

SINK THE BOAT

Louis, Andy, Suzuna, and Kayo were visiting Ron and Marilyn's Loon-a-tick (Lunatic) Island on the Whitefish Bay part of Lake of the Woods (boat dock/house built in 2000) when we decided to go on a southbound trip with the rowboat across the lake and through Turtle Portage to visit Ron's brother Richard at Farnsworth Island. We hauled out the 20 HP outboard engine, attached it to the transom and set out across the flat lake on a sunny day. Andy, with his great vision, was the navigator. The trip is mostly southbound along the buoy-marked passage. We got to Turtle Portage and winched the boat using the available apparatus to pull the boat across the concrete passage on the wheeled boat carrier with the large iron tow-wheel to Turtle Lake on the other side. We then carefully motored across a short section of Sabaskong Bay to the dock at his brother's Island. We found that the old Island (structures built in the 1930's) had changed since we were last there as Richard took us on a tour. He had brought in two new jet-skis, established new solar panels for electricity, rewired the cabins, and removed the old ice house since there was now power for refrigerators to make the needed ice and provide cold storage. The pathway around the island was also improved to provide a smoother/wider path to take small vehicles. There was even a new storage structure in the middle of the island for motorized stuff. Richard was quite proud of his new achievements around the island. Richard also had a float plane at the dock to get there and also to go fishing at remote lakes in northern Ontario Province.

After a nice visit, we set off back for Lunatic Island. Now that we had practice, we crossed Turtle Portage easily and set off northbound. It was such a nice day that we decided to stop and have lunch at Timber Island since it had the nicest beach in that area of the lake. We nosed into the long, curved beach, tied up the boat to a nearby tree and waded into the water. We then decided to have a picnic lunch on the sunny sand and explore some of the swampland behind the beach. When we got back to the beach, we noticed that sky had turned cloudy and there was more of a swell directly from the west onto the beach. Andy got into the boat to start the engine, but soon noticed that the boat was starting to take on water with the increased wind-driven waves and his weight causing the water to come over the back transom into the boat. Our attempts at bailing the water only increased the amount of water going into the boat and soon the motor was grounded on the sand. We tilted the motor so it was out of the water, but the waves had increased and slowly filled the boat with water. Bailing water was useless as more water was coming into the boat than was going out of the boat.

Now what!?! The first step we tried was to remove the heavy outboard engine from the boat. This helped but the waves had increased, the boat had sunk into the sand and there was now even more water going into the boat. So, what were we supposed to do with a boat full of water at the bottom of a shallow area? ...after some discussion and thought, we decided to completely sink the boat in the deeper section of the lake, invert the boat underwater, and lift it up slowly to allow the air to fill up the boat, and then lift the whole boat out of the water inverted, turn it around in the air and carefully place it back on top of the water. We could then put the boat back on land with the bow facing the waves, reinstall the engine on the back, and slowly move the boat back into the lake without any load. We then put Andy back in the boat while keeping the boat level with the water. After some work, we got the boat into deep enough water to restart the engine, re-boarded the boat and set off across the now quite choppy lake to the Island. We were all obviously completely soaked from our time in the cold lake inverting the boat. We had used a cell phone to inform Ron about the problem, so about this time, Ron and Chris showed up with his bigger boat with many very welcome warm towels so we could dry off and reduce the excessive load on the rowboat as we struggled across the very wavy lake back to the aptly named Lunatic Island.