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The Key to it all...

By Jeff Merrill

Can one key make a difference?

One of the many things we all share in common as we march through time is an accumulation of keys. Take a look at your key ring. I'm sure it's not much different from mine and includes a home key, car key, office key...and perhaps even one or two you aren't sure what they unlock.

Keys secure our possessions and are an essential component of modern civilization – a reminder of all the necessity and ambiguity that locks us into our lives.

For those fortunate enough to balance the three essentials needed to pursue the Nordhavn cruising lifestyle – time, health and money – the importance and dependence upon keys can be dramatically reduced.



This past December I had lunch in Dana Point, CA with Steven and Carol Argosy, owners of Nordhavn 62 #4 *Seabird*. The Argosy's have been enjoying life at sea for several years now and are part of the GSSR fleet ([Great Siberian Sushi Run](#)), which last year traveled from Seattle, WA to Osaka, Japan as an armada. Over calamari appetizers we talked about their adventure and what it took to achieve their goal of buying a Nordhavn and setting out to

sea.

The previous month, November, we had just held our first southwest Nordhavn rendezvous in Dana Point and had several Nordhavn owners address their colleagues to share highlights from their travels. One of the speakers was Ken Williams who spearheaded the GSSR and presented a slide show and commentary of the trek across the North Pacific. One event that Ken related was the “key ceremony” that had been held in Japan and involved Steven and Carol. I was enthralled with the story and now, weeks later, couldn't wait to ask them about it.



The story began several years ago when my late colleague, Steve Miller, who sold *Seabird* to Steven and Carol, made a very astute judgment that set a series of events into play. During one of their early boat shopping meetings a few years back, Steve Miller spied Steven's massive key ring and exclaimed (in a loud, matter-of-fact voice for which he was famous is still dearly missed), "You've got a complicated life!" Like a bolt of lightning, it sunk in: each key represented a responsibility that was holding them back from doing what they dreamed.

This realization was an epiphany for Steven and Carol who understood the truth and significance of Steve Miller's observation and set out to do something about it – targeting a goal to thin out and un-complicate their lives so that one day their personal world could be reduced to one key, the key to their Nordhavn 62, *Seabird*. Over time the Argosy's sold their house, their cars, the manufacturing business that Steven owned and all other earthly possessions that required a lock to maintain. They purchased *Seabird* in 2003, ten years before they realistically thought they would be able to enjoy her full time, but with plenty of time to outfit her and to get to know her. Each year they would have a minor celebration as they reduced a key, one less string of attachment and it took most of four years to sell the business, sell off cars, sell their home and finally whittle their key ring down. They retired in 2005 with one terrestrial key left on the ring and began to spend more time afloat.



THE DAY finally occurred as the GSSR fleet arrived in Yokohama Japan. Steven got word via email that the sale of the building that he still owned and had rented out to the buyers of his manufacturing business in Connecticut had finally closed and his lawyer confirmed the proceeds had been wired into their account...liberating the last key on his key ring.

Ken and Roberta Williams hosted an evening gathering aboard their Nordhavn 68 *Sans Souci* that night in Yokohama to toast the Argosy's independence and Steven, moved by the significance of completing his goal, said a few words of thanks and appreciation to those in attendance then ceremoniously flung the now unneeded building key into the harbor, to a warm round of applause and roar of approval from his close friends of the GSSR which also include Braun and Tina Jones of the Nordhavn 62 sister ship *Grey Pearl*.



Poignant, perfect, precise.

One key left, the key to *Seabird*. Now the Argosy's can enjoy all they have spent a lifetime working for. One key has unlocked the world for Steven and Carol and allowed *Seabird* the freedom to fly to wherever and whenever they choose.

As I type up this report I am waiting in Ishigaki, Japan with my 13 year old son Jonn to join up with *Seabird* and crew with Steven and Carol aboard *Seabird* on a historic trip from Japan to Taiwan. We flew over yesterday from California to participate in this small adventure that was hatched during that December lunch in Dana Point. The GSSR fleet has begun their 2010 campaign heading from Japan to Taiwan and ultimately intending to cruise to Hong Kong. The leg we are sailing is from Ishigaki, Japan to Tainan, Taiwan – home of the Ta Shing yard who built the three Nordhavns in this convoy. This will be a homecoming that has never happened before, none of the boats built in our Asian yards have ever returned to the place of their birth. For Jonn and me, it will be a summer vacation filled with memories we will share for the rest of our lives and I know in the back of my mind I'll be thinking of schemes so that one day I, too, can reduce my life to one key.



Jeff Merrill has traveled aboard Nordhavns all over the world with his clients and enjoys being out at sea when he is not “working”. You can email Jeff by sending a note to Jeff.Merrill@JMYS.com Twitter – @merrillyachts.

Note: This article originally appeared on the Nordhavn website in July, 2010 and has been re-edited.