

This trailerable houseboat  
roams wherever the wind blows

# The Lil' Hobo

Trevor Mason



**Human ingenuity never ceases to amaze me. When it's applied to something that honors the dearly departed, that goes double. Mike Gilly's trailerable houseboat is just such a creation.**

Mike is a retired shipbuilder from Pascagoula, Miss. One fateful morning he decided to take a leisurely ride on his motorcycle to Dauphin Island in Alabama. As he rode, he passed a house that had something somewhat unusual parked in the front yard: a trailerable houseboat. He says, "I thought to myself, 'that's neat.' I turned the motorcycle around and went back for another look. I slowly drove by it again, giving it a very thorough look. I thought to myself, 'That's what I want!' The more I thought about it, while driving my motorcycle home, the more I

was determined to investigate one. A trailerable houseboat: how unique is that?"

Before we go any further, we'd be remiss not to mention Mike's late wife Karen. "It was always her desire to have a big boat; nix that, what she really wanted was a second home!" Though the Catamaran Cruisers model is Lil' Hobo, the boat's official name is *Ki Ki too* in Karen's honor. Mike's original boat, a 14-foot fiberglass center-console skiff, is the original *Ki Ki*. That name came from the name of Karen's father's boat, which in turn comes from a nickname given to Karen by a niece who couldn't pronounce her name.

"If Karen were alive today, I would be in a lot of trouble for having purchased that skiff." Their son, Derek, has Down syndrome and really enjoys driving the little boat.

"I think that Derek having the ability to drive the skiff would somewhat make her happy," adds Mike.



**MORE INFORMATION:**  
**Catamaran Cruisers**  
 800-365-1255  
[www.catamarancruiser.com](http://www.catamarancruiser.com)

Mike, an ordained Permanent Deacon, christens the boat.



## RUNNING DOWN A DREAM

In all his years as a shipbuilder, Mike has seen all sorts of vessels, like tugboats, barges, shrimp boats, and other recreational craft, but never a houseboat small enough to fit on a trailer. He set off on a search for a company that could make his new dream come true.

He found three companies that advertised such a thing, but one was defunct and another was in Michigan, too far away to be feasible for him. The third, Catamaran Cruisers, was located in nearby Tennessee, so that's where he went.

"After reviewing the website and talking with their representative, I was hooked," he says.

The boat design was essentially a box with a flat deck, which may not appeal to some people, but Mike thought it was perfect: "I'm the cook, the dishwasher, house cleaner and as a single parent, the flat deck would be easier to sweep out the river/beach sand than the other boat-type houseboat."

## MAKING IT HAPPEN

How do you pay for something like this when the idea comes out of nowhere? He spoke with his annuity representative to pull some money out of the 401k he'd spent 36 years putting money into. He also figured this would be a good thing to pass on to his children and grandchildren, so why not?

Now that the financing was taken care of, he had to figure out how he was going to actually tow the dang thing.

"All I owned was a Lincoln MKZ Hybrid and a small Colorado truck," he says. "These two could not handle the weight."

He made arrangements with a friend to use his dually pickup to bring the boat back once it was completed, but because life likes to get in the way, that fell through and Mike had to purchase his own pickup to take over towing duties. He enlisted the help of his brother, Buddy, and his friend Maurice to help get the boat back home.

They arrived at the plant early in the morning on the



appointed day in mid-July 2015. As they made their way to where the boat was located, they all gasped when they first caught sight of it.

“My first thoughts were, ‘I gotta get a bigger truck!’ Buddy and Maurice both said some ‘OMG’s!’”

They hooked the boat up to the truck and made their way back to Mississippi. He says, “The drive home proved to be uneventful, but we did get a lot of extra looks, a couple of thumbs up and a couple of inquiries about what the houseboat was. One lady at a gas station asked that we drive it to her house to show her husband. She said she wanted one and if her husband saw it he might get her one!”

They got her home safe and sound, and after a couple weeks of finalizing paperwork and preparing the boat for the water, Mike was ready to take her on her maiden voyage.

“We decided to head up river and stop at the first sand bar to try the slide,” he says. “The houseboat was smooth riding and easy to handle. The motor barely made any noise. Moments later we anchored off a sandbar and I was the first off the slide. Each of us took our turns on the slide and all were much impressed with this whole product from Catamaran Cruisers.”



Mike's son, Derek, at dusk at the Two Pipes sandbar.

## MILES TO GO

Since then, Mike has already put the boat to good use and picked up some valuable lessons along the way. One: take care when navigating at low tide, unless you want a new propeller. Two: make sure you tie your anchor to the cleats on the boat before tossing it overboard.

He's also had some good experiences while taking his family out for a cruise. On one such excursion, he and Derek went out to the Two Pipes sandbar on the Pascagoula River channel and dropped anchor for the night.

He says, "All night the Pogy (Menhaden) boats were traveling back to their homeport in Moss Point from the Gulf of Mexico. They would consistently shine their bright spotlight on us which would illuminate the whole houseboat with light. I suppose that they had never seen a trailerable houseboat and were checking us out!"

Another time, they were returning for the day and came upon a man in a jon boat frantically paddling to get out of their way. They slowed down to ease their passage and let him get to a safe distance. As they passed him, Mike's sister called out a

thank you, to which the man responded, "All I could see was a Winnebago coming towards me!"

This past Labor Day, Mike gathered with his friends and family under the West Pascagoula bridge to officially christen *Ki Ki too*. In addition to his career as a shipbuilder and his post-retirement bus driving, Mike is also an ordained Permanent Deacon, serving the parish of Our Lady of Victories, so after the toast to King Neptune, he offered an additional blessing on the boat:

"God of boundless love, at the beginning of creation your Spirit hovered over the deep sea. We ask your son, Jesus Christ, to bless this boat and its equipment and all her friends. May all who sail on the *Ki Ki too* have fair winds and following seas. May the Lord bless and keep the *Ki Ki too*. May the Lord let his face shine upon her and be gracious to her. May the Lord look kindly upon the *Ki Ki too* and give her his peace."

"This event begins her acceptance as a true boat," Mike says, "and I look forward to many years of memories and good times with her." ■