***The Story of Ensign Hull 1645 – kick’n back***

In 2013, we purchased Ensign Hull 1645 then known as DÉJÀ VU and owned by Donald E. Pollock of the Blackbeard Sailing Club of New Bern, NC. Don was getting older and no longer able to race. Larry saw Don’s advertisement and he couldn’t believe what beautiful condition DÉJÀ VU was in from the photographs so he asked Don how old the photos were. He remarked they were current and as the conversation went, Larry shared that we had previously owned another Carl Alberg designed boat – a Cape Dory 33’ and loved the timeless lines of the Ensign as well. He also shared that our son, Daniel, learned to sail our Dory and had just graduated from MSU (Michigan State University) and was looking to get back into sailing while spending the summer in Pentwater– home of Ensign Fleet 70. Don too was an MSU alumni as is Larry and from there an offer for sale was struck!

Borrowing a trailer from Mike LaHaye, Larry and Daniel headed out to North Carolina from Pentwater on a snowy March day to bring Hull 1645 to Pentwater. Renaming her to *kick’n back* in a play off Daniel’s collegiate kicking career as a student athlete, Daniel enjoyed the 2013 summer under the sailing & racing tutelage of Tom Sturr. Tom even won Outstanding Crew Award that year. Sadly, Tom passed away, and that happened to be Daniel’s final summer sailing and racing as he made his way westward to begin his career as a firefighter and church ministry.

Prior to their acquisition of Hull 1645, Larry skippered his family’s sailboats over the years including Lightning, Catboat & Ericson 39’ and his wife Chris raced Arrows out of Wilmette (IL) Harbor with her Mariner Scout troop against the Sheridan Shores YC Arrow Fleet, and ran the Wilmette Beach Sailboat rentals. With this rich sailing history, Larry and Chris embraced Ensign racing fully the summer of 2014 with the Ensign National Championships hosted by Fleet 70 and the Pentwater Yacht Club. The camaraderie and sheer fun of racing on Pentwater Lake and salt-free, shark-free Lake Michigan in Caribbean blue water on a warm summer day has been addicting. We have had wonderful crew over the years including our minority owner, Mike McKearnan, a fellow Wheaton resident and childhood family friend, who also coached Daniel during his elementary school soccer days, and enjoys their summer home in Pentwater as do we. Our skipper Larry has led us to several years of championship series placement including 1st place in 2022. The summer of 2020 – Covid summer – gave Chris & Larry a chance to test their meddle in our sailing bubble. Even 2021 was a challenge year finding crew as we were coming out of Covid lockdowns, but the joy of being outdoors with the wind in our face and sun on our backs is a joy we’ve tried to share as much as we can.

kick’n back has traveled to Hessel, MI for the 2017 Nationals and to Seaside Heights, NJ for the 2018 Nationals, and are always impressed with the talent, and welcoming hosts as well as the joyful youth programs of host yacht clubs.

Again, Pentwater is abuzz in preparation for the return of the Ensign National Championship Regatta in 2023.