AM.

Our route took us across to the northwest corner of Basswood I island, then east along the south shore of Hermit I island, where we stopped for lunch.



Paddling past an Apostle Island "sea stack" with almost everything inside the boats



Many of the islands were edged with granite overhangs

After a 10.5 mile paddle with waves about one foot, we arrived at the southwest shore of Stockton I island.

We found the long beach on Quarry Bay where our campsite was located but the sites are back in the trees and our group site [B] was not readily visible from the water.

We landed and walked the shoreline until we found the path to the campsites with a little help from some big boat people at the dock.



Sandy beach on Stockton I island





Wooden tent supports on Stockton Island

It was down a nice boardwalk to two large wooden decks – one for tents and one for cooking. Everybody hauled their gear to the campsite and got their tents set up, which was interesting trying to figure out how to fit eight tents on that deck.

Then it was time to kick back, relax, have an adult refreshment and talk about the wonderful day we had. It was warm and we did have mosquitos but they were nothing like we had in Florida.



Brownstone Quarry

**TUESDAY, AUGUST 8:** Everybody was still a little tired from yesterday's effort so we decided to stay on shore this morning and hike 1.5 miles to the Brownstone Quarry [C]. We had a nice hike through the forest to the quarry which was in operation by the Ashland Brownstone Company from 1886 to 1897. Since this was over a hundred years ago the site is now totally overgrown but you can still see strong evidence of the quarry operations that removed a million cubic feet of building stone.



I am always totally amazed when I visit sites like this and think about the technology (or lack of technology) they had back then

and how they were able to do such amazing things. It was very hard to visualize how they could cut huge square stones from this hillside, get them down to the shore and onto a boat for shipping to faraway cities. After oohing and aahing and getting lots of pictures we headed back to camp for lunch.

After lunch, a few of us were feeling rested up and decided to paddle six miles round trip to Presque Isle Point [D] to the ranger station and dock.

We had a pleasant paddle and stopped at the visitor's center to talk with the volunteer rangers. One of the displays at the center was Skar, a stuffed, adult black bear that got just a little too comfortable being around people on the island.

**A NOTE ABOUT BLACK BEARS:** The NPS says that the Apostle Islands has one of the highest concentrations of black bears in North America. They may be found anywhere in the park but are most common on Oak, Sand, Manitou, and Stockton islands—two of which we planned to camp on.

On the hike to the quarry Tim said he saw a flash of black disappear into the woods. Later our neighbors in Group Site A said a bear came through their camp and swatted at some stoves and then ran through our campsite.

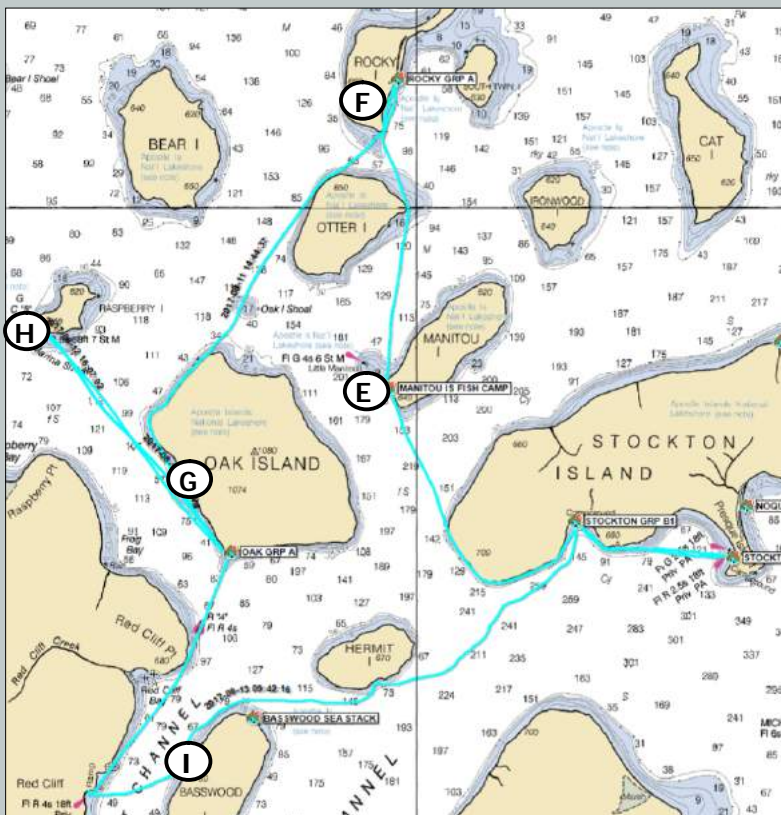


The paddle back was into a 10 mph wind with waves up to 18 inches, so we had to work a little harder but we made it. Now for one of the best times of the day: relax, review the great day we had and eat some dinner, which was interrupted with a short thundershower.

In addition, the rudder raise/lower cable on Tim's boat broke so Brian, our club handy-man, dug into his stash and came with some cable he brought because he and Tim thought there might be a problem, which they were able to fix. The side benefit is that Tim and Dave discovered the source of water entering the rear hatches on their Delta kayaks. A fix for the diagnosed problem will be undertaken at a later date. See, every cloud has a silver lining.



Tim and Brian planning the rudder cable repair



**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 9:** This was going to be one of our longest days as we made our way to Rocky I Island. The group got up around 6:00AM and we launched around 9:30. Way to go team!

We got this done even though George, Dave and Clark saw the bear on the boardwalk. When Clark saw it, he hollered and told him to scat, which he did. Way to keep us safe, Pres.

**ANOTHER NOTE ABOUT BEARS:** They are a reality for what we do and we all need to adhere to rigorous bear safety practices. This includes keeping all our food and food-smelling stuff in the bear boxes provided at every campsite, and not taking anything into our tents that smells even the least bit edible: no toothpaste, chap stick, sunscreen, deodorant, etc.

Our route to Rocky I Island took us southwest around the corner of Stockton I Island and then north to the south end of Manitou I Island. After a six-mile paddle, we stopped at the dock on Manitou I Island [E] and had lunch.



More about the fish camp: <https://explorationvacation.net/2013/07/manitou-fish-camp>

As we were pulling in, two other kayakers were also landing. There is a volunteer ranger on Manitou who also greeted us and we all visited while we ate lunch.

Manitou is popular because of the Manitou Fish Camp, a collection of shacks used by two commercial fishermen, Hjalmer and Ted Olson, from 1938 until the park took over in 1970. The buildings are currently undergoing restoration and it was really fun talking to the volunteer ranger and hearing the stories about the camp's history and the fishermen who worked it.



After lunch, our two kayak visitors headed west toward Oak Island and we headed north along the east side of Otter Island to our destination on Rocky Island. We began the day with pretty good weather conditions but these were deteriorating as the day wore on. A low front was moving in and we could see rain in the west as we approached Rocky [F on the previous page].

Fortunately, the rain held off until we landed, and got our tents and the bug house set up. All in all, it was a good day with an 11.9 mile paddle, meeting some nice people, seeing some history and watching rain squalls chase us into Rocky Island. But again, it was time to relax and visit, which we seemed to be very good at.

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 10:** Well, you know the old saying about the best laid plans of mice and men. We were a great example of that old adage. Our plan for the day was to paddle over to Devil's Island [northwest of Rocky Island off the map on the previous page] and check out the large sea caves on the north end. It was going to be the highlight of the trip.



The storm coming in on the way to Rocky Island



The bug house on Rocky Island



Tents set up under tarps on Rocky

But the low front that chased us into Rocky had other plans for us. We could hear it blow and rain all night and we got up to a strong wind and strong chop on the water. Being the brilliant and decisive trip coordinator that I am, I immediately asked the group, "Uh, what da' y'all think?"



Brian's rainy close-ups

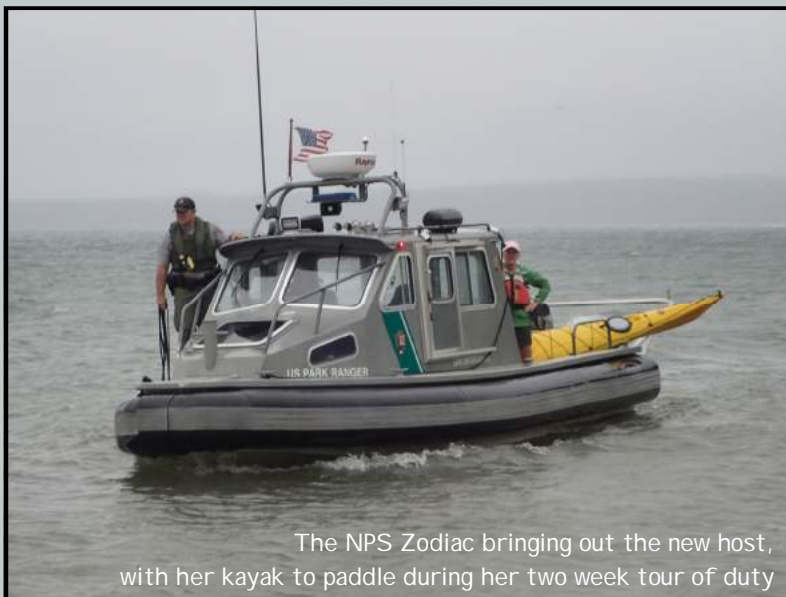


They all agreed that we should not paddle in those conditions, so everybody settled in for a long day on shore. Clark decided to sleep in for the day. The rest of us decided to hike a trail across the island to the west shore.

We walked back to the dock and ranger house where Ann (the current volunteer) was packing up to leave the island; Katherine, another volunteer, would take her place. In just a few minutes we saw the NPS boat headed our way so we waited to help with the exchange.

After Ann left we began our nice hike which gave us a view and appreciation for the interior of the islands. When we reached the west shore, we could see Devils Island and dreamt about that paddle.

But from two miles away we could also see large plumes of white water spraying up on the east shore of Devils as the wind blew the waves into the rocky shoreline. The wind and waves breaking across the low dock at the volunteer house also all made us feel good about not trying to paddle. On the way, back we ran into Robert and Jill from St. Paul who were camping at the other end. They are a nice young couple who come to the Apostles a lot.



The NPS Zodiac bringing out the new host, with her kayak to paddle during her two week tour of duty



Back at camp Marsha had the excellent idea of starting a fire. Everything was so damp that it was hard to get paper to light. But Scout Master Tim jumped in there and with everybody helping we finally had a nice fire roaring.

Let me tell you, nothing feels better at a cold, wet camp than a good fire. In order to get the wood to burn we would stack cuts inside the fire ring to dry them out somewhat. So, I thought, why not dry out my socks the same way? It was interesting to watch the steam come off those socks as they heated up.

Okay, end of a disappointing day but we made the best of it. Déjà vu of Annette Island last year as I spent my birthday watching it rain all day. But many large kudos to this group of people. They really take to heart our club philosophy that flexibility is the word of the day and we will adjust our itinerary daily based on current conditions. Everybody did just that without any griping or grumbling. I tell you, you can't ask for a better group of people to paddle with than our members. Of course, a little extra adult libation also helps.

**FRIDAY, AUGUST 11:** Our little front moved through and we woke to bright sunny skies and calm lake conditions. Dave's watch said the pressure was coming up which also indicated good weather. So we took off for our next camp on Oak Island.



Trip Leader Jud Hurd standing in the wind on Rocky Island





Enjoying the view from Oak Island

Our plan was to spend three nights at the Oak Island site and explore the surrounding islands before heading home.

A pleasant surprise was Robert and Jill, whom we met on Rocky, also paddled to Oak and were camped next to us in the single campsite. They joined us later in our camp for a visit and brought us a bunch of Bonbell cheese.

They are a nice youngish couple and it was fun talking to them. I think they were impressed to hear about RMSKC and some of the paddles we had done. I showed them our planning sheet; they were really impressed with how much planning goes into our trips. They were interested in our stoves and our food planning and everything. We told them we are thinking about another trip to Glacier Bay next year which is a destination they have always wanted to go to. We gave them an RMSKC card and our contact information and invited them to join the club and join us in this paddle. They said they would be in touch. We will see.

Ed and Kristine were the volunteer rangers on Oak Island whom Brian met when we stopped at the dock. They also visited with us for awhile. They wanted to see what this Rocky Mountain Sea Kayak Club was all about. I've got to tell you folks, we seem to turn heads everywhere we go. Ed is ex-navy so he and Dave swapped a lot of stories; it was fun to hear them talk. Ed went into the navy as an enlisted man, worked his way up to officer school and then went through SEAL training: one impressive guy. I am constantly amazed at the interesting people we meet out paddling and camping. After all our guests left it was time for our usual evening routine: relax, re-view the wonderful day we had and have dinner.

We paddled south to the west side of Otter Island and then to the north end of Oak Island. After stopping for lunch, we paddled down to the dock and volunteer ranger house.

After this rest, we headed south to our campsite [G on the map on page 29] which turned out to be the nicest site I have been to, with a wonderful landing area on a sandy beach. Then it was a short hike up to the campsite which was on a cliff looking out to the south over the lake. We had a large, flat area with lots of tent sites, bear boxes and picnic tables (which were at each campsite). The view to the south is one of the most picturesque that I have ever seen, with the added benefit of a nice south wind which kept us very comfortable.

The day's paddle was 10.7 miles but we had a northeast wind which pushed us right along so it was pretty good paddling. We did have some heavy chop on a crossing where the water was more exposed to the wind coming across the lake. But once you get past these you usually have protection on the lee side of the islands.



Oak Island campsite



**SATURDAY, AUGUST 12:** Our plan had us paddling to Basswood I land today but we changed that. Dave, George and Clark decided to stay in camp and hike the island. They had a nice hike among the mosquitos to the highest point in the Apostle I lands: 1,081 feet above sea level. But they couldn't see anything as they were surrounded by trees.

The rest of the group agreed to paddle to Raspberry I land [H] to visit the lighthouse complex, considered the show place of the Apostle I lands. This was a 10.5 mile round trip to a wonderful destination. As we approached the south end of the island, we noticed a really nice sand bar on the east shore. Our notes stated that there was a sand spit trail .75 miles from the lighthouse to the east side of the island and that was what we were looking at.

We continued to paddle to the dock and discovered there was no place to land a kayak: there was nothing but large boulders on either side of it. Fortunately, the dock is a U-shape and Marsha paddled to the back side of the U and found that the water was only about knee deep. So, we could land there, tie our boats to the dock and climb the stairs up. The guys stood on the dock while Marsha and Joy in their dry suits wrangled the kayaks alongside it.



Joy in the water getting the boats secured

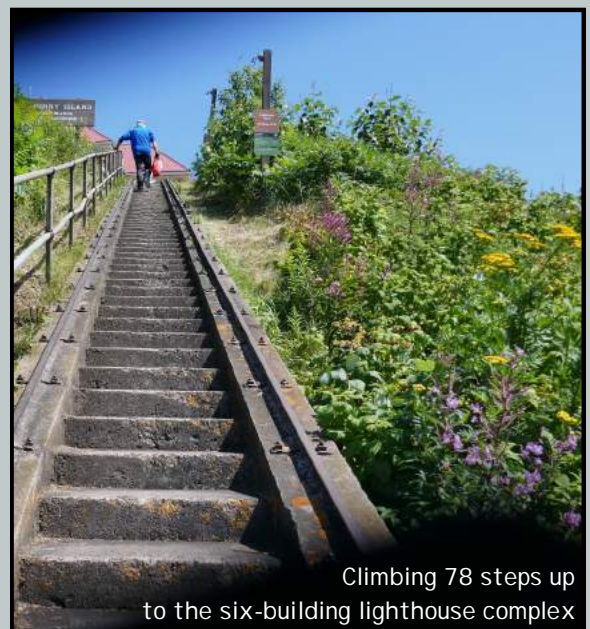


The U-shaped dock with the kayaks; the post on the grass in the foreground holds the technology that has now replaced the entire Raspberry Lighthouse complex

The lighthouse originally consisted of five buildings put into operation in July, 1863. The timing of this underscores the importance of the lighthouse and the Great Lakes shipping industry at that time; the funds were dedicated by Congress for the lighthouse during the Civil War (1861 to 1865) when most money was going to the war effort.



The kitchen of the living quarters of the lighthouse has been restored to the way it was circa 1900. It was interesting to hear about the lives of the lighthouse tenders in that era.



Climbing 78 steps up to the six-building lighthouse complex



The complex has been totally restored to the 1906 time period. In 1903, a fog whistle building was added to alert ships during low visibility times, although the low visibility was due mostly to the smoke from forest fires rather than fog. The lighthouse was in operation until 1947 when it was converted to an automatic operation. The NPS website [<https://www.nps.gov/apis/learn/historyculture/raspberry-light.htm>] provides more info on this historic site.

After the tour we paddled back to camp with a good tail wind. The evening was our usual routine of relaxation, dinner and reviewing the day.

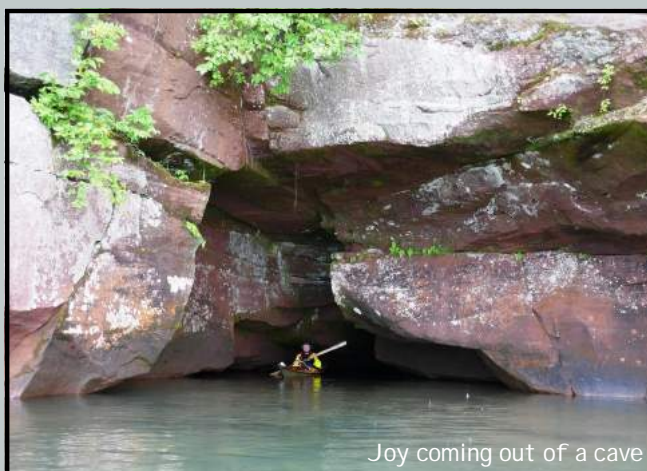


The restored light house

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 13:** Since we had gone to Raspberry I island our plan was to paddle and explore Basswood I island [I]. However, in looking at the map I realized that entailed paddling five miles south to the island which was directly opposite Buffalo Bay and then paddling five miles back to our camp on Oak I island, and then getting up on Monday and paddling almost the same five miles back to Buffalo Bay. Well, that seemed kind of silly to me. Dave and I, and Tim and Brian decided to end the trip a day early and paddled to Buffalo Bay on Sunday instead of Monday. We did the 5-mile paddle out and headed home.



Clark and Joy by one of the old shipwrecks



Joy coming out of a cave

Marsha, Joy, George and Clark stayed and paddled the east shore of Oak I island. They saw eagles and a group of mergansers with 15 chicks. There were sea stacks, archways and rock caves to explore; one cove near the marina had marked sites of shipwrecks. Clark sent links about the wrecks: <http://www.wisconsinshipwrecks.org/Vessel/Details/255> and <http://www.wisconsinshipwrecks.org/Vessel/Details/486>

Overall, the group paddled 50 - 55 miles. We saw a lot of wonderful parts of America, met some really nice people and had a splendid time. The group enjoyed this trip so much that they are speculating on where to go for 2018. So keep tuned for future trip announcements.



Sunset on Rocky I island

Photos from Jud, Brian Hunter, Tim Fletcher, Dave Hustvedt, Marsha Dougherty and Joy Farquhar



# POST-APOSTLES WANDERINGS

Wisconsin is a long way to go, and several of the Apostle Islands paddlers coupled the journey with other trips.

Marsha and Joy carpooled out and back, with adventures on both ends of the RMSKC paddle. Their road trip out took them on back country roads past unknown limestone stacks and peaks, the Corn Palace in Mitchell, South Dakota, and to visit Marsha's family in Minneapolis. There they spent two days catching up on family news and exploring the area and Lake Minnetonka.



Buster and Joy

Then it was on to Grand Island National Park ("definitely coming back"). In Munising they filled up on the best pasties at Muldoons and drove to visit Joy's brother and family in Naubinway in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

Next it was the ferry to Mackinac Island, where only bikes and horse carriages are allowed; it's well known for fudge and salt water taffy. It was too late for Traverse City's famous cherries but they bought pounds of dried ones to take home. Then came nearby Sleeping Bear Sand Dunes, an old camping spot of Joy's from the 60s.



View through bow lines  
on the Mackinac Bridge

They also had wander time on the way home, so they spent another week on the road.

Their first stop was a ferry to Madeline Island for camping overnight and a day exploring island history, hiking and looking at real estate. They took the ferry back to the mainland and onward to Ashland to pick up Marsha's dog, Buster, who had been boarded there while they were paddling.



Joy at the  
Sleeping Bear Sand Dunes



The last stop was all the way to Alliance, Nebraska, where St. Matthew's Episcopal church had set up a campground for the eclipse. They arrived at 4:00AM after a bout with big hail, and found their reserved spot. In the morning the church provided an exquisite breakfast and information sessions about the solar event. After the lectures they drove to nearby Carhenge. Joy says you must look this up: <http://carhenge.com/>. The eclipse was total, in a cloud free sky. They spent another night in camp before heading for home. They had a grand time!

George also spent more time in Great Lakes country before returning to Colorado. He has family on Lake Superior and he was met there by his wife, RMSKC member Jen Ottenhoff, and their daughter, son-in-law and grandson from the Bay Area.



George and Jen's grandson  
at George's brother's place on Lake Superior



EDITOR'S NOTE: Here are more pictures of the younger generation. Jud bought small rec boats for his grandsons' visit this summer. He says they had a blast paddling but he was too busy to take photos.



Marty and Clark's grandkids:  
two of four cousins



Making ice cream with kids  
is easier to photograph than paddling