



Door County's haunting spell

We spent the weekend at the cabin on the beach just south of the Sturgeon Bay Ship Canal. The foghorn sounded every day and every night we were there and I can still hear it, reverberating through my inner space like some great, nameless animal moaning in a darkened cave.

Two moans within a five-second space, then an uneasy silence for 23 seconds, then the pair of moanings again and then the silence, throughout the day, throughout the night. Throughout our fitful dreams. Throughout our fitful lives.

In the darkness, we sat on our piece of secure, rockbound coast and listened to the eternal sound, melancholy, but not frightening. We waited for the foil-wrapped potatoes in the driftwood coals. We waited for the fish to be done. We waited without fear.

Jo and Vince and I sat on the log a pebble throw from the restless alien world and I told them of the dark, stormy nights on the ore carriers, the foghorns washed away on the screaming winds, the seas crashing over the cargo holds, the afterend lifted high out of the water, the screw spinning, chattering in mid-air, the ship struggling like a drowning animal, fighting, fighting. In those nights nothing was secure, nothing was rockbound and fear pecked at our spirits the way gulls peck out the eyes of dying fish.

Anyone who has sailed the Great Lakes in the great ships can talk to you of fear. Fear of the November storms on the open lakes. Fear of the holy, mystical powers in these living waters. Fear of the alien world.

A lot of sailors will not put these things into words for you, let alone put the words on paper, but I think they would agree with Mike Link, who did put some of these things on paper in the book "Journeys to Door County."

This land, he writes, should be saved for the sullen, grey foggy days or the blustery, stormy days. He tells of visiting Cave Point on a thick, foggy day — one that gives thoughts of London or Maine and foghorns in the gloom.

They were there alone. Billows of damp air rolled in instead of big waves and the water surged, gurgled and disappeared at the rock's edge. The fog hid the rest of the world and the rocks were wet and seemed to glisten in an otherwise muted scene.

"My thoughts of that day were mixed," Mike Link remembers. "The fog made us seem alone in the world, and the surrealistic setting made my wife's image stand out from the grey background. There was a haunting spell in the air. The fog was not just Lake Michigan water suspended in the sky. There were spirits floating there. Seamen of the fresh water that had tested their mettle in the Great Lakes' storms and had lost. I could feel them."

Every Door County coastline, Link concludes, every port has an aura of antiquity.

"We each journey," he writes, "beyond the limits of our body in



—Press Connection photo by Tom Riles

A setting sun outlines some of Door County's shoreline beauty.

spirits that hitchhike on the fishing trollers or full-sailed yachts. Where we do give our vision room to wander, we do great things and go beyond the curve of the horizon."

We stared at the shrouded sea and for a moment, I was back on the D. M. Clemson and the Norman B. Ream and even on the fishtug Ione out of Two Rivers, watching the Le Claire brothers gilling and gutting a ton of lake trout, the waters sparkling and filled with fish and gulls and the laughter of young men who knew damn well they were all going to live forever.