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HULL OF A TOUR: The 'duck' stops here — in Hyannis

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HYANNIS, Mass. — After six days of truly fabulous adventure our crew fondly kissed Maine and New Hampshire goodbye, leaving the moose warning signs, road construction and, to be fair, some pretty awesome riding behind.

We had an incredible time exploring mountains and coastal communities. I'd love to come back and visit again, and that says a lot.

On Thursday our mighty road warriors had kickstands up by 9 a.m. as we headed enthusiastically to the great state of Massachusetts, and in particular, Cape Cod. We shifted into high gear and booked it like banshees for four long hours on the interstate, skirting the congested Boston exchanges as much as possible.

Remember how earlier in the week we were battling the chilly fog of the coast? On Thursday it felt as if we were in a Florida heat wave! We breathed like dragons as we rode the asphalt at a blistering 89 degrees. We also dodged a dangerous truck-tire blowout. Overall it was pretty smooth sailing.

We pulled into our destination of Hyannis in the early afternoon, freshened up and headed out to discover the village before our late-afternoon boating activity. Hyannis is the epicenter of Cape Cod; many refer to it as the "Capital of the Cape." We bird-dogged it to the historic downtown area, which sports a fabulous brew of restaurants, boutiques and gift shops, specialty stores and more.

One of the highlights was visiting the John F. Kennedy Hyannis Museum. I was a kindergartner living in Washington, D.C., and my dad, a career Navy officer, was assigned to the Pentagon when President Kennedy was assassinated.

It had such a profound impact on me at an early age, and I remember sadly watching the funeral procession from our one black-and-white TV. From those early days the Kennedy legacy has continued to fascinate me.

The museum is not large, but it brims with all sorts of interesting family photographs depicting JFK's life and that of his immediate and extended family. I loved the memorabilia, handwritten notes and official White House invitations, watching an 8-minute video and seeing the boating and sailing shots that represented such a big part of Kennedy's recreational life.

It was cool to watch a clip from a TV interview with the boatbuilder who designed JFK's personal sailboat. I left the museum knowing more about why Hyannis and the Kennedy compound meant so much to him and how it became the summer Washington, D.C.

We wandered around Main Street for a while and then headed to Cape Cod Duckmobiles, where we were greeted by Randall Lyons, executive director of the Massachusetts Marine Trades Association, which serves and represents nearly 200 marine businesses.

Randall is a great marketer, and he had produced a very large sign officially welcoming the Hull of a Tour to Massachusetts, which we all just loved!

Randall and I serve together on the Recreational Boating Leadership Council, and I've been a fan of his for quite some time. Prior to his relatively new role, which he assumed the first of this year, he had worked for 10 years for the Newburyport Marinas. He is a major advocate and supporter of youth boating initiatives and promoting marine industry jobs and careers.

Randall had read one of the pre-event media stories about our tour. He reached out to extend an invitation to host one of our events when we cruised into Massachusetts. What a guy! It really meant a lot to me personally to be so warmly welcomed to Massachusetts!

The two co-owners of the 11 Freedom Boat Clubs of Massachusetts, also members of the Massachusetts Marine Trades Association, came along for the ride. Matt Carrick and Capt. Matt O'Connor have really built an empire in this state and they are serving nearly 1,000 members since they opened their first club in 2008. It was great to visit with them and get a chance to catch up on their impressive dynasty and their ongoing growth plans.

Randall had arranged for all of us to enjoy a Duckmobile ride, and we were stoked to participate. We coordinated a group shot, then boarded the amphibious craft for an hour-long land-and-sea adventure.

We were introduced to the owner and the driver, who put on a hilarious, knee-slapping routine, mixed with some truly interesting narration about the area. We cruised the village on wheels, then splashed into the water, where the tour continued to gain speed.

All along the way, on cue, we were taught to "quack" three times to unsuspecting tourists. What a hoot to watch their faces. No shy ones in my group — *no sirreeee!* We were all born to quack, quack, quack, and quack we did!

When the tour ended we headed over to a popular watering hole, Baxter's Fish & Chips, adjacent to Hyannis Marina. It was hopping! Lyons had made arrangements for reserved seating and we toasted a great day and enjoyed dinner outdoors set against a stunning panoramic view of the entire harbor.

There is a wealth of large yachts belonging to the rich (and maybe famous!) here. Hyannis boasts the largest recreational boating community on Cape Cod, as well as the second-largest commercial fishing port in the area. It's also a favorite among tourists who trek here to take ferry boats across to Nantucket Island and Martha's Vineyard.

We thoroughly enjoyed a relaxing evening on the waterfront, surrounded by really great people and plenty of beautiful boats. How blessed are we who have the fortune to make a living in this business?

Hard to believe, but today is the grand finale and the last day of the official tour. It has flown by, but it's been a blast! We are heading to Newport, R.I., in the morning and look forward to a very special sunset dinner cruise hosted by our presenting sponsor, Freedom Boat Club, and the Rhode Island franchise owner, Richard "Dick" Cromwell.

Our final tour blog will post on Monday. Hope you've enjoyed riding with us vicariously. I'd love to hear from you!

Boaterz n Bikerz of America Hull of a Tour: The Lobster Roll is presented by title sponsor Freedom Boat Club; boat sponsor Regal Boats; media sponsor Soundings Trade Only; official chase vehicle sponsor Sea Tow; power partner BRP/Evinrude; plus event sponsors Moose Landing Marina, Freedom Boat Club of New Hampshire and Freedom Boat Club of Rhode Island; the Massachusetts Marine Trade Association; and Kenton Smith Marketing.

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