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# HULL OF A TOUR: Final splashdown celebration in Newport

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NEWPORT, R.I. — While we were all looking forward with great anticipation to riding into Newport, R.I., for our grand finale last Friday, we had mixed emotions as we also knew it signaled the end of a memorable weeklong adventure.

Friday was our last day of organized riding. We left out of Hyannis, and our group split into two routes. One set wanted to make a run to Provincetown (P-Town) at the tip of Cape Cod, while others of us were ready to jam straight into Newport. The plan was to get to the hotel, take a quick shower and then UBER into the downtown Newport area for some shopping at the wharf and/or some R & R at the local watering holes.

The ride was straight interstate, not our norm or preference, but the only real option on a Friday considering our busy schedule. Once again, we were blessed with an abundance of sunshine (and heat), which bode well for our evening's festivities.

At 7:15 p.m., everyone reunited at the dock of Oldport Marine at Sayer's Wharf. I had invited some boating industry friends to join us for the evening, and we were thrilled to welcome Herb McCormick, senior editor of Cruising World magazine, and Kacye Florio, VP at Lighthouse Consulting Group who works with Sail America and produces IMBC for the Association of Marina Industries, among others.

Our special guest for the evening was Richard "Dick" Cromwell, the former president of the Rhode Island Marine Trades Association and current chairman of the board. Dick is also president of Maritime Solutions, a firm that sells and services boats, engines and inflatables, and the owner/operator of four Freedom Boat Clubs including two in Rhode Island in Newport and Warwick, and two he co-owns with another franchisee in Connecticut. His two RI clubs currently sport a fleet of 30 boats and services 235 members. Freedom Boat Club corporate, owned by president and CEO John Giglio, hosted the evening's big event which Cromwell helped to facilitate.

Prior to boarding our private charter — the 55-foot, double-decker *Amazing Grace* — we huddled on the dock for a final group shot. We then eagerly set off for a spectacular sunset dinner cruise

around Narragansett Bay and Newport Harbor, surrounded by breathtaking yachts and vessels of all types.

As we got underway, I was pleased to officially welcome our riders and recognize our sponsors one last time, then to turn the mic over to Cromwell who had agreed to point out several key landmarks along the way.

Our crew was thrilled when Cromwell flagged several impressive America's Cup contenders in the harbor, as well as the fabled New York Yacht Club. He also pointed out the Rose Island Lighthouse built in 1870 that we learned is available for overnight rental, as well as Ft. Adams, an 80-acre former Army fortress that opened in 1824 to protect the harbor, named for President John Adams.

We cruised past a gorgeous Victorian mansion, Hammersmith Farm, that we learned was the family home of former first lady Jackie Kennedy. She and JFK were married in Newport. And speaking of mansions, the waterfront here boasts some of the most impressive in the world, including glorious gilded estates such as The Breakers, Chateau-su-Mer, the Elms, Marble House and more.

After a thoroughly entertaining and educational narration, it was time to indulge in the feast! Our event coordinator for Freedom Boat Club's 17 corporate clubs in Southwest Florida had researched and vetted out several caterers and selected Scratch, as in everything is made from scratch. After sampling the fare, my crewmates and I enthusiastically gave Scratch a five star rating.

We enjoyed huge, chilled fresh shrimp; the local favorite, "stuffies," which are giant quahog clams baked in the round and stuffed to perfection; a crisp Newport salad; baked mac and cheese; parmesan garlic and barbeque wings; and the major bell-ringer of the night, homemade clam chowder that was heralded as the absolute best many had ever tasted, myself included! A spread of home baked desserts capped off the delectable offering, with a variety of flavorful cookies, magic bars and fudgy brownies.

And while the meal was definitely top notch, the best part of the night for me was simply toasting the beauty of a wonderful sunset, on a truly magical boat ride; visiting and laughing with friends; and reminiscing about the many recent memories we had created together.

Just as the sun kissed the evening sky goodnight and began to fade into twilight, we pulled safely back into harbor. Not one prone to emotion, I admit I felt a little tug at my heart as The Lobster Roll turned its last page and dropped anchor.

Yes, we'd had another truly fantastic trip with awesome roads to ride, thanks to my great friend and tour partner, route planner and road captain, Jim Krueger. We had experienced several really fun boating activities, including riding Regals at the Moose Landing Marina kick-off, whale watching in Lubec, tubing the Kennebec, riding Freedom Boats in New Hampshire and quacking up on duckmobiles in Hyannis before wrapping with tonight's sunset cruising extravaganza. We'd eaten a bounty of great New England delicacies. And, Mother Nature had been kind, as we'd experienced favorable weather throughout our journey. *What a week!*

Yes, this was the appropriate time to celebrate the success of an event we had painstakingly planned in minute detail over the past seven months. But ... after spending days together in the saddle and experiencing some of the most exciting boating and biking imaginable ... well, it was just a little hard to say goodbye. Instead, I chose to share hugs and say ... *I'll see you later!*

Krueger and I are already talking about a fifth tour in 2018 and will be sure to keep you posted!

A special thanks to all who joined us for the ride, whether in the flesh or vicariously through this blog. Thanks to my editor at Soundings Trade Only, Jack Atzinger, who turned this blog around on a dime every day, as well as Eric Colby who pinch hit for today's final edition. A giant thanks to John Wooldridge, who drove our Sea Tow chase vehicle Big Red like a Nascar champ, staying tight on us through many challenging twists and turns. And, a very special shout out to each and every fantastic 2017 Hull of a Tour sponsors for making this unique event possible. We are all very grateful for your support, and are in your debt.

***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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