

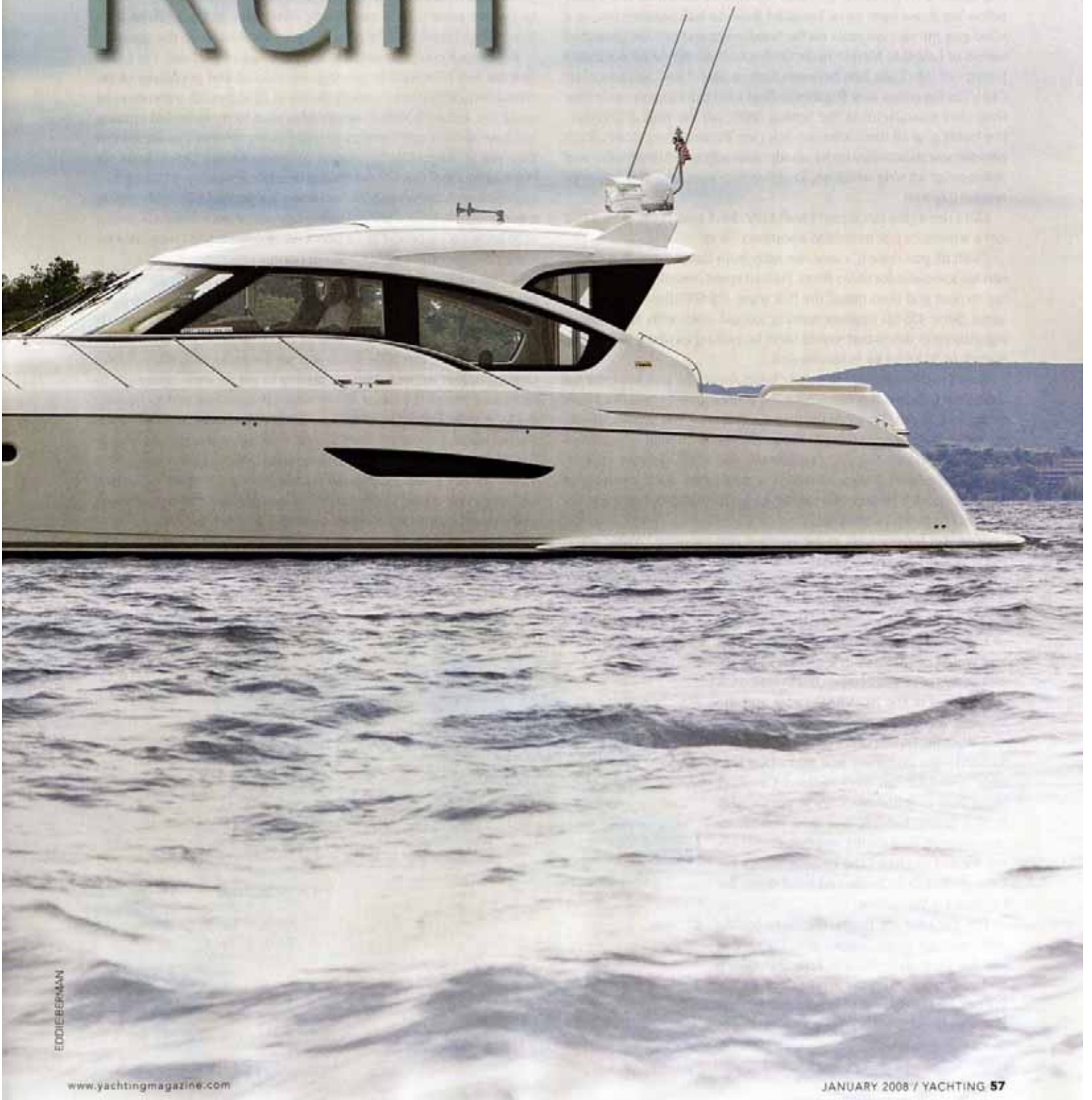
A white yacht is shown from the side, moving across a body of water. In the background, there is a large, green, forested hillside and a large, multi-story stone castle or fortress. The sky is overcast. The text 'Born to' is overlaid in a large, light blue, sans-serif font.

Born to

We move *Crown Jewel*,
Tiara's first 5800 Sovran, from
Lake Erie to New York City

BY JOHN WOOLDRIDGE

Run



EDDIE BERMAN

You know how to whistle, don't you?

The first time I laid eyes on *Crown Jewel*, the new Tiara Sovran 5800, I wanted to purse my lips and mark the moment in a manner commensurate with a screen goddess, say Lauren Bacall in her dewey prime. Yes, those were some beautiful lines on hull number one, as it idled past my vantage point on the breakwater and into the protected waters of Lakeside Marine Yacht Center, here on the small peninsula jutting out into Lake Erie between Kelleys Island and Sandusky Bay, Ohio. The luxurious new flagship of Tiara's fleet, the largest yacht they have ever manufactured, the Sovran 5800 had the hull and protective hardtop of all the Sovran models (see *YACHTING*, December). But it also set new standards with its aerodynamically raked deckhouse and down-swept aft side windows, long hardtop overhang and beautiful reverse transom.

Did I rise to the occasion? I truthfully don't remember now, if I let out a whistle, or just mumbled a stunned "Wow?"

"Wait till you drive it," came the reply from David Zgrabik, a senior service specialist for Volvo Penta. He had spent countless hours helping to plan and then install the first triple IPS 600 diesel system, the same three 435-hp engines turning azipod units with forward-facing dual-prop drives that would soon be pulling us along at cruising speeds of 30 knots for hours on end.

David and I were here to meet *Crown Jewel* and join her crew for a delivery to Norwalk, Connecticut. We walked over to take docklines from Dave Walsh, Tiara's marketing director and Tim Westra, the relief delivery skipper, and marveled at the precision with which Evan Dufendach, Tiara's flagship coordinator and chief delivery captain, snugged the 5800 Sovran alongside a steel-faced dock, courtesy of Volvo Penta's IPS joystick that swung the azipods and shifted the gears at Evan's fingertip commands.

"Did you have a look at the weather this morning," Walsh asked as I shook his hand and began handing over my gear. I had, and it wasn't very promising. A big low was spinning up south of Chicago and beginning to move across the lower part of Lake Michigan. It was headed right for us and would overtake us in less than 24 hours.

The five of us gathered on the bridge deck and looked at the NOWRAD radar and the weather forecast available from Sirius Marine Weather. Dufendach's plan was straightforward—get underway and make best possible speed for Canada's Welland Canal, 17 miles west of Buffalo, N.Y., try to get through it in a timely fashion, and then reevaluate our situation vis-à-vis the weather. Eventually we wanted to cross Lake Ontario, transit the Oswego and Erie Canals, and head down the Hudson for Manhattan.

For the next six hours, the Tiara Sovran 5800 was our magic carpet ride, smoothing out the light chop of Lake Erie. Dufendach and Westra stayed on the bridge deck, watching out for the dozens of small fishing boats that wander well offshore this time of year in

search of salmon.

We left behind one of Lake Erie's premiere cruising destinations, South Bass Island and Put-In-Bay. I looked to the south shore, remembering the good harbor and family attractions at Cedar Point. It's a region I'm committed to exploring more thoroughly in the future.

If there is a common element among many of the boats I've tested over the last 10 years, it is growing inclusion of, and popularity of, enclosed helm stations on cruising yachts of all stripes. It's a common request, too, among boomer owners who want to try extended cruising and have had enough experience with helms not-so-well protected that they won't compromise on comfort underway. Aboard *Crown Jewel*, we knew all too well that the overtaking weather system could strengthen and catch us in open water. We also knew that we had a 30-knot cruising speed available to us, a tactical advantage over slower designs. Running at 30 knots over a period of six hours, we also knew we'd burn approximately 360 gallons of fuel, or half our normal capacity.

As the nautical miles passed beneath our keel, we interacted and got to know one another, found places to store the gear David Zgrabik and I brought aboard and generally enjoyed the afternoon. By 6:30 PM we were tied to the wall of Port Colborne, entrance to the Welland Canal. Evan Dufendach was on the radio with Vessel Traffic Control before we were tied up, hoping to get an early clearance to enter and transit the canal. There were six sailboats tied to floating docks nearby, Canadian sailors returning from a regatta, also waiting permission to transit. They'd been there several hours, waiting to hear that the majority of commercial traffic, which gets priority from Vessel Traffic Control, had finally passed through. It was obvious that we were in for a wait. Dufendach took our passports, found a phone and cleared us into the country through Canada Customs.

We chatted with the locals who walked or bicycled by who, like



DAVID POLLARD

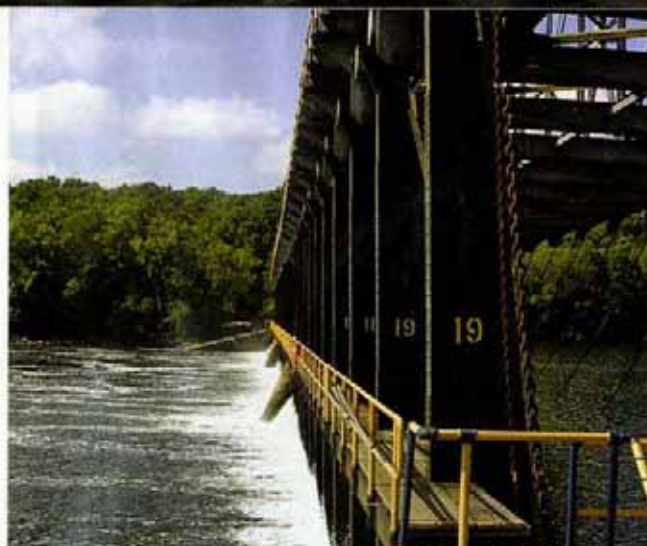


THE TIARA'S ENCLOSED HELM STATION REFLECTS OWNERS WHO WANT TO EXTEND THEIR CRUISING SEASONS (TOP) AND WAS APPRECIATED WHILE RUNNING AHEAD OF A FRONT (BOTTOM LEFT). PART OF THE ERIE CANAL COMPLEX (BELOW).

JEREMY FRACHETTE



JOHN WOOLDRIDGE



A TYPICAL ERIE CANAL SCENE (TOP) WHILE CUTTING THROUGH NORTHERN NEW YORK STATE. TUGBOATS OF THE N.Y. STATE AUTHORITY FLEET MAINTAINING THE LOCKS (BELOW). COUNTER-CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM, THE UNBEATABLE COMBINATION OF A LOCK; THE TIARA 5800; AND THE AUTHOR, AT THE TIARA'S HELM, ENJOYING THE GOOD VISIBILITY AND THE VOLVO IPS SYSTEM'S FINGERTIP CONTROLS.

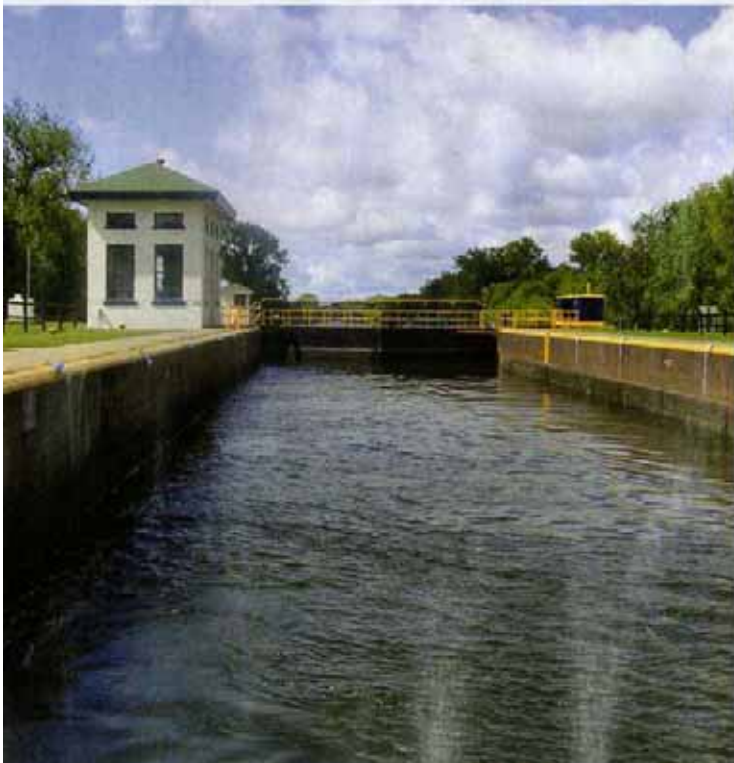


EDDIE BERMAN



dockwalkers everywhere, were drawn to the water hoping to share the experiences of cruisers passing through. And there was regular big ship traffic to watch, as well, large ore and bulk carriers passing through the Welland Canal to points east and west. Not knowing how long we'd be waiting for clearance, the decision was made as darkness fell—time for dinner and a movie. Tim Westra had opened the undercounter freezer, which was packed with over a week's worth of frozen meals lovingly prepared by Cindy, his wife. Out came chicken breasts in white wine sauce, laid tenderly over rice and accompanied by a crisp green salad. Homemade chocolate cookies for dessert made a heavenly finish. We weren't going hungry, thanks to the Westras. Dave Walsh pulled the latest Bond movie out of a CD wallet, and we all settled in to enjoy the action, putting off until later the next weather update.

At 10:15 PM, we were cleared to enter the canal, with a condition—we would stick together with the sailboats and all go through as a group. For the next eight hours, our small flotilla would traverse



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: EDDIE BERMAN, JOHN WOOLDRIDGE, EDDIE BERMAN, JOHN WOOLDRIDGE

the 27-mile long canal, passing through eight locks and dropping down 326 feet to Lake Ontario. Despite the hour, lock workers were always ready with long clean yellow nylon lines to stabilize our yachts while the waters were being drawn off. We all took a turn at the helm and let the off watch get a quick nap. In a long land cut between locks, a stretch of water so dark that seeing the shoreline was part guesswork and part reliance on the accuracy of the little boat icon on the Raymarine E-120 screen, I saw the lights of a large ship coming our way. My hand instinctively moved the wheel ever so slightly to starboard as my eyes went to the depthfinder screen window. Plenty of water, I thought, but less than before. In moments it was abeam of us, its dark painted hull illuminated by our running lights, and I was happy to have moved a little right of the channel when I first saw it approaching.

Evan Dufendach headed us out into Lake Ontario, which was developing a chop from the winds heralding the storm system behind us, and set a course for nearby Niagara-On-The-Lake. This quaint town is home of the annual Shaw Theatre Festival, and is chock full of bed-and-breakfast accommodations for cruisers who might want to see some

and the small towns along its length suffered as trade and commerce began to rely on overland rail and highway routes, the Erie Canal is now under the care of the New York State Canal Corporation. Financed by the New York State Thruway Authority, the state has led an aggressive campaign to maintain the canal in top working order and develop destinations along the way that promote recreational boat, tour boat, charter boat and light commercial uses.

A visit to the official Website (www.nyscanals.gov) is a must for those considering this ramble across upstate New York. There are countless towns with municipal docks, and a host of events, to draw you there, if only for a week. You can even learn where to hire a traditional "English Narrowboat," or something more modern if time and distance will keep you from taking your own cruiser there. This is relaxed cruising, usually around 10 knots. It seems that there's a small town just around every bend that yearns to be explored, separated by long stretches of open country (and the occasional stretch of highway at some points), plus the fascinating structures of the locks and spillways themselves—manned by friendly lock keepers who aren't afraid to chat or recommend a good stop down the line.



YOU CAN MAKE IT HERE (NEW YORK CITY) WITH TIARA'S HARDTOP.

EDDIE BERMAN

live theatre, explore the numerous wineries of the region, or simply get off the lake and enjoy the hospitality of Canadian restaurateurs. Should we stay or should we go? As we took on fuel, we weighed the distance to Oswego, N.Y., entrance to the Oswego Canal, which would take us to the Erie Canal, and the weather, which was advancing steadily.

Four hours later we pulled into Oswego harbor, leaving behind a comfortable sleigh ride in three- to four-footers. By the time we ascended the 118 feet of the Oswego Canal's seven locks, the storm was on us with a vengeance. With reports of 12-foot waves on Lake Erie ringing in our heads, handling lock lines in the pouring rain was relatively comfortable, particularly if you remembered to bring your best foulies (I had) and remembered to hold your arms down as you controlled the line (reaching up sent rivers of water sluicing down your sleeve).

This was my second passage through a section of the Erie Canal. It is truly one of the most interesting experiences a cruiser can have, taking you 363 miles from Federal Lock just north of Albany, N.Y. on the Hudson River at the eastern end to Buffalo, N.Y. on the western end. If you cruise the canal in its entirety, negotiating 83 locks, you'll rise 676 feet up to Lake Erie. More importantly, you'll travel on one of the world's engineering marvels, a route first proposed in 1639, and opened in 1825. Though it fell on hard times for a number of years,

After the storm front passed us by, we had two days of brilliant sunlight and early autumn weather. We found docks with 50-amp service every night, stayed in small towns with good restaurants within walking distance or only a short cab ride away. Fuel was available as well, but we were well supplied and planned to refill in Albany, once we entered the Hudson River. The highlight was descending the Waterford Flight, a series of five locks that let us down 169 feet in a two-mile stretch of the Canal that might be the prettiest of them all.

It's 126 miles from the docks of the Albany Yacht Club to The Battery and the glass-and-concrete lower Manhattan waterfront. We set our sights on a loop around Lady Liberty before nightfall, but slowed down to take in the beauty of notable landmarks like Bannerman's Island and its now-crumbling castle, and the mist-topped mountains flanking Storm King and Bear mountains where the Hudson narrows and twists before widening on its way to New York Harbor.

We could have spent time in any of several dozen stopovers. If you're lucky enough to have a cruiser like the Tiara 5800 Sovran with a protected helm, you can make all or parts of this trip earlier or later in the season and still be comfortable. But no matter what kind of cruiser you own, this is not a trip to put off. □

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