

Newsletter



Knife River Heritage & Cultural Center

PO Box 240 • 180 Marina Road
Knife River, MN 55609
info@krhcc.org

June 2023

By Paul von Goertz – KRHCC Board Member

THE REAL RESCUERS OF CRUSADER II

By Paul von Goertz with material gleaned from the story “Not quite ready for Valhalla,” by Mel Sando, former Executive Director of the Lake County Historical Society. Sando’s story appeared in the January 2014 issue of the Society’s newsletter.

It occurred to me there are really three chapters to the rescue of CRUSADER II. Our friends in Two Harbors wrote chapter I, the KRHCC chapter II and now chapter III.



In the photo are some of the many dedicated Two Harbor (TH) volunteers who first saved CRUSADER II held a rededication ceremony on Lighthouse Point on July 14, 1991. Photo: KRHCC archives

Newsletter

CHAPTER 1: The Rescue

Chapter I begins shortly after the death of Carl Erickson in 1957. Carl had fished CRUSADER II since its launch in 1939 when it was christened by Crown Prince Olav of Norway.

A few years later the boat was sold to three couples who did some herring fishing but used it mostly for pleasure. Since the interior was equipped with bunks and a coal stove it provided a cozy atmosphere. Under the ownership of the three couples, the cabin was emblazoned with the red, white, and gold Norwegian coat of arms, befitting its royal christening.



The Norwegian coat of arms that was placed on CRUSADER II will not be mounted on the boat after the rebuild as it was not original to it. It will, however, appear within the shelter of the commercial fishing exhibit. Image: Public domain

Eventually CRUSADER II was sold to a man from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan (UP) who planned to sail it down the Mississippi. He gutted it to be fitted for long term cruising. But, looking at the work involved, he bought another wood boat, a factory-built Wheeler from the '50s that required far less work.

So off he went only to discover that on the Mississippi you don't just throw out an anchor for the night. That is not allowed on a river that is also a marine highway. You must be off the river and at a marina. He soon went broke from marina and gas prices, and so another boater's dream dashed. Meanwhile, CRUSADER II sat forlornly in a corner of the KR marina for many years.

In August of 1983, our disappointed and repentant Huckleberry Finn donated CRUSADER II to the Two Harbors Area Development Corporation (THADC) as a tourist attraction. We commend the owner for doing this but wish he hadn't gutted it with his dream of running it down the Mississippi.

Upon accepting the boat, THADC assumed the responsibility for its storage, which was \$200 a year. This prompted THADC to donate the boat to the Lake County Historical Society in 1985. Later that year the Society began making plans to move CRUSADER II from Knife River (KR) to TH.

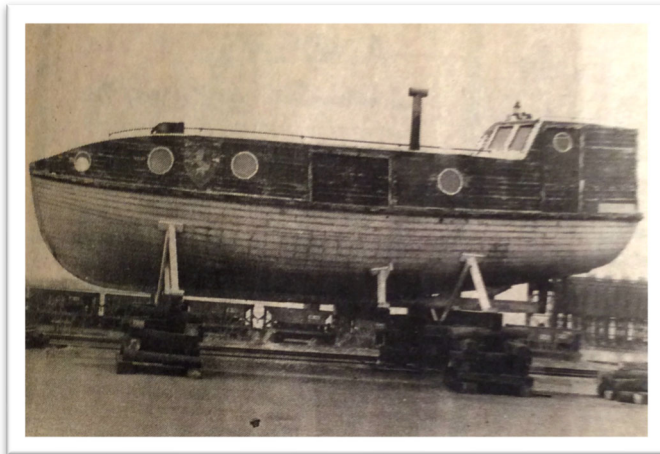
Newsletter

Just getting the boat to the TH waterfront was a challenge as the DM&IR underpass at the time was too low for the boat and trailer. Eventually the Society would get the boat next to the TH depot by bringing it through the railroad yards. No small feat!

CRUSADER II would sit next to the TH depot in limbo for a few years as discussions took place how best to restore and present the boat.

Photo: Doug Hill

The TH Sons of Norway Lodge recognized the historical significance of the boat. In 1987 the Lodge solicited bids to restore the boat as she sat at the depot. A bid was accepted for \$2,600.



Local boatwright Larry Ronning recalls he was involved with building the cradle and making the most necessary repairs. Many volunteers scraped, sanded and painted the hull and cabin.

A small plot of land near the lighthouse known as the Falk Lease Land was chosen as the site to display CRUSADER II.

In 1989 the Commercial State Bank of Two Harbors (now Park State Bank) was celebrating its centennial year. To honor its 100th year, the bank donated \$5,000 to the Society to relocate the boat on Lighthouse Point, overlooking the waterfront where Two Harbors' commercial fishing once took place.



Image: Several TH volunteers enlisted Superman to help with the work in freshening up CRUSADER II.

Photo: KRHCC archives

Newsletter

Between the donations from the TH Sons of Norway and the bank, Larry and many volunteers led by Ray Widen were able to make the boat presentable to visitors. In the fall of 1990, the boat was moved from the TH depot to a level site on Lighthouse Point. Some further restoration work was performed by Larry Ronning and Ray Widen.

Image: CRUSADER II at Lighthouse Point

Photo: KRHCC archives



On Sunday, July 14, 1991, a rededication ceremony was held for CRUSADER II on Lighthouse Point. The celebration featured presentations by the past International

Directors of the Sons of Norway, local historians, and the planting of a Norway pine next to the exhibit.



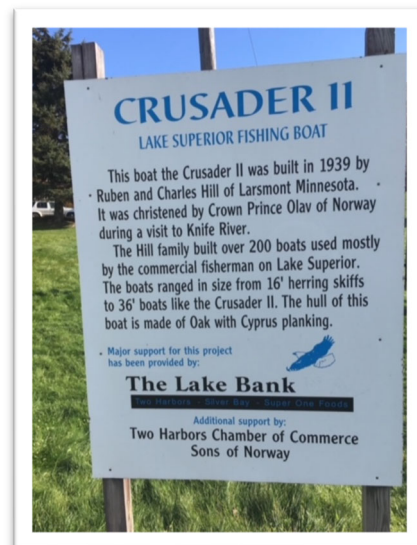
Image left: Helmer (left) and Reuben (right) Hill, builders of CRUSADER II were honored at the rededication of CRUSADER II.

Photo: KRHCC archives

A brief summary of CRUSADER II's history was placed next to the boat along with recognition for its principal sponsor.

Photo credit: KRHCC archives

The effort now began to raise money to build a shelter over the boat. The biggest obstacle to receiving grant help was the fact that the Society did not own the land upon which CRUSADER II rested. An application was made and then approved by the TH city council for the council to exercise custodial control over the property. This move allowed the Society to demonstrate sustainability to grant organizations.



Newsletter

The agreement was subject to the city attorney drafting a document for approval by the city council. The agreement included a stipulation that the Society would also accept ownership of the EDNA G. – a liability the Society could not carry, even with lodging tax revenue. That was a deal breaker.

By the late 1990s CRUSADER II needed some freshening up. The North Shore Rotary Club approached the Society with an offer to repaint the boat if the Society would pay for the paint. This offer prompted the Society to pay for some cosmetic repairs prior to painting. These repairs cost more than expected. Learning of the overrun, the Rotary Club covered it.

The Society maintained CRUSADER II and the property around it until the boat was gifted to the KRHCC in December of 2016.

Interestingly, in 2000 the Canal Park Business Association expressed an interest in buying CRUSADER II and turn it into a vending booth selling fried fish. Thankfully, the Society rejected the offer. But the Canal Park association's idea did pan out years later when the NELS J., another long time KR fish tug, was purchased, gutted and put into service dispensing fried fish and other snack items.



Image: The NELS J. at the KR marina in 1974. A good-looking boat.
Photo credit: Paul von Goertz

Editor's note: Canal Park businesses' plans for relocating local historic boats to Canal Park as visitor attractions included LEIF ERIKSON when the ship was gifted to SOS (Save Our Ship) by the City of Duluth. A search by SOS to find a site for the ship in 2021 resulted in two finalists - Canal Park and the KRHCC. The KRHCC gave a convincing argument for the KRHCC as the best site for the ship and visitors. The ship arrived in KR in November 2021 in time to be a featured attraction at Julebyen 2021.

Individuals and businesses that steered CRUSADER II through Chapter I :
(apologies to those overlooked):

- Previous private owner of CRUSADER II
- Lake County Historical Society

Newsletter

- Two Harbors Area Development Corporation (THADC)
- Two Harbors Chamber of Commerce
- DM&IR
- Two Harbors City Council
- Knife River Marina (Ed Drill operator)
- Commercial State Bank (now Park State Bank)
- The Two Harbors Rotary Club
- Two Harbors Sons of Norway Lodge
- Larry Ronning, boatwright
- Lyle Northey (former TH mayor and fierce advocate for Two Harbors)
- Ray Widen (tireless and dedicated volunteer)

The real rescuers of CRUSADER II were those who accepted the offer of its last owner to take stewardship of the boat with a vision of restoring and displaying it, which they did.

Chapter II: The Homecoming

Chapter II of the CRUSADER II odyssey starts with an invitation to me, Paul von Goertz, from the Bay Area Historical Society to speak on the rebuild of STAR, an iconic 20' KR "gas boat." STAR was built on the Michigan UP in 1934 and fished Isle Royale, eventually ending up in KR where over its lifetime was owned by five KR fishing families.

In my talk given at a Beaver Bay restaurant, I mentioned the boat building talent in KR that helped me bring STAR from a "gray boat" to the graceful lady she once was. Following my talk, Mel Sando, who was the Lake County Historical Society's Executive Director at the time, asked if I through KR would like to have CRUSADER II.

He explained the boat was continuing to weather and the likelihood of the Society building a shelter over it was slim to none. For starters, the Society did not own the land upon which the boat rested, and that was a deal breaker for any hope of receiving grant support. Secondly, TH did not have volunteers with boat building/restoration skills or the apparent leadership to restore the boat. The only condition of gifting the boat to KR was that it had to be gifted to a non-profit. I stuck my neck out and told Mel I felt KR would like to have the boat brought back home.

Newsletter

By chance the Knife River Rec Council, a non-profit, was holding its monthly meeting the night of my talk. I asked to speak and repeated Mel's offer. I only asked for the KRRC to agree to be the steward of the boat until a CRUSADER II non-profit could be established. The board agreed and even offered to pay the liability insurance while the boat was in storage.

I rounded up Larry Ronning, Randy Ellestad and Bob Entzion (grandson of Carl Erickson) and all agreed we should accept Mel's offer, which within a week was voted and approved by the Society's board. The four of us also agreed we should move fast in getting the boat to KR before snowfall. Within days Randy Ellestad arranged for the KR marina to move the boat with their hydraulic trailer, Ostman Trucking to provide a truck, and the marina to store the boat until a suitable site could be found to display it. Both Ostman and the marina donated their services.

To shorten the story, the boat was sitting at the KR marina on December 21, 2016.



CRUSADER heading to its new home on December 21, 2016. The THPD provided an escort to the TH city limits. Ostman Trucking provided the truck and the KR Marina the hydraulic trailer – all at no cost. As we understand it, not all those in TH were thrilled when they began to realize something was missing from Lighthouse Point. However, they will be thrilled when they realize the common goal of our two communities has been achieved – to save and restore CRUSADER II and place it under a shelter.

Photo: Paul von Goertz

Individuals and organizations that steered CRUSADER II through Chapter II:
(apologies to those overlooked):

- Lake County Historical Society
- Knife River Rec Council
- Knife River Marina (Barkers Island Marina – Eric Thomas CEO)
- Ostman Trucking & Excavating

Newsletter

- THPD
- Larry Ronning
- Duane Madison
- Todd Lindahl
- Paul von Goertz
- City of Two Harbors Public Works
- Mona Linden
- Bob Entzion
- Randy Ellestad

Chapter III – The Rebuild

The rebuild began in November of 2022 when Barker’s Island Marina crews, operators of the KR marina, moved CRUSADER II from the back of the KRHCC site to its newly poured shelter slab at no cost to the KRHCC. Photo: Paul von Goertz

On May 6, 2023, the restoration began with the removal of the lower half of the boat’s rotted stem. The next weeks were devoted to readying the boat to be placed on its cradle and building the cradle itself. That was accomplished on May 29.

In late June Alex Happ from KR and owner of NorShor Construction, and his crew began building the deck for viewing CRUSADER II’s interior. That will be accomplished by end of July. At that time the five commercial fishing interpretive displays will be mounted on the deck. (see May issue)

Restoration of CRUSADER II will be continuous six days a week until completed this fall. At that time a protective shelter will be placed over it, trusting the grants for which we have applied are awarded and we raise required matching donations.



Individuals participating in the rebuild:

- Larry Ronning – Project Manager
- Doug Hill – (has devoted his summer as a volunteer to restoring the boat his grandfather and uncle built)
- David Grong

Newsletter

- Randy Ellestad
- Norbert Norman
- Paul von Goertz (cheerleader/gopher/grant writer)
- Mike Ojard
- Kris Olson

CRUSADER II as North Shore community builder.

CRUSADER II has helped bring the communities of KR, TH and Larsmont together through a common goal to preserve each community's commercial fishing heritage.

For KR, CRUSADER II speaks to a town recognizing an icon from the day it was christened by Crown Prince Olav of Norway in the spring of 1939.

The Lake County Historical Society recognized the boat's historical significance to Lake County and used their resources to bring the boat to Lighthouse Point in TH, locating it overlooking the town's once vibrant commercial fishing waterfront.

Larsmont valued the boat as representative of one of the more than 200 boats (up to 50 feet long) the industrious Hill family built in Larsmont, as well as for its tie to Norwegian Royalty.

Many thanks to the Lake County Historical Society for donating CRUSADER II to KR and by doing so showing its faith in KR to restore and display the boat when they were unfortunately forced to acknowledge they could not.



Lyle Northey addresses those attending the celebration of the freshened-up CRUSADER II on July 14, 1991. Lyle was an untiring community activist serving two terms as mayor on the early '80s and was the Lake Superior School Superintendent in 1991.

Photo credit: KRHCC archives

Newsletter

Final thought on Memorial Day 2023

VETERANS FOIL HITLER'S PLANS TO INVADE THE UNITED STATES

I have always had the utmost faith in our military to protect the freedoms we have and pretty much never gave much thought to a serious threat to our country, other than perhaps the Cuban Missile crisis of 1962. Unknown to me until recently was a plan to invade our country during WWII.

From the first of January through end of May of this year I have been watching a documentary on Prime Video called "World War II Diary." It covers all 2,185 days of WWII for a total of 71 hours of installments (yes, I have a life, a very good one).

One of the take-aways was Hitler's contempt for democracy as a failed institution – that a country could not govern itself. He viewed the US as a nation in chaos coming out of a deep depression and rethinking capitalism. Chaos creates opportunities.

As the war progressed and England was expected to fall, Hitler began to plan his next move – to invade the US. He would use England's large, now defeated navy and large fleet of merchant ships to bring his war machine to the US. Now this certainly rings of madness. But consider this: at the end of the war as the allies went through German scientists' records and notes they discovered the Germans had already developed a rocket capable of delivering a warhead 3,000+ miles.

Furthermore, in 1941 German scientists had a general idea of how to create an atomic bomb but needed more time. The allies were aware of this and so bombed the Nazi research centers and materials depots into oblivion.

So, worst case scenario, if timing had been different, Nazi Germany could have destroyed our east coast cities with an atomic weapon and forced the US into some kind of truce or armistice.

The speed by which the allies, led by the Americans, swept through Germany from D-Day was a big factor in destroying the development of Hitler's secret weapons that he promised his people would win the war, even as Germany was collapsing.

Yes, freedom is not free and not to be taken for granted - it only takes demons with twisted minds to remind us. And, those men and women who pledge their lives to defend our country – the ones we remember each Memorial Day.

Newsletter

THEFT THWARTED AT KRHCC SITE

Someone must have thought Menards had opened a lumber yard at the KRHCC site earlier this month and attempted to take advantage of a “100% Off Sale” as they backed their truck and trailer up to the pile of treated wood that will become the viewing deck for CRUSADER II.



Photo credit: Paul von Goertz

Fortunately, an alert neighbor noticed “suspicious activity” and turned on a light. The truck “left in a big hurry,” but not before our alert neighbor got a good description of it and the trailer.

The incident was reported to the Lake County Sheriff’s Department and steps were taken to increase site security.

Rule: If you see suspicious activity, report it to law enforcement.

Editor’s comment: It saddens me that someone would attempt to steal from the KRHCC, a source of pride for the KR community, built by volunteers, and funded to a large degree with local donations. But reality is there are selfish people who could care less about moral issues and only care about themselves.

Newsletter

KR NOW HAS ITS OWN WATERFRONT LIVE STREAM WEATHER STATION!

I have an app on my phone that acknowledges KR as a “location” and tells me that the temperature is 80 degrees - but my house thermometer records 54 degrees. **No more - thanks to “Sheleweather!”**



Scott Shelerud has placed a weather station on his lake front property by the river mouth that will give you real time weather conditions, and the 10-day forecast. How great is this for folks who leave the metro with what the metro forecasts say is a perfect KR day, only to be welcomed by a honkin’ northeast and 47-degree temps!

Photo credit: Scott Shelerud

I asked Scott the why and how of the weather station and here is his response: “I have been intrigued by weather since I was young. As part of my former Air Traffic Control job, I was trained for and qualified as a “Certified Weather Observer” for many years.

“Since I retired, my status has relaxed to that of a “Trained Weather Spotter.” Any reports you see for Knife River on the national sites are likely from my weather station, or from reports I routinely phone in to the National Weather Service.

“This station is marketed by WeatherFlow Tempest and reports back to my weather app, to Weather Underground and other sites via WiFi to my home system, and thence to my various weather accounts. It does a great job, but occasionally over-reports the amount of precipitation, especially in windy conditions. (In the interest of full disclosure, I do own stock in WeatherFlow).

“I also have two additional sensors outside the house (for other systems) and it is amazing to see the difference between the readings at the river mouth and those just a few hundred yards inland!”

To access Sheleweather go to: <https://tempestwx.com/station/21170>

Thank you, Scott, for creating and sharing this valuable service to the KR community and our visitors!

Newsletter

HOW TO TURN \$1 INTO \$2

It's clear as we get further into the building season with wood prices continuing to escalate, that to meet the cost of building materials for both CRUSADER II's rebuild and its shelter yet this year will be a challenge.

Budgets we established back in January continue to be "adjusted." Can you help us keep up to increasing costs?

The IRRR has been a great funder to the KRHCC because we have always met their 1:1 match requirement. For every dollar we contribute they match it up to a set amount. Please help us continue to make the match and turn \$1 into \$2. This match is particularly critical now as we look to fund a shelter for CRUSADER II this fall at an estimated \$50,000.

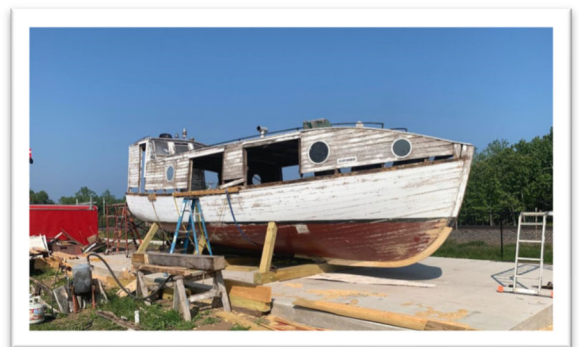
The KRHCC is an IRS-recognized 501(c3) so your donation is totally tax deductible. Send to: KRHCC, POB 240, Knife River, MN, 55609. Thank you!

DIDN'T GET YOUR MONTHLY NEWSLETTER?

A few folks who normally get the KRHCC monthly newsletter have mentioned to me that occasionally they miss one. I can't explain this as I am very careful with the mailing list. Blame it on this electronic world we live in. The newsletter is almost always sent by the end of the month. If you have not received it by the 2nd or 3rd of the following month, please email info@krhcc.com and I will personally send it to you.

STATE OF CRUSADER II REBUILD TO JUNE 20

- Cradle built and boat lowered on to it
- Items added by previous owners removed from interior
- Stern and stem restored
- Gunnels removed
- Interior power washed
- Hull ratcheted back to original width (had spread 2" over the years)
- Work begun restoring hull and cabin structural components.



Newsletter



Boat restoration is both time consuming and expensive. Can you help? We need volunteers to sand hull and donations to help with material cost. Send donations to KRHCC, POB 240, Knife River, MN 55609. We are a 501(c3) so all donations are tax deductible.

Photo credits: Paul von Goertz

MAY DONATIONS, MEMORIALS, HONORARIUMS AND SPONSORSHIPS

Sponsorships:

Anonymous – Fishing Exhibit interpretive display
Skadberg family – Fishing Exhibit interpretive display
Bugge family - Fishing Exhibit interpretive display

Memorials:

In memory of David Olin:
Memorials from Steve and Carol Carlson, John Codrea, and Steve and Anne-Lù Hovis. One given anonymously.

*The KRHCC is a 501 (c3) non-profit so all donations whether in the form of a memorial, honorarium, or sponsorship are fully tax deductible. Your comments and suggestions for this monthly emailed newsletter are always welcome. Email to: info@krhcc.org
If you have family or friends who may enjoy reading this newsletter, they can access the current and all past issues on the “Current News” page of our website at: krhcc.org*

Newsletter published and copyrighted by Knife River Heritage & Cultural Center. Editor/Writer: Paul von Goertz; Historians/Researchers: Todd Lindahl, Randy Ellestad and Paul von Goertz; Graphic Design and Production: Anne-Lù Hovis.

No portion of this newsletter may be reproduced without written permission from the KRHCC. Contact: info@krhcc.org

© KRHCC 2023