

VIEW FROM THE COCKPIT

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By Norval Stephens

Can you believe this winter is over?

Now, I will have to admit that we were in Florida, reading the Ludington *Daily News*. It would usually arrive in batches of two to four issues. What fun to read not only the stories of the amount of snow, the temperature estimates but also see the photographs of snow falling, accidents, the lighthouse encased in ice, accidents, snow drifts and even some homes almost isolated. And the intrepid editor, our own Hamlin Lake resident, Steve Begnoche, who daringly flew over the Sable Lighthouse to get a photograph showing that Lake Michigan was frozen over.

So, what is the view from the cockpit? Probably the story I told others the most was the story last year of the ice fishing derby in January 2013 canceled because the temperature was so high the shanties were sinking, and then this year the weight of the snow was such that it was causing melting at the interface between ice and snow forcing the cancelation for 2014.

Here I am in May getting ready to open our cottage on the Upper Lake for its 101st year over the Memorial Day weekend. We will stay about a week to get the usual work done, get the lawn mowed, the flowerbeds planted AND THE BOATS BACK IN THE WATER. Nothing beats the feeling when the outboard motors start on an early crank: aha, we winterized them correctly.

No, the sailboat will not go in yet. It is slung in our boathouse, that sleek hull immobilized but raring to go. The cockpit is covered with a plywood cap and mothballs are in the well to discourage any vermin from putting their feet where I have to put my feet. The sail is carefully rolled spinnaker-style and covered to discourage any creature thinking there might be nourishment there.

Nothing in the world beats the feeling a sailor gets the first time he sheets in to catch the breeze to start another sailing season. Come join us every Saturday on the Lower Lake. There is great camaraderie all season and a farewell beer or two and dinner Labor Day weekend. Wait! The season is just starting. See you out there. That is my view from the cockpit.