

DRL Keeper Comments and Excerpts from Keeper's Log

DRLPS is unaware of any other offshore lighthouse to offer a volunteer keeper program. We believe that the experience of staying on DeTour Reef Light is unique and unmatched. Good weather or lighting, wind and rain -- full moon or dark night with shooting stars and northern lights -- DRLPS volunteer keepers have the time of their lives. Keepers of DeTour Reef Light are asked to make log entries so their experience can be shared with others. The comments below were taken from the 37 pages of the DeTour Reef Light 2007 Keepers Log. (Underlining, capitalization and exclamation are copied as written by the keepers.) Providing this type of experience for others is what fuels the passion of DRLPS volunteers. We hope that you will decide to join these Keepers of DeTour Reef Light.

Keepers from 2005 Describe their Experience

(An entry in the Keeper's Logbook): "To study history is interesting, to touch history is enlightening, to live history is nothing short of amazing. Spending these couple days on this Light has been an experience I'll never forget as long as I live. There really are no words to describe this experience, but I can say that it was truly a once-in-a-lifetime event. The DRLPS has done a miraculous job with this restoration, and they should be congratulated. Thanks for the opportunity of a lifetime." -- *Mike Hershberger, Elkhart, IN, 7-24-05*

(An email to Dave Bardsley): "Dave: You and your colleagues did a marvelous job restoring the DeTour Light. Thank you very much for selecting us for the third keepers week-end. We had a great time and enjoyed ourselves. That was one of the most enjoyable week-ends we have spent in years." -- *Ren & Gail Farley, Ann Arbor, MI, 7/27/05*

(An email to Dave Bardsley): "Dear Dave and All DRLPS Members: From the ride out to the light, to the tours, to the spectacular views of the light, boats, and the sunrises and sunsets, I enjoyed my stay. The scope of what you all have accomplished is AWESOME!!! Thanks for the experience." -- *Judy Mills, Coopersville, MI, 8/14/05*

(An email to Dave Bardsley): "...I've got some flack from some people in describing our stay at Detour As the Holy Grail Of lighthouses. My convoluted thinking goes something like this: A picture of a LH, seeing a LH on shore, getting in to a shore LH, get to the top of a shore LH. Working on a shore LH. Staying overnight. The same sequence for a LH on an island. I've experienced all of that over the years. I've often wondered how it would feel to do the same on a crib light, knowing some of the problems involved. Never ever thought it would be available to anyone let alone me!!!!!! Your organization has made this possible; to lighthouse "nuts" it truly does not get any better. I wish there was something I could say more than THANK YOU to you and the others that made this take place." -- *Robert Sperling, Holland, MI, 8/14/05*

(A letter to DRLPS): "Dear DRLPS, I just wanted to say THANK YOU VERY MUCH for the wonderful and unique opportunity for allowing me to be a lighthouse keeper at DeTour Reef. This is definitely something that I will never forget! I was with the nicest people ever and it was like we knew each other forever, instead of just having met. I was sad to have to leave DeTour, and the Light "looked" almost sad as we closed up all the shutters and left. I took nine rolls of film and love sharing my experience with others, especially lighthouse lovers. Someone asked me

if I would want to do this again. I said no because it was such a rare experience that if I were to be Keeper again, it might not be as magical and I might compare my stay with the first time. But...if you need someone to be a full-time seagull poop scrubber – I'd do it in a heartbeat. I might consider applying for Keeper again, but I'm not too sure.

The peacefulness, solitude and pure enjoyment of being at DeTour Light, especially sleeping there, was incredible and amazing. Our first night, we climbed up top and watched the sunset, while sharing tattoo stories. We all thought that was something that, besides enjoying lighthouses, all four of us had tattoos. There are so many memories that I can share.

We had a real treat on Sunday. Jim Schutt (charter boat captain) caught a trout while waiting for one of the tours. He filleted it and us Keepers had a delicious lunch, to say the least. The salmon was so tender and had such a delicious taste. Gail had to get creative when cooking the salmon, since we didn't have much foodstuff left. I think first, she cooked up a few pieces of ham lunchmeat, and then let the salmon sit a while in the left over red wine. She then watered down Caesar salad dressing and put that on top of the salmon. After frying it up, we were all ready to dig in. That was the best salmon ever, especially since it was only about an hour old.

I could go on and on about my stay at DeTour Light. I'm thinking about publishing a book, primarily of photos, and sharing my experience as a Keeper. I'm not sure though, as it is probably an expensive endeavor. Who knows though!

Once again, I would just like to say thank you again for this very unique and incredible experience. (*signed*) Judy Dolney, a.k.a. "Tower Monkey" (P.S. Mike called me this since I would go up and down the tower constantly and clean the windows around the catwalk way up top, and went up and down the ladder to the boat with no fear.) -- *Judy Dolney, Clinton Township, MI, 8/2/05*

Keepers from 2007 Describe their Experience.

"...A great time. Really, really enjoyed this experience. What a wonderful time & what a huge undertaking this was. Kudos to the DRLPS. –Leslie Westbury, Keeper 2007

"...There is water EVERYWHERE – and birds, and mayflies with fancy delicate wings, also far from home. There is no laundry to do, no children to take to or pickup from school, no Yankees or stock market and no piano. ...Now the children are all grown up...and I hope, I hope.. that someday they ill get to come here to this wonderful place. I am so grateful to be here." --Ellen Taylor, Keeper 2007

"...We have great admiration of the people who have so lovingly and generously restored this lighthouse to give folks like us such a unique experience. A grand time was had by all...." -- Susan Cameron, Keeper 2007

"...What a privilege it has been to be part of the "lighthouse" keepers program with a great crew for this stay. The sunrises and sunsets were spectacular. At night, the full moon shone brightly....hundreds of pictures were taken... It has been a great time – new friendships made, beautiful weather and ever-changing sky and water colors enjoyed. A

huge thank you to all who have worked hard to make this experience possible. – Hallie Wilson, Keeper 2007.

“...It was a true vacation – no schedules, phone or deadlines. ... This place is beautiful. I’ve valiantly tried to capture it all on my Canon Power Shot (gone through ten batteries) and I know the pictures will trigger many memories. It is an experience that cannot be replicated... The DRLPS has done a magnificent job. I feel that I know all the rooms, twists and turns of the ladder and could walk through blind folded --- it’s been wonderful to have all the time to explore and enjoy. The close-ups of the freighters, listening to the water, wind and seagulls, watching the sunsets, moon risings (and one sunrise!) talking with Hallie, Byron and sharing the experience with my wife, meeting the tour guests Have made this a weekend to remember. Thanks to all who made this opportunity possible.” -- Dave Meyer, Keeper 2007.

“The tours were fun to “host”. I felt like a hostess welcoming guests to my home (and what a house it is!). I’m sure the smell of fresh-baked cookies was a treat to everyone! ...I was very proud of my “light”. The weekend could not have been improved upon ...same time, same people, same weather next year!” --Joan Meyer, Keeper 2007

“What a unique experience after weeks of planning we are finally here. A wonderful time was had by all. It was especially nice to share these memoirs with our best friendsThanks [DRLPS volunteers] ... for your great orientation ...for you expertise, ...for your sunny smile and personality ...for getting us here & back safely. We had a wonderful time. **MOST OF ALL THANK YOU DETOUR REEF LIGHTHOUSE FOR LETTING US BE YOUR GUESTS!!!!**” -- Fred & Jan Billin, Ed & Sandy Nieuwenhuis, Keepers 2007.

“Enjoyed watching the passing freighters. The first fully lighted one passed about 10:00 – a beautiful sight. Awoke to rain and the sound of the fog signal at 05:45 ... Very heavy rain and strong winds .. Tour was cancelled due to weather at 08:00. ...Sunny and very pleasant – light breeze. ...We join keepers before us in expressing our appreciation to DRLPS for the super restoration and preservation joy. We are amazed at what you have accomplished. Thank you for the opportunity to stay here. Thank you so much.” Jeannie Stephenson, Pete and Marian LeMere, Keepers 2007

“Can’t believe we are doing this again. Some folks would say “been there—done that.” We say “been there—done that – couldn’t wait to do it again.”Last night...John C. left the corner windows open to listen to the wind whistling through – Did I say whistling? More like howling! It was neat. As the ships rumbled by you could almost fee the rumbling. Sort of like a freight train in the distance. And we finally saw the Northern Lights. No noise there but they really put on a show. ... Almost unhindered view of the Mackinac Bridge and Spectacle Reef this AM....” John & Sunny Covell, Todd & Sherry Stepien, Keepers 2006 & 2007.

“The fog horn eventually ceased its rhythmic drone in the pre-dawn hours of the day – long after the fog had lifted. We were greeted by a magnificent sunrise as several freighter passed by. ...one of them [the fishermen] pulled up to the lighthouse and kindly offered us some freshly caught and cleaned salmon. ... Awaken by the sea gulls, the day began with another beautiful sunrise. At midmorning we celebrated Mass—perhaps the first one to be celebrated here? Surrounded by the beauty of God’s creation, it was a perfect setting. The remainder of our stay was quiet and restful. The traffic through the channel was busy ...Our time here was most special indeed. The DRLPS has done and incredible effort in restoration. We wish that every lighthouse on the Great Lakes has such dedicated preservationists. That you for the opportunity to serve as keepers of such a historic and beautiful landmark. Thanks for the memories!!” Theresa & Keith Kiel, Louie and Colleen Stein, Monsignor Bill Duncan, Keepers 2007.

“...Went to bed to peace and quiet. 4:00am—awakened to seagulls arguing about defecation right to the deck. Shouted an obscenity and awakened Ken, Cindy & Marjorie. ...9:00am Kenny installed plastic owl on railing to scare away seagulls. 9:05am, seagull found sitting on owl’s head.7:00am – Lied to mates about having watched sunrise.” Bill Tudor, Keeper 2007.

“...Windy, rough ride over... JoEllen made raspberry pied, smelled soooo good. It was yummy!!.. Lovely weather, not a cloud in the sky! ...Woke up to a ton of fishing boats – it was the annual [salmon] fishing contest. Many boats passing by and waving. ...Another wonderful day at the light. Good friends, good weather, good food, excellent wine!! So peaceful, great scenes, loved the fireworks from atop the light. ...The moon was shining and all was right with the world! No sooner had we shut our eyes and we heard a God awful scream just outside our window. I felt like Edgar Allen Poe with his fateful raven. The scream was from a seagull. My response was ###!?. It was 2:00am. ...We had a great time and hope to come as group again in the future. Awesome get a way. Loved it!: JoEllen McDonald, Susan Collins, Katherine Butler, Laura Priebe, Keepers 2007.

“Our first afternoon on the lighthouse was very relaxing. With John’s good binoculars and the freighter book we identified a couple of big freighters.Once it got dark, the stars came out. We had a fabulous light show since many shooting stars were seen. ...The sunrise was glorious as was the rest of the experience. I wish I could put into words the exceptionality of this entire weekend, but words are insufficient. I would certainly recommend it to anyone.Loved the Light—Keep it shining. ...The best renovation work I have ever seen. ... Great Memories.” Rick & LuAnn Tluczek, John & Donna Grassmid – Keepers 2007.

“...We were awakened at 0400 by lightning, thunder, rain and our very own fog horn. We were from the top to the bottom taking pictures and videoing this unique experience. Great fun!! ...Remains windy, Gorgeous sunrise.Usually mariners don’t wish for storms/foul weather, BUT – last nights storm was great!! Love it, and this Lady stood strong thought it all – Just as I am sure that she has for many years --. ... Beautiful sun rise. Water calm.” LuAnn, Jim & Chandra Meyer, Chelsea Volz, Keepers 2007.

“...The six of us have been planning this stay since last fall. It was awesome to step onto the deck to begin. ...The winds remained strong thru the evening, We watched the sunset and the freighters from the tower. ...The stars were spectacular and the sunrise beautiful. ...We flew the kite, read and napped on the deck and enjoyed the calm day and many freighters passing by. ...The stars at night were incredible – don’t miss the shooting stars. We had a great morning enjoying the company of our friends and a beautiful sunshine day.” Sally & Arvon Byle, Jim & Margie Steller, Richard & Carole Casey, Keepers 2007.

“Our arrival was uneventful, with calm waters, and we had our first sight of the Lighthouse. WOW! It is even more spectacular than we thought. ...We didn’t think we were going to have a sunset, but at the last minute it [the sky] cleared on the horizon and we watched as the sun passed between the clouds and land. It was beautiful. ... The sky was clear by sunset ...the sky stayed a wonderful orange/red long after the sun disappeared. It was spectacular. ...Our last day [sad face]. The weather is beautiful. Wish we could stay another couple of days. May God bless and keep you for preserving such a wonderful experience for us.” Gary & Gloria Pierce, Mary McGough, Nora Lawton, Keepers 2007.

“After a wonderful dinner we watched a beautiful sunset and the full moon rise. Two freighters passed in the night back lighted by the full moon. The wind “whistles” until after 1am. ... A beautiful sunrise and calm seas! The full moon was in the western sky. ...Many freighter today – most unusual was the Ypermachos, a salt water vessel from Greece.. A wonderful afternoon. Fished spawn off East side of Lighthouse. ... Watched the sunset from the upper deck. The moon rise was red/orange. ... Another beautiful sunrise.Thank you DRLPS for a wonderful experience. The freighter cutting in front of the full moon at night was a delight, we have the image fixed in our memory. A wonderful experience—a lasting memory to take into retirement. Many thanks to everyone who made this lighthouse such a jewel in Lake Huron!” Paul & Sandra Huber, Robert & Sue Metzger, Keepers 2007.