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Three brothers from OU sail the Great Lakes on board the Sea Llama

By **Katie Land**, news editor

Three brothers about to embark on a whirlwind sailing trip through Michigan's waterways plan to show their Golden Grizzly spirit during the excursion.

The Lewis brothers are Brandon, 21, an OU alumnus headed to law school this fall; Kenneth, 19, a pre-med sophomore at OU; and Colton, 18, who will enter Oakland's marketing program as a freshman this fall.

Searching for an adventure, the brothers toyed with the idea of taking a cross-country motorcycle trip this summer, but opted instead to purchase the Sea Llama, a 25-foot sailboat.

"We were pretty much born on the water," Kenneth said. "Sailing with our parents as kids was a big part of our lives. Even though my parents haven't had a sailboat in a while, we feel confident that we can handle it."

The Lewis brothers are a tight-knit group that grew up active and adventurous. They rode dirt bikes, kayaked the Great Lakes, spent time mountain biking, fishing, hunting and more.

They also share a college experience at Oakland. Brandon, the eldest, never specifically advised his siblings to attend, but rather let his own experience speak for itself.

"Oakland has prepared me for the real world in ways that most schools can't," he said. "I was able to work nearly full-time during all four years, never felt like I drew the short straw as a commuter, learned from faculty with extensive experience in their fields and had a great overall experience as an OU student. Perhaps best of all is that my Oakland undergraduate degree was very strong on graduate school applications."

All three are able to commute from their family's Rochester Hills home. Kenneth has hopes of continuing his OU education at the Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine.

Colton is looking forward to beginning his Oakland career. "It was the right school for both of my brothers," he said. "I know I can't go wrong with OU."

The Sea Llama's name comes from a childhood joke that sprang to life after the boys spotted a llama farm during a Lewis family vacation. Colton said the brothers spent some time discussing what type of name the boat should have, and they decided unanimously to stick with something funny and unique to them.

They bought the boat over the winter, with each brother investing roughly \$2,000. Colton used Photoshop to design a logo depicting a llama with mask and snorkel, and had a decal custom-printed for the ship.

While the three have their parents' support, they know that this trip is a serious undertaking. "Our parents are a little nervous about sending all their chances for grandchildren away at the same time," Colton said. "But they are confident in our abilities."

To prepare for the trip, the brothers took the ship out for a weekend practice run in Muskegon, Colton said. "We only had one near-death experience," he joked. "A gust of wind caught us off guard, but we recovered and everything went smooth after that."

The actual voyage should take a total of two weeks and will include stops at 11 port cities from Muskegon to Tawas Bay. The brothers are confident about their skills and feel capable of handling any situation that may arise.

"Of course there's a little pressure on me as the oldest brother," Brandon said. "My real responsibility as the oldest will come when weather conditions create a situation where a judgment call is necessary. But sailing, of all things – and especially in tough situations, has to be a team effort."

Kenneth takes a more humorous approach to the obstacles they might encounter. He hopes they won't be capsized, dismantled, hit by a freighter, run aground, attacked by sharks, looted by pirates, afflicted by scurvy, stranded on a deserted island or die. "Aside from that, I am feeling great," he joked.

In the meantime, the brothers are all looking forward to sailing underneath the Mackinac Bridge. "It's something I've dreamed about doing since I was a small child looking out the car window as we drove over the bridge," Brandon said. "In my opinion, there are few places in the country as beautiful as the Straights of Mackinac."



Colton, Kenneth and Brandon Lewis embark on a two week tour throughout Michigan's waterways.



The Sea Llama is a 25-foot sailboat owned by three brothers from Oakland University.

SUMMARY

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