

HIGH COTTON is a year 2000 Camano Troll, a trawler that was originally designated as 28' but is now known as 31'. HIGH COTTON is powered by a single Volvo TAMD41P diesel engine and is equipped with a bow thruster. There is no onboard genset, but there is a four battery house bank and a 2000 watt inverter. The galley is equipped with a refrigerator and a three burner propane range with oven and broiler and a microwave oven. Cruising at 2000 RPM, she makes 7 knots over slack water and burns about 1.8 GPH.

The following is an account of a cruise south on the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway and the St. Johns River from Charleston, SC to central Florida and back, beginning April 30, 2015 and ending on June 19, 2015.

Captain's Log, day one (April 30, 2015)

Well, the Widmans are on the move again. There's a Camano owner's group rendezvous this weekend in Myrtle Beach, SC so we thought we would attend and see what all the fuss is about. This is the first time since we've had our Camano that the rendezvous has been reasonably close to our home. The plan is to head for Myrtle Beach, spend Friday, Saturday and Sunday at Grande Dunes Marina and then head south from there with a stop at our friend's house on the ICW south of Myrtle Beach.

As usual, we had a friend drop us off at RiversEdge Marina so we could spend the night on HIGH COTTON and get an early start while leaving our vehicle at home.



HIGH COTTON at home at RiversEdge Marina

As planned, we unhooked the power cord and dock lines and were underway at 6:20 AM as dawn was arriving. The trip down the Ashley River was uneventful but halfway across the Charleston Harbor, the depth sounder began flashing and giving a false reading. This is a problem we've had before. We checked for error codes on the control unit and according to the code, everything was working fine. We knew better. We continued on.

North of Isle of Palms, in a notoriously shallow part of the ICW we came to a sudden stop! And guess what? The depth sounder came back on! It showed 2.7 feet, about a foot less than our draft.

We were able to back off the shallow spot and continue with no apparent damage. HIGH COTTON has a full keel and skeg that protects the running gear. Later, the display began blinking again and Captain Ron went down to see what he could do about it. It seems like there is a bad cable from the transducer to the control unit and wiggling the cable restores operation. The solution is either to replace the entire transducer/cable for \$100 or to try to find and eliminate the bad spot. The problem is, it may work for a year or more before showing symptoms so you never really know if you fixed it.

Anyhow, Captain Ron wiggled the cable just right and the depth sounder began working again and worked the rest of the day.

The weather was a bit cool but otherwise nice and we had an uneventful rest of the day to our anchorage for the night behind Butler Island, north of Georgetown, SC on the Waccamaw River. We were underway for a little over ten hours.



[A little cooler than we had expected today](#)

Once anchored, we began fixing dinner and that's when we noticed our next problem. Apparently, the battery combiner is not actually combining the batteries when the engine is running so the house batteries are not being charged. So, the inverter was showing a low voltage alarm as we used the microwave. Once we get to our marina Friday, we'll have shore power to charge the batteries and we'll find a way to get to west Marine and buy a replacement battery combiner.

Anyway, we're sharing the anchorage with one other trawler (so far) and it should take about four and one half hours to get to the marina tomorrow.



[Our anchorage near Butler Island](#)

Captain's Log, day two (May 1, 2015)

Last evening after we anchored, Kiki (the sea dog) was anxious to go outside, expecting to be at a marina dock, not anchored. She kept looking at us wondering why we weren't taking her for a walk like we do when we dock at a marina. We finally had to put her leash on and put her on the swim platform so she could see there was no place to walk.

We slept in until about 8:30 AM. Boating is tiring even if all you do is sit in a seat and steer the boat. Even though the batteries were low, the windlass worked and raised the anchor. Away we went without a hot cup of coffee. After a while Captain Ron realized that he could heat water on the propane stove and pour it through the coffee filter so he did get a couple cups to get himself going.

By the time we got to Grand Dunes Marina, the batteries were so low that the bow thruster wouldn't work. It would have been better if we had known this ahead of time but no boats were hit and no dockhands were injured. We got settled in at 1:30 PM or so. Kiki walked up to the marina office with us and entertained the staff by running around in circles and playing with the dockhand.



HIGH COTTON docked at Grand Dunes Marina, SC

We called our friends in Myrtle Beach and they agreed to take us to West Marine for a replacement battery combiner. While we waited we took showers and got ready for the Camano owners rendezvous. Captain Ron went with our friend Bob to West Marine and put a few bucks on the credit card. Hopefully, he can find time to install it before we leave here Monday. The rendezvous schedule is pretty full.

We went to the meeting (on the seventh floor of the hotel at the far end of the marina) and got back to walk Kiki about 8:30 PM. Kiki wanted to go for a long walk. We wanted to go for a short one.

So now it's off to bed, the meetings start tomorrow at 8:00 AM.

Captain's Log, day three (May 2, 2015)

Up bright and early, it was Captain Ron's turn to walk the sea dog, Patti's back was hurting. Kiki found something she didn't like about a lamp post and had to growl at it.

Back on the boat, we got dressed and headed for the hotel for breakfast and meetings. It was interesting, but required a lot of sitting still that we

aren't used to. Lunch was on our own back on the boat and of course walking the sea dog.

The afternoon had more meetings including questions and answers from the former owner of the company that manufactured our boats and the former east coast dealer. After the meetings we all gathered for group photos and then some of us had an informal gathering around and on the three Camanos that were in the marina.

We went back for dinner at 6:00 PM, then games and prizes. As usual, we came back to the boat and took Kiki for a walk. We think she is responsible for half of our exercising when we're cruising.

Tomorrow we start at 9:00 AM so again, it's off to bed.

Captain's Log, day four (May 3, 2015)

The meetings started at 9:00 AM with a rather detailed explanation of weather and why it rains, the wind blows, etc. It was interesting but not vital to boating. More valuable would have been how to tell what the weather will be on a given day and how to tell if it's going to change in a bad way. After that, the club's webmaster came to HIGH COTTON and took some photos of the unique things we had done to our boat. Later, there was a presentation of owner modifications (including ours).

There was a business meeting where officers were elected, minutes read and a treasurer's report was presented. We did our best to look small and inconspicuous when the subject of nominations for officers came up.

The weekend ended with a "Camano crawl" (looking at each other's boats) but since only three

couples came by boat and two had to leave early, the “crawl” consisted of just HIGH COTTON.

Since we have been pretty well fed for the past three days, we decided to get something light at the marina restaurant, the Anchor Café. The food was delicious, but the service was very slow. Even though we had nowhere special to be, it’s annoying just sitting at a table waiting to be waited on and waiting for the check.

Tomorrow we’ll get to work on the electrical problem and wash a load of clothes in the free marina washer and dryer. Then it’s on to our friend’s house and their private dock.

(Kiki writes): *I am really happy when we stay in a marina instead of anchored out. I get to walk the docks and grassy areas and smell new smells. I get to meet new people and they usually pet me. And I get to meet new dogs.*

Captain’s Log, day five (May 4, 2015)

Up at 7:00 AM to walk the sea dog again, then clean out the bilge and climb in to replace the battery combiner. We have a fairly complete set of tools on the boat but of course not enough to do this the way we want to so it’s a temporary repair until we finish our cruise and return home. Captain Ron said it was a half hour job so it should take about an hour. It was closer to two hours before it was finished. We’re going to have to add a pair of knee pads to the tool kit.

While Captain Ron was working on the boat, Patti did a load of clothes in the marina’s washer and dryer. We could have gone another week or so but it was free so we took advantage of it and got a fresh start clothing wise. Sometimes people ask us what we do about laundry when we are cruising. Patti tells them we put the dirty clothes in a mesh

bag and drag them behind the boat but the reality is, many marinas have laundry facilities so we take advantage of them when we have the chance.

Once the work was done and Captain Ron took another shower, we cast off our lines and headed back south to our friend’s house and dock on the ICW near the Socastee Bridge. We got tied up, had some pleasant conversation and the men took naps. We woke and all went to Bob Evans for a nice dinner, then back to their house for showers and a night sleeping in a non-rocking bed.

Captain’s Log, day six (May 5, 2015)

The plan was to get underway at 9:00 AM for a seven hour cruise to an anchorage in Awendaw Creek. Well, plans have a way of changing so we didn’t get underway until after 10:30 AM. We did have a lovely home cooked breakfast though. While we were sitting on Bob and Curtis’s deck we saw one of the other Camanos from the rendezvous go by, heading south for its home at Charleston Harbor Marina. At the speed they were going, we would guess that their plan was to make the trip in one day.

Not us, we’re taking our time and enjoying the cruise. This is the time of year for all the “snowbirds” who take their boats to Florida and beyond for the winter to return north for the summer and we must have passed thirty boats of various types headed north. Patti saw an alligator on the Waccamaw River while Captain Ron was below and we all saw a few dolphins. Kiki the sea dog maintained her watch and notified us of encroaching power boats and jet skis.

Anyway, we had an enjoyable cruise (actually close to eight hours) and we’re sharing the anchorage on Awendaw Creek with one other boat, a sailboat.



Anchored on Awendaw Creek

It's time to dig into the pantry and see what's for dinner, then early to bed.

Captain's Log, day seven (May 6, 2015)

It was microwave chicken and dumplings for dinner last night. Not Cracker Barrel, but not bad. We had a nice sunset and went to bed about dark. We had a great night's sleep on the water and woke about 7:00 AM, ready to hit the ICW and head south.

After a little figuring on fuel stops, we decided to fill our tanks at the Ashley Marina in Charleston, SC. After that it was south through Wappoo Cut and under the Limehouse Bridge. Once we pass through that bridge we know we're leaving home and heading south.

Once again, we passed dozens of boats heading north for the winter. Some were sailboats, some were trawlers and some were "others". Some of these folks travel from Canada to Florida and back every year in their boats. Most are pretty nice but a few look like a hobo jungle on a hull.



Now that's a boat!

Our hope was to get as far as Thunderbolt, GA tomorrow and take a slip for the night and fuel up for the long stretch of Georgia where there are no diesel fuel stops, but after nearly nine hours on the water, we decided to anchor in one of our usual spots on the South Edisto River. If we can't make it all the way we'll just anchor again and hit Thunderbolt the next day. Nobody is keeping track!

We ate high on the hog on HIGH COTTON today; bratwursts, sauerkraut and baked beans. Yum!

Kiki is sacked out in the V berth. She is tired from keeping watch. We will shower on the back of the boat and turn in early for another day on the water.



Ever vigilant Kiki the Sea Dog

Captain's Log, day eight (May 7, 2015)

We didn't try for Thunderbolt, GA; we had a quiet night on the hook, slept in late and got underway about 8:30 AM. We were travelling against the current on the South Edisto River but with the current on the Coosaw River. Since we had decided to just take it easy, we pulled into the free dock in Beaufort, SC for lunch and for Kiki to stretch her legs. As we pulled up to the dock, we were in for a big surprise. Standing there waiting to take our lines were a couple (Stuart and Shirley) we had met at the Camano owners rendezvous last week. They no longer own a boat but remain members of the club and were driving home from North Carolina to their home in Georgia and just happened to stop in Beaufort and be walking along the docks when they saw us coming in. It's a small world sometimes!

They joined us and Kiki for lunch. Well, they had ice cream; we had lunch and ice cream. Kiki got nothing until we got back to the boat.

About the time we finished and our friends left, it started raining. Not hard, but enough that we headed straight for the boat instead of letting Kiki run around in the park.

Unfortunately, that rain was a sign of things to come. We had the current leaving Beaufort for several miles down Port Royal Sound but then we had to cross it against the current and with the wind and waves on our beam (the side for you landlubbers). This makes for a very uncomfortable ride and the boat keeps being knocked off course so it's a constant battle with the wheel to stay on course.

We were already at the lower helm because of the rain but decided we couldn't keep standing the rest of the day so we stopped and got the helm seat out of the storage area and set it up.

Next, the fog set in. We could only see a couple hundred feet and could not see land, only navigation aids when we came near enough to them. Of course we had to look for them so we wouldn't hit them. We were navigating with just the chart plotter and the compass and because the GPS antenna was swinging back and forth with the motion of the boat, the chart kept jumping around.

We finally made it out of the sound and into Skull Creek (a pleasant name if there ever was one) on the land side of Hilton Head Island. The wind and waves died down but it was still raining and Captain Ron was ready for a break. We found what looked like a good anchorage just off the channel and anchored and settled in. About that time, a local boater came by and warned us that this wasn't a good anchorage and offered to show us a better one so we pulled the anchor up and followed him back up Skull Creek a ways to a better spot.

We probably didn't really need to eat again but we had left over bratwursts, sauerkraut and baked beans and they weren't going to eat themselves so we warmed them up and finished them off.

It looks like about a four hour trip to Thunderbolt from here so if the weather cooperates, we'll head out in the morning. If not, we'll stay right here.

Captain's Log, day nine (May 8, 2015)

Last night was pretty quiet except for water splashing against the hull. It's a sort of lullaby that we've gotten used to so after a little TV watching we drifted off to sleep. The anchor drag alarm sounded about 1:30 AM, not because we drug anchor but because Captain Ron didn't set a wide enough swing circle. He reset it and we went back to sleep.

This morning was a lot nicer than yesterday so we got underway at about 8:30 AM. We skirted the inland side of Hilton Head Island and then Daufuskie Island. From there it was several creeks and rivers until we crossed the Savannah River. Fortunately, there was no commercial traffic so we scooted right across. This is where we had to replace the Charleston area routes in the chart plotter with the “far south” set of routes. These are routes made up ahead of time and loaded into the chart plotters. They keep you from getting lost but it’s important to follow what you see with your own eyes, not what the chart plotter says.

After crossing the Savannah River, we entered the Wilmington River and passed by Savannah’s historic Bonaventure Cemetery. Talk about a “tomb with a view”!



Bonaventure Cemetery

We called and made reservations at Thunderbolt Marina. When we got near the marina we noticed another Camano Troll on the face dock and they put us right behind it. The boat’s name is Knot Busy, owned by John and Lee. It’s been in Florida and they are on the way home to Wilmington, NC.



Twin Camanos at Thunderbolt Marina

Kiki couldn’t wait to get on solid ground and led us all around the marina grounds. Between that and her watch keeping today she is worn out. No doubt she will get her second wind later today.

The marina has a nice laundry room and facilities so we did a load of laundry and took long, hot showers, something we miss when anchored. We take showers but they have to be short. Get wet, turn the water off, lather up, then rinse quickly. We usually do this on the back of the boat rather than in the head because there’s no cleanup afterward.

After we got the clothes and ourselves cleaned up we walked to the famous “Tubby’s Tank House” for dinner. It’s a restaurant/bar known to boaters on the ICW. We walked back to the marina, got Kiki and walked up the ramp to the gazebo where we talked with other boaters and Kiki met some other dogs. One of the couples is from Brunswick, GA, and that’s where we are heading. They told us about the marina there and the town and we all discussed places we had been or hoped to go. The bugs began biting so everyone headed for their boats. It’s time for us to see what’s on TV and then go to sleep.



The infamous Tubby's Tank House

Captain's Log, day ten (May 9, 2015)

Are we having fun yet? We were planning on heading south this morning. Everyone else here is heading north but staying put because of the tropical storm.

We borrowed the loaner vehicle and went to Walmart for a new set of heads for Captain Ron's electric shaver and some sodas and other food items. When Captain Ron went to check the oil and coolant (a daily task), he found the aft bilge slowly filling with water. Not something you want to find. Further inspection revealed a leak where water enters the transmission oil cooler. It wasn't a loose hose or hose clamp. The nipple where the hose connects on the oil cooler was actually corroded and leaking. In layman's terms, the oil cooler is Kaput! (And the switch for the bilge pump had been accidentally turned off).

Well, it's Saturday and although this is a large and respected marine repair facility, they don't actually work on engines, they have an outside contractor and of course the contractor doesn't work on weekends and even if they did, the parts suppliers would be closed.

So, it looks like we will be sitting in Thunderbolt, GA enjoying the view and watching the four stations we can get on TV until at least Monday. We found a replacement part on line and Captain Ron could install it, but we're paying to stay here so hopefully the contractor can send a mechanic who will be able to source a replacement cooler locally and we can get on our way on Monday. If not, we'll have to see about overnight shipping.

Anyway, it was back to Tubby's for dinner. Maybe we can wash the boat tomorrow.

Captain's Log, day eleven (May 10, 2015)

All night long we heard a low pitched "beeping" sound every few seconds. It would stop for a while, and then start up again. Captain Ron tried to trace it, even to the point of turning off all the electrical power, 12 volt and 120 volt. The sound continued. We couldn't hear it outside the boat but it seemed to come from the bilge. It was still there in the morning so Captain Ron disconnected the batteries to be sure but it was still there, on and off. Maybe it's being transmitted through the water from another boat.

Patti did another load of clothes including the bed sheets. We had planned to get the loaner vehicle and go to Publix and get something interesting to cook for dinner but it seems it's only available on weekdays. That doesn't explain how we got it yesterday, but the guy on duty today doesn't have the keys to get it. We'll figure something out, there's plenty of food on the boat.

We spent the day walking the sea dog, visiting with other boaters and watching the boats go by. It's a good thing we got here when we did, the marina is about full. Most of the transients are snowbirds heading back north after wintering in Florida or the Bahamas.

We found another source for the repair part closer to where we are and a hundred dollars cheaper so if we can't get fixed and underway tomorrow by the marina's contractor we'll probably have the part shipped by the fastest method and replace it ourselves. We'll call at 7:30 AM and see what they have to say.

Captain's Log, day twelve (May 11, 2015)

It took an hour and a half after the service company opened to actually talk to the person who owns it and schedules service. He said that it would be two days before he could send a mechanic but if we could remove the oil cooler and bring it to the shop, his parts man could see if it could be ordered.

OK, we already found an Internet source, but we figured we had nothing better to do so Captain Ron removed it. Well, that was easier said than done. The other water hose came off without a problem but the nuts to the oil connections weren't budging. Not only had they been in place for fifteen years, but Volvo assembles its engines and then paints everything. Also, we didn't have a metric wrench big enough. With a combination of solvent, a heat gun and a pair of channel lock pliers one nut came loose but not the other. We asked another boater on the dock if he had any big metric wrenches. He didn't but he did offer a large adjustable wrench. Between that and the heat and solvent, the other one broke loose. It looks like a large adjustable wrench will be the next addition to the boat tool kit.

The same boaters had already planned on using the loaner car but they offered to take us to the shop to see if they could supply a replacement oil cooler. That turned out to be a waste of time; they didn't have one and didn't know where to get one.

So, we went back to the boat where we called our source and ordered the oil cooler with overnight

shipping. Assuming it's the right part, it's less than an hour's work to install it, add oil to make up for what came out with the old cooler and test everything. If it's early enough we can get out of here, if not, we'll leave the next morning.

We got the loaner vehicle, went to Harbor Freight for our own adjustable wrench, West Marine for some new hose clamps and Publix for a few things. We thought we would get some fresh corn and then stop on the way back at the shrimp boat dock for fresh local shrimp but they were sold out and closed so we had beef tips, mashed potatoes and fresh corn.

We've seen lots of boats during our stay here including many serious trawlers and sailboats heading north. Hopefully, HIGH COTTON will be heading south tomorrow.

Captain's Log, day thirteen (May 12, 2015)

We went to the marina's receiving department around 9:00 AM but our oil cooler had not come in yet. We attached some hooks so we could use a bungee cord to store the helm seat in a better (safer and more convenient) location while we waited. A little after 10:00 AM they called and said our package had arrived.

Captain Ron got to work installing the replacement oil cooler and had it installed in thirty minutes or so. It took a little more time to top off the transmission oil (we always carry extra) and clean up and put the tools away. Captain Ron was in need of a shower so off he went.

We topped off the fresh water tanks and pulled the boat up to the fuel dock and topped off our diesel tanks and got underway about 11:45 AM.

Heading south, we again passed many boats headed north. Perhaps they thought we were lost. We passed through the infamous “Hell Gate” with plenty of water. There were a few rough spots and we had to go below for a short rain but then the weather cleared up again. We did run into (not literally) perhaps fifty dolphins, some with babies by their sides. Kiki got to watch the “big fish” again.



Snowbirds headed north for the summer

We got to a highly recommended anchorage on Walburg Creek about 4:30 PM so we decided to call it a day. We stayed here in 2012 and it’s a nice quiet anchorage. There was some rain and lightning in the distance but it dissipated and the sun came out. Patti is making jerk pork chops with pink beans and rice for dinner tonight. We are able to receive TV stations from Savannah and Jacksonville so Patti will get to watch her favorite TV show tonight.

We may or may not make it to Brunswick, GA tomorrow. It depends on how early we get underway and how long we feel like cruising.

Captain’s Log, day fourteen (May 13, 2015)

We had a quiet and peaceful night anchored in Walburg Creek. No lightning, no storms, no rain. As we were getting ready to get under way, a couple dolphins came by and checked out the boat.

As we were leaving Walburg Creek, a fairly large cruise ship went past the entrance to the creek travelling south on the ICW. Not a QE II size ship, but a couple hundred feet long. We followed it for several hours until it left the ICW for an island. From the charts, it appears to be a nature preserve. The cruise ship couldn’t have continued on the ICW anyway, we ran into some very shallow water in the Little Mud River, another well-known trouble spot. The Federal Government is supposed to keep the entire ICW (north of south Florida) dredged to ten feet at low tide. They haven’t done this for several years, claiming lack of funding.



The American Star cruise ship

So, we got to the Little Mud River just after low tide and had four to five feet of water. HIGH COTTON needs three and a half feet of water to float.

We calculated about eight hours from Walburg Creek to Brunswick Landing Marina and that’s exactly what it took. We could see the suspension bridge over the river from two hours away but the route by water takes a big circle.

The marina is inexpensive and very nice. It’s surprisingly big, mostly permanently slipped boats but with several slips for transients (like us). They have a free wine and snack get together three times a week and tonight was one of the times so we went and met many boaters. After that we walked

to town for pizza at Fox's Pizza. They give a 10% discount for marina guests.

We came back to the boat and took Kiki for a walk. By this time she was well rested and led us on a pretty long trail. Back at the entrance to the marina she met a cat. Kiki has never been around a cat and didn't know what to think of it. She would run at the cat, then jump back and hide behind us. The cat didn't seem to care, it stayed around.

We're going to stay here for at least two nights so we haven't planned our next stop yet.



HIGH COTTON docked at Brunswick Landing Marina

Captain's Log, day fifteen (May 14, 2015)

We got up this morning, walked Kiki and then walked to a local restaurant for breakfast. It's a good "down home" diner style restaurant. When the waitress (in a good old southern drawl) asked Captain Ron what kind of toast he wanted and he selected raisin bread, she offered apple butter with it. The pancakes were so big Patti couldn't finish hers and brought them back to the boat for tomorrow.

Walking back to the boat, we were surprised to see the same cruise ship, the American Star" that we had been following yesterday docked a couple

hundred yards behind HIGH COTTON. A little Internet research turns up that it is one of several "small cruise ships" cruising the US east coast. It is headed for Florida.

We decided to take Kiki for a walk and tour the town. Like so many small towns and cities, the downtown areas have a lot of vacant buildings and most of the remaining businesses are restaurants, antique stores and boutiques. We walked past a music store with guitars and amplifiers for sale but the sign listed the business hours as "closed" except for Saturdays from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. We did find an ice cream shop though.



Ice cream - Yumm!

We walked back to the pizza shop for dinner. Instead of pizza again we had lasagna and chicken parmesan. Again, it was good. Back on the dock afterward, Kiki entertained the other boaters with her attempts to get a cat to play with her. Kiki ran back and forth and barked while the cat just sat and watched her.



Kiki and the cat

We took showers and did another load of laundry. The laundry is free here. When we came back to take Kiki for a walk, a different cat was on the dock. It lives on a neighboring boat. Kiki and the cat looked at each other and sniffed then Patti took Kiki up the ramp for a walk. The cat jumped onto HIGH COTTON and checked it out. Its owner said he is always looking for a nicer boat.



A visitor to HIGH COTTON

Looking at the weather forecast and the wind in particular, we may stay here another day before heading south. We have to cross one of the worst sounds in Georgia and high winds will only make it worse.

Captain's Log, day sixteen (May 15, 2015)

It's been sixteen days and we haven't made it to Florida yet. We suppose when you count the two days to Myrtle Beach, the three days there and the two days back, that's not too bad. And of course there were the three extra days in Thunderbolt, GA for boat repairs.

We got up late this morning thinking we were staying in Brunswick another day but the weather and wind forecast didn't look any better for Saturday than for today so we topped off the water, filled the fuel tanks again (they have good fuel prices at Brunswick Landing) and headed back to the ICW with several plans in mind. St. Simons Sound leaving Brunswick was rough enough that Kiki and Patti had to go below. We also folded the bimini top back up in its boot to avoid wind damage.

Once we got into sheltered (and shallow) Jekyll Creek the water and the wind died down. Another trawler passed us heading north so we called him on the radio and asked him about St. Andrews Sound. He said it was fine, we wouldn't have any problem. Well, you have to take this sort of advice with a grain of salt; his boat was much larger than HIGH COTTON. Still, with Patti and Kiki below and the bimini folded up, it was bearable and we got across it just fine.

We passed the Kings Bay submarine facility without incident (and without seeing a submarine) and passed along the inland side of Cumberland Island. We did see one lone wild horse grazing near the beach.



Feral horse on Cumberland Island

We passed the southern tip of the island, turned north and entered the anchorage behind Cumberland Island. There were two sailboats anchored already, one with New Zealand as its home port. We wondered if it actually sailed from there.

We paid some bills with on-line banking but remembered that we can't check our insurance bills on line so we'll have to call the agent soon and find out what we owe for each policy.

Dinner tonight is leftover jerk pork chops, this time with black beans and rice.

We finished dinner and covered up what needs to be covered. There are now seven boats in the anchorage. Five sailboats and two trawlers. Tomorrow we plan to visit St. Marys.

Captain's Log, day seventeen (May 16, 2015)

Well, we're still not in Florida but we wanted to visit St. Marys, GA. It's one of the oldest towns in the state, if not the country. It's a nice place but like so many we have visited, the real businesses are on the outskirts of town and the downtown historic district is mostly gift shops, antique shops and restaurants. Travelling on a boat, we can't really buy furniture but Patti got a blouse and some

jewelry. We did hit the weekly farmers market and came away with tomatoes cucumbers and a cantaloupe. We didn't have any salad dressing on the boat and there was no place to buy any. Someone suggested a wine and coffee shop so we went there. They didn't have any for sale, but they gave us a cup of ranch dressing, no charge. That's southern hospitality!

The ride from our anchorage was only a little over an hour. We could see the marina most of the way but had to follow a big circle in the river to get there. This isn't one of those marinas with uniformed dockhands and a free bottle of wine or free donuts every morning, it's a "dock it yourself" marina but it's only \$1 per foot and \$3 for electricity and it's convenient to town. It's also the only marina in town.



Lang's Marina, St. Marys, GA

Speaking of "town", the town advertised live music in the park tonight so after dinner we got our folding chairs and walked to the park. We expected a band but "live music" turned out to be several guys taking turns playing guitar and singing songs they had apparently written themselves. Captain Ron used to play music professionally and has played with some excellent musicians in the past. He was not impressed so after three or four songs we left and walked back to the boat. It wasn't going to get any better.

It would be a long trip to St. Augustine from here so we're looking at a free dock near where the ICW crosses the St. Johns River. If that doesn't work out, we'll anchor somewhere near there and should get to St. Augustine on Monday.

Kiki sends her love.

Captain's Log, day eighteen (May 17, 2015)

Oh, the cruising life! We can pay our bills through on-line banking but of course we have to know how much we owe and when they are due. We can get this information on-line for credit cards and utilities but not for insurance. So Captain Ron waited until 9:30 AM this morning and called the insurance office. It wasn't until he got the recording that he realized that today is Sunday and the office is closed. Things like the day of the week tend to slip our minds after a few days of cruising.

Later he figured out that he actually could actually create an account and check the policies on-line. So, another \$850 was sent off to cover cars that are sitting in the driveway for several weeks. At least if a tree falls on them they will be covered.

Well, we finally made it to Florida! Actually, we crossed into Florida an hour or so after leaving St. Marys. For the first couple of hours we saw mostly cruising sized boats heading north, but the closer we got to Jacksonville and the St. Johns River, the more smaller, faster boats we saw, passing us in both directions. Being it's warm and sunny out and it's Sunday, that's understandable.



Entering Florida on the ICW (Fernandina Beach)

We made it to the Jacksonville free dock just off the ICW (not in downtown Jacksonville) in about four and a half hours. We were afraid it would be full but so far we're the only boat tied up here. There's a steady stream of boats a couple hundred yards away on the ICW itself. There's a public park here and a large public boat landing with a playground and restrooms. There's even a self-appointed greeter who comes by and welcomes boaters and offers rides to the store, etc. We're OK and will be in Jacksonville and close to shopping and West Marine tomorrow so we talked a bit and he went on his way. We are still the only boat docked here.



Jacksonville free dock

Dinner was leftovers from the Italian restaurant. Dessert was fresh cantaloupe from the farmer's market in St. Marys.

It should take about five hours to get to St. Augustine so we can take our time getting underway.

Captain's Log, day nineteen (May 18, 2015)

We had a quiet night except that the mystery beeping returned after several days of silence. We'll see what happens tonight.

We got underway a little before 8:00 AM. Captain Ron noticed that there was no depth reading on the chart plotter. It was blank. You don't want to travel the ICW without a depth sounder unless you're in a rowboat or a canoe. We pulled up to the dock at the boat ramp, having traveled a hundred yards or so and Captain Ron got out the manual. According to the error code, there was a "software malfunction" and it could possibly be fixed by cycling the power off and back on again. Well, it's always best to try the easy things first so he turned off the power for a couple of minutes and then back on. It worked!

So, back underway again, we went under the Sisters Creek Bridge, looked for traffic (big ships), and made our way across the St. Johns River and continued south on the ICW. It wasn't long before we saw a manatee. We saw several more in a long straight stretch with nice homes and docks on the east side and woods on the west side. We couldn't get good photos but we managed not to hit any of them.

We got to St. Augustine and the Municipal Marina a little after 1:00 PM. We had made reservations because the marina has a reputation for filling up. It also has a reputation as difficult to negotiate but we had no difficulty.

As usual, Kiki had to go for a walk and check out the marina and grounds. Then we registered and got ourselves hooked up and settled in.



Approaching St. Augustine from the ICW

Since it was nearly ninety degrees out, we left Kiki in the air conditioned boat and set off to tour St. Augustine. We looked and acted like tourists, checking out all the gift shops and such, but of course, that's exactly what we are, tourists. The only difference is, we came by boat.



A couple of tourists in St. Augustine, FL

We found an ice cream shop and sat in the shade while we each ate a cup. A little more shopping and browsing and it was time for an early dinner so we found an Irish Pub. Captain Ron had his favorite, shepherd's pie while Patti had her usual fish and chips. It was very good.

Back at the boat, Kiki was well rested and ready for a walk (or so we thought). We decided to walk part

way across the Bridge of Lions (on the sidewalk of course). Apparently, that's not what Kiki had in mind so she had to be carried most of the way.



Kiki inspects the Bridge of Lions

We get several TV stations but not the one with Patti's show "Dancing With the Stars" so we took showers and we'll walk the dog one more time and turn in for the night.

Captain's Log, day twenty (May 19, 2015)

It's time to take it easy for a while. We got up at 9:30 AM. Somehow, the Birthday Bunny managed to sneak into the locked boat and leave birthday cards for Captain Ron. This always surprises him because he can't figure out how anyone can get in without a key.

We took Kiki for a walk and went to the ship's store. Usually a marina's ship's store carries oil, filters, cleaners and other boat needs. This was just a souvenir store but there were no customers and the girl working there said we could take Kiki off her leash. We did and she ran around the store entertaining us all.

We had made arrangements to meet our friends and former neighbors who had moved to St. Augustine several years ago for lunch at 11:30 AM so that would be our breakfast and lunch combined.

Actually, the portions were so big that later that evening we shared just a plate of nachos for dinner. We had a good time catching up with all the changes in our lives, but then they had to go and pick up their grandchildren from school. So, the rest of the day was spent walking around town with and without Kiki.

The St. Augustine Municipal Marina is not only a very large marina, it owns several mooring balls on both sides of the bridge and people tie up to the balls and use their dinghies to get to shore for showers and whatever else they may do on shore. It appears some may actually live on these moored boats full time. This and the tour boats make for a pretty busy place at times. Captain Ron had to wait in line to take a shower last night.

We have talked to a lot of other boaters and had some interesting conversations. This is one of the nice things about boat cruising, most of the people are pretty friendly.

Now it's off for showers and then to bed. Tomorrow is another tough day of wandering around doing nothing.

Captain's Log, day twenty one (May 20, 2015)

There's not much to say when you stay in port for three days. We originally intended to stay for two and then extend our stay if we wanted to but they put us down for three and we just accepted that.



HIGH COTTON at the St. Augustine Municipal Marina

The girl at the ship's store told us about a small park just two blocks away where we could close the gate and let Kiki run. Actually, she told us yesterday and we looked but couldn't find it. We asked her again today and she gave us direction again but we still couldn't find it. We asked some local people as we were walking around and none of them knew about it. We happened to walk by the historical gift shop just as they were opening and asked one of the staff. After mentioning two parks he said "Oh, I know what you're talking about." and gave us directions. We had walked by it twice thinking it was just an overgrown lot. It had a wooden fence and the gate was on the next street over. It appears homeless people sleep there at night.

We went in and shut the gate and Kiki sniffed around but she didn't feel like running so we left and walked back to the boat. On the way back we passed a Greek and Polish restaurant and decided to go back there for lunch. We ordered assorted pierogies and they were different and very good.

We walked around town and saw some things we missed before and then went back to the boat to take Kiki for a walk. Everywhere she goes, people have to stop and pet her and she loves it.

We turned on the TV and the weather report called for strong thunderstorms. Right on cue, the rains

and lightning came. We look at rain as a free boat wash.

After the rain we went back to town and had soup and salad at a different restaurant for dinner. Again, it was very good. There's no shortage of good restaurants in St. Augustine.

Back at the marina, it was the usual showers and walk the sea dog. Tomorrow we have a five hour cruise back the way we came and the next day we head for Ortega Landing on the outskirts of Jacksonville.

Captain's Log, day twenty two (May 21, 2015)

We got underway a little earlier than we expected, about 9:30 AM. We retraced our way back up the Intracoastal Waterway. We looked for manatees but none could be seen. Perhaps it was because of all the fast boats speeding up and down the waterway today.

As we neared the St. Johns River, we thought about spending the night at the free dock in the park again or motoring another two hours to Jacksonville Landing in downtown Jacksonville. We decided to head on to Jacksonville so our travel time today was about seven hours.

If you read about our trip south in 2012, you read about our experience with this place. It was supposed to be a mall with lots of stores and restaurants and entertainment with a free dock for boaters. The stores are mostly gone and only a few restaurants and bars remain. They bring in entertainment on weekends and other days. We walked with Kiki and got some ice cream. Kiki got to ride up one floor on the elevator. When we were ready to go back down she walked to the elevator and waited to ride back down.

As we walked back to HIGH COTTON, we saw a band setting up for tonight. From the size of their sound system, we will be listening to them whether we want to or not. We could have docked closer to the far end but it was a choice of being near the restaurants or the homeless people. We chose the restaurants this time.



HIGH COTTON at the Jacksonville Landing dock

We walked Kiki and walked up to hear the band. They are pretty good but there wasn't much of a crowd to appreciate them. They took a break shortly after we got there so we walked back to the boat. We rinsed ourselves off in the cockpit wearing swim suits instead of going to all the trouble to take showers inside. Then we watched TV for a while and went to bed.

It's only an hour or so to our next stop at The Marina at Ortega Landing. There's a swimming pool, hot tub and free laundry. And they throw a free picnic on Memorial Day. We stopped here for a split week in 2012. It's one of our favorite marinas.

Captain's Log, day twenty three (May 22, 2015)

The dock quieted down last night and we had a decent night's sleep. Kiki was in her protective mode and barked at everyone who walked by and made noise.

We got up, dressed, walked the sea dog and then walked to the bank building to have breakfast in the forty second story restaurant overlooking the city that was so impressive three years ago. We got on the elevator and pushed the button but it went nowhere. We tried again with the same results. It turns out the restaurant closed a couple months ago. That was a disappointment.

We got a light breakfast at the counter at the entrance and then headed back to the boat.

We watched as the train bridge closed for several trains and boats backed up on the river. It was open by the time we cast off our lines but just as we were nearly under the bridge the alarms sounded that the bridge would be closing again. We hit the throttle and made it through before it actually began to close. Railroad bridges don't wait for the boats to pass, the trains can't stop.



Waiting for a train in Jacksonville, FL

We could see the drawbridge leading to our destination, The Marina at Ortega Landing as soon as we cleared the railroad bridge so we were in no hurry. Our travel time from Jacksonville Landing to The Marina at Ortega Landing was under an hour even at reduced speed. We had to request an opening of the drawbridge but it's unrestricted, we didn't even have to stop.

Once we got tied up in our slip, Kiki had to check out the marina and the neighborhood so she led Patti on an exploratory mission while Captain Ron took care of paying the bill. One unique thing this marina does is offer a weekly rate and allow it to be split into two segments so we can stay for four nights, take our trip up the St. Johns River and stay for three nights on our way back north.

With all the details out of the way we decided it would be nice to cool off in the pool for a while so we did. Kiki had to stay on the boat though. Dogs aren't allowed in the pool area.



It's a tough job but someone has to do it

Patti decided she needed to visit a nail salon and there's one in the shopping center a few blocks from the marina. She and Captain Ron walked the four blocks and ate a light lunch before heading to the nail salon. They told Patti it would be a few minutes so Captain Ron left her there and walked to West Marine looking for an easy way to hold Kiki's leash to secure her on the flybridge. He saw something that would work for \$30 but decided to walk to the boat parts outlet store we had seen on our 2012 trip. Well, that was the second disappointment of the day; it too, was out of business.

Captain Ron walked back to West Marine (they say walking is good for you), paid the \$30 and walked back to the nail salon. They were just putting Patti

in a chair so Captain Ron walked back to the boat alone. He and Kiki started to watch TV but they actually took naps.

Patti stopped at the grocery store for a few things on her way back to the boat. Then she gathered up the dirty clothes for the free washer and dryer. Dinner was left over restaurant food and then it was time for showers and bed.

Captain's Log, day twenty four (May 23, 2015)

There's not much to report today. We walked back to West Marine and returned the \$30 part. Captain Ron determined that it wouldn't do what he wanted it to do. We did some shopping, ate a light lunch and came back to the marina for some more time in the pool and hot tub. We walked Kiki and she met some humans and some dogs. Everyone seems very friendly here and of course the marina amenities are first class.



HIGH COTTON at the Marina at Ortega Landing

We took our showers, put on our "dress clothes" and walked to Longhorn Steak House for steak dinners. As usual, we have leftovers for another meal.

Another walk for Kiki and it's time for bed.

Captain's Log, day twenty five (May 24, 2015)

We slept in late, got up and walked Kiki (you have to start wondering who is in charge here) and then walked to the shopping center for breakfast at the Metro Diner. You wouldn't expect a line for breakfast but there was one. After a few minutes we got a table and ordered. Patti got a pancake bigger than the plate it was served on. She had to bring some home, she couldn't finish it.



Patti's pancake at the Metro Diner

We came back to the boat and Captain Ron took Kiki for a walk while Patti got out the vacuum cleaner and cleaned up the boat. After she was finished, Captain Ron did some minor boat work. Patti stripped the bed and took the sheets to the marina to wash them, then we both changed into our swimsuits and took advantage of the pool, hot tub and abundant Florida sunshine.

Tomorrow is the Memorial Day cookout at the marina. They supply hamburgers and hot dogs and the marina guests bring a side dish so Patti is making her famous pasta salad. It's best chilled overnight so she made it today.

Dinner tonight was leftover steak and potatoes from Longhorn. Still good warmed in the microwave. How did we ever get along without microwaves?

We haven't decided where our next stop is after tomorrow. It's either an anchorage or the town dock at Green Cove Springs.

Captain's Log, day twenty six (May 25, 2015)

Today was the marina's Memorial Day picnic so that's pretty much what we did, attend the picnic. Of course Kiki wasn't allowed to go so we spent time at the pool, then with her, then at the pool again, etc. There was lots of food and beverages and most of Patti's pasta salad was taken so we have just a little bit left. It's been great weather here and of course, the marina is as nice as we remember it.



The Marina at Ortega Landing

Kiki discovered and chased a small lizard yesterday so now when we walk her she insists on going to the same spot to look for another one to chase. We have to hold her leash to make sure she doesn't actually catch one. We have noticed though, that when we head back to HIGH COTTON, she remembers the way and stops at the right dock and boat.

Tomorrow we'll walk to Publix for ice and supplies, top off the water tanks, head a few hundred yards up the river to fill the fuel tanks and then head back into the St. Johns River to continue our trip south. We'll probably stop at the town dock in Green Cove

Springs if there's space. If not, we'll anchor somewhere.

Captain's Log, day twenty seven (May 26, 2015)

The plan was to top off the water tanks, walk to Publix for ice and last minute items, head up the river a few hundred yards to a marina that sells fuel and then head out to the St. Johns River. The first part of the plan worked fine but when we headed up river for fuel, the railroad drawbridge closed in front of us. We called the bridge tender and she told us a train was coming and the bridge would open in about ten minutes. An Amtrak passenger train crossed the river and the bridge went up. As we were passing through, the bridge tender called and informed us that people were on their way to work on the bridge and once they started, the bridge would be closed for two to three hours. We did our best to hurry at the fuel dock and made it back through the bridge before the work began.



Waiting for a train, Ortega River, FL

That left us with the Ortega River drawbridge to deal with. We called the bridge tender and he said he had people working on the bridge so he had to get them to a safe location before he opened the bridge. There was no delay but we should have had the camera ready. As we went through the bridge we could see two guys working on it and one of them was spraying WD-40 on something.

As we were nearing the Buckman Bridge (I 295), we heard a loud splash. When we looked, we saw three or more manatees off our port side. We stopped the boat and watched them for a few minutes. Kiki watched them too.



Kiki watching the "big fish"

After a few minutes we continued on our way to Green Cove Springs. A houseboat came from the Doctors Lake area on our starboard side. It was way ahead of us and crossed in front of us and turned south just outside the channel. It was going just a little slower than us so we were catching up to it.

Apparently, vision isn't very good in a house boat because just as we were almost beside it, it turned into our path. We had to turn to avoid it.

Eventually, it turned south again, now on our starboard side. We couldn't figure out what it was doing but it was behind us now so it didn't matter.

We found the Green Cove Springs City Dock and got ourselves tied up and connected. It's \$20 for overnight with water and electricity and you're supposed to put the money in an envelope and put it in a secure box. There were no envelopes so we had to call the police department and they sent someone to refill the envelope box.



City pier at Green Cove Springs, FL

We walked Kiki up the very long pier to the park and she did her business. We walked around the park a bit and Kiki explored. It was very hot so we walked back to HIGH COTTON to cool off in the air conditioning.

After we had cooled down, we walked back leaving Kiki to rest on the boat. Green Cove Springs is named after a large mineral spring. Long ago, the city built a public swimming pool fed by the spring. The water from the spring flows into the pool, then exits to the St. Johns River. Unfortunately, they are working on the building surrounding the pool so it is closed for the season.

After checking out the spring and pool, we walked to the business district but since it was after 5:00 PM, all the stores were closed. There aren't very many anyway.

As we were heading back towards the dock intending on eating at the wing and oyster restaurant (bar), we were surprised to come across a Jamaican Restaurant. Jamaican Food (in Jamaica they just call it "food") is some of our favorite so we went in and had dinner. Jerk pork, jerk chicken, fried plantains, red beans and rice. Yumm!



Jamaican Restaurant, Green Cove Springs, FL

When we got back to the boat, Kiki was rested and ready to go so we walked her to the park. She found a sandy place next to a sidewalk and proceeded to dig a hole. A large hole. She entertained the townspeople with her digging. Once she got tired of that, she saw several squirrels and took off after them. She pulled the leash out of Patti's hand so there we were in the park, Kiki running around dragging the retractable leash, Captain Ron chasing her and Patti bringing up the rear. Finally, Kiki stopped and we caught up with her.



Kiki in the sand

After all that running, Kiki was too tired to walk back to the boat so Captain Ron had to carry her. At least she'll sleep good tonight.

Tomorrow, we'll head for Palatka, another small town on the west bank of the St. Johns River.

Captain's Log, day twenty eight (May 27, 2015)

Green Cove Springs is a pleasant little town and we could have stayed and enjoyed the park and restaurants but we decided to move on down the river. The St. Johns River is pretty wide here so there wasn't much to see other than crab pots and crab boats. We did see a spot where a manatee might have been but we stopped and it didn't come back up. They can hold their breath under water for several minutes. Green Cove Springs is the site of the infamous Shands Bridge, a bridge with only forty five feet of clearance over the river that keeps larger sailboats from travelling further south. It's not a problem for us though.

Rather than stop at Palatka we decided to save it for the trip back and continued on to a small county park recommended by the cruising guides and some boaters we met. It's on Murphy Island south of Palatka and access is by boat only. Since HIGH COTTON is as long as the entire dock, we probably will be the only ones here tonight. There are nature trails and campsites and an outhouse. We took Kiki and walked around a bit but it's pretty hot so we walked back to the boat and hosed Kiki down. Later tonight we'll hose ourselves down.



HIGH COTTON at Murphy Island on the St. Johns River, FL

Dinner was leftover Jamaican food, as good as the first time. We took Kiki for another walk on the island and then we all took showers in the rear

cockpit of HIGH COTTON. There's nobody on the island and only rarely does a boat go by.

Tomorrow we'll probably go to Georgetown Marina for fuel and real showers.



Kiki and Captain Ron on Murphy Island

Captain's Log, day twenty nine (May 28, 2015)

We had a great night's sleep at the Murphy Island dock. The temperature cooled down quickly from the nineties and there was a breeze. Surprisingly, there were no wakes from passing boats. We were a little disappointed that we didn't see or hear any wildlife. Perhaps we would have if we had anchored on the other side of the island away from the river.

We walked the sea dog and got underway at 9:00 AM or so. We took our time as our next destination and fuel stop, Georgetown Marina (Georgetown, FL, not Georgetown, SC) was only about a three hour journey.

The railroad bridge was open so that didn't slow us and we just took our time watching the scenery and small towns pass by. Patti got a glimpse of an alligator before he ducked under the water.

Georgetown Marina is more of a "fish camp" than a marina. They also rent cottages and sites for RVs. It's best described as "rustic" but it has everything

we need and the staff and other people are very friendly and helpful. It's also the only source of diesel fuel south of Jacksonville so we have to stop here and top off our fuel tanks.



Georgetown Marina, FL

There's no restaurant on site or nearby so we had "boat food" for dinner. Meatloaf, mashed potatoes and green beans. Not bad at all. The last "real" showers we've had were in Jacksonville so we're going to take advantage of the marina showers and do a load of laundry.

As we mentioned, Georgetown marina is as much a fish camp as a marina. People come here to stay in the cabins or campers and fish in Lake George, a fresh water lake. One of the unique things we saw on our last visit and again this time is the automatic fish de-scaler. Rather than scale the fish by hand, they put them in a drum with an electric motor and water supply and turn it on. Much like a washing machine, the fish tumble over and over and the scales are removed and washed away.



"Scale-O-Matic" fish de-scaler

We are planning on visiting Silver Glen Springs tomorrow and hope to spend the night. Silver Glen Springs is a well-known clear, warm spring that is a very popular recreation area. It's only ten miles away but the entrance is shallow so it might be tricky getting in. The marina manager gave us a hand drawn map of how to get in and where and how to anchor. This should be better than our original plan of anchoring in Lake George and going to the springs by dinghy.

For the first time on our trip, the Verizon Hot Spot can't communicate with the outside world so we are on the marina's Wi-Fi. We're in the middle of nowhere! We may be out of touch for a day or two once we leave here.

Captain's Log, day thirty (May 29, 2015)

We had a quiet night's sleep after the airboats went away. If you've never seen an airboat, it is a very shallow draft boat powered by a car engine attached to an airplane propeller. It can go in very shallow water but it's as loud as an airplane. They are popular around here because there's a lot of very shallow water outside the channels.



An airboat on the St. Johns River

Just after the sun came up the fishing boats started leaving the marina and since we are docked on the fuel dock, we heard the fishermen talking as they fueled up their boats. As Captain Ron was making his morning coffee, one actually leaned over to look inside HIGH COTTON! It's a good thing Captain Ron was dressed.

We topped off the water tanks, bought another bag of ice and headed out across Lake George. As suggested by the marina guy, we turned west at marker nine and headed for Silver Glen Springs with the hand drawn map he gave us. A few hundred yards from the entrance we hit the bottom. That wasn't unexpected so we backed up and tried a different way with the same result. A local boater in a smaller boat came by so we asked him where the deeper water was. His reply: "There isn't any." Most boaters are more helpful than that.

We backed up, swung around and tried a different way. We could see grass growing on the bottom and we made it in to deeper water leading to the spring. We could look down and see the bottom and schools of fish swimming. The marina guy had warned us not to go too far into the run because it was the beginning of the weekend and we might have trouble getting back out tomorrow with all the boats. Also, there's a sandbar in the middle of the run where the water is about three feet deep and

you're supposed to put out a bow anchor on the sandbar and a stern anchor in the deeper part to keep from swinging onto the sandbar or into other boats.

Setting two anchors is not something we normally do in the Charleston area because of the current but we do have an extra anchor aboard HIGH COTTON. It's a Fortress aluminum anchor and it makes a good spare because it can be folded up and put in a bag. It's a good spare but way too big for a casual stern anchor in a place like this. Also, there's thirty feet of chain on the rode.

Setting an anchor on a sandbar isn't something easily done on a larger boat. We had to drop the stern anchor thirty feet from where we wanted to be, motor up near the sandbar and carry the bow anchor onto the sandbar and set it manually. The thirty feet of chain was far too much for the stern anchor so Captain Ron got a nut and bolt from the spare parts collection and looped the excess to shorten it. Fortunately, current is insignificant here and even wind shouldn't be a serious problem because there are trees on both sides of the run.

Once we brought Kiki down from the flybridge she saw the crystal clear water from the swim platform and wanted to go for a swim. We put her life jacket on and put her in. She swam around and loved it. Each time we took her out she wanted back in.



Kiki goes for a swim - Silver Glen Springs, FL

We inflated Q-Tip (our dinghy) and cruised around the entire park. The end where the actual spring is roped off and boats and dogs aren't allowed in so we didn't actually see the spring. We are anchored between two relatively quiet houseboats but further in there is a raft up of about a dozen small boats and they are partying. It's not really loud though.

There's a pontoon boat cruising around selling hot dogs, ice, drinks and other water "necessities". We're pretty well self-sufficient so we didn't stop it.



[Get your hot dogs and Hawaiian shaved ice here!](#)

The hot dog boat gave Patti an idea so for dinner we had hot dogs, sauerkraut and baked beans. After dinner, Captain Ron took a cruise around the anchorage in Q-Tip. The party is over and the loud boats are gone.

We started the day with about thirty TV stations but as the evening wears on we are down to about ten with a reliable signal and most of them are either Spanish speaking stations or trying to save our souls. We had a busy day so we'll probably go to bed early.

Captain's Log, day thirty one (May 30, 2015)

We had a quiet night but were a bit surprised there weren't more sounds of wildlife. Once we woke and got dressed we saw schools of fish swimming around the boat. Kiki saw them too.

We sometimes rave about the microwave meals we eat when we're anchored and out of leftovers. Meatloaf and mashed potatoes, chicken and dumplings, etc. Most are pretty good. We warmed up some breakfast meals this morning. Eggs, potatoes and sausage. They were awful. We're going to have to start a list of what's good and what's not. You would think that before a company puts their name on these things they would at least try them.

Because the sea dog has a sensitive stomach, we can't just buy her dog biscuits or dog treats, we have to make them from her special food by flattening it out and baking it in the oven. We are running low so Patti had to make another batch. They stink while they are cooking so it will be a good time to be outside of the boat.

We decided to stay here for another night and just relax in the water and on the boat. Kiki got in some swimming time swimming between Mawmaw and Pawpaw. She also met some people and dogs and got to float on a plastic raft with another dog for a while. The day started out slow, but pretty soon the boats came rolling in. House boats, go fast boats, jet skis and runabouts. There were even a few air boats. The people have been well behaved, no loud drunkenness or cursing. Several stopped by and told us how much they admired HIGH COTTON and asked questions about it. One couple keeps their boat in Sanford, FL so we may meet them again in a couple of days.



Kiki makes a new friend

It's nice here but we'll get moving tomorrow. Once we get to Sanford in two days it will be time to change the engine oil. Actually, we will have passed the time by a few hours but we don't want to change it while anchored because we wouldn't have air conditioning and if there's a problem, we want to be where we can get parts or help if needed.



Party time at Silver Glen Springs, FL

Captain's Log, day thirty two (May 31, 2015)

Last evening as the sun was beginning to set, we saw a group of otters playing in the water across from our boat. We couldn't get any good photos but we could see them.

Getting underway this morning was a little more complicated than usual. Since the bow anchor was in a sandbar in about two and a half feet of water,

we couldn't just motor up to it and pull it up with the windlass as we normally do. Captain Ron had to wade out to it and pull it up manually and carry it closer to the boat. Then the stern anchor had to be pulled all the way up manually.

Anyway, we got ourselves loose and headed out of the run. We had to slow down for an otter and we saw an alligator along the bank. This was away from the swimming and partying area where we had been.

Even though we were trying to follow our track back out on the GPS, we did manage to hit bottom once and had to back up and try again. We finally made it to deeper water and headed south in the Lake George channel.

There is a narrow area at the southern end of Lake George where the channel passes between wooden fences designed to keep hyacinth growth out. From there on, it's one no wake zone after another for several miles. It didn't matter, we're in no hurry. This is a part of Florida that most people have never seen or heard about. No condos, no million dollar waterfront homes, just rural, country Florida. There are lots of campgrounds and fish camps. And many of the private homes looked like they originally came with wheels!

We decided to split the forty five miles or so from Silver Glen Springs to Monroe Harbor Marina in Sanford, FL into two parts. There's an anchorage that we used on our 2012 trip that Patti wanted to stop in again. There are several loops in the St. Johns River that were bypassed by man-made cuts many years ago and this is one of them; "River Forest Loop". We anchored about 2:00 AM and a couple of the houseboats from Silver Glen Spring have come through on their way back to the marina that rents them out. Other than that, there have been a few boats fishing. We are out of the St.

Johns River traffic, which, since today is Sunday, has been pretty heavy.

So far, nobody has joined us in the anchorage, we are alone. We can hear what we think are alligators but we haven't seen them yet. We won't be swimming this evening. Neither will Kiki.



An "Oxbow" off the St. Johns River

Captain's Log, day thirty three (June 1, 2015)

When we anchored here in 2012, we saw several alligators, several turtles and a supposedly rare bird. One alligator swam within a few feet of our boat. This time we saw one turtle, that was it.

We got the flybridge uncovered, put the sea dog at her station, and got underway about 8:30 AM. We decided to go slow (slower than our usual seven knots) and look for wildlife. We went for a couple of hours without seeing any, even in the manatee no-wake zones. Finally, south of Hontoon Island and Blue Springs State Park (supposedly a winter home for manatees), we began to see alligators crossing the river. Of course when we came close they dove under the surface. We saw a large one sunning on a log but when we got close, it too slithered into the water.



Alligator on the St. Johns River

There's a railroad drawbridge just before the entrance to Lake Monroe and it was closed so we had to ask for it to be opened. The bridge tender told us it would be about six to eight minutes before he could open it. Ten minutes later a three car passenger train crossed the bridge. The bridge started to open and right in front of us was a manatee. It dove so all we saw was the tail.



Waiting for a train - Sanford FL

After we came through the bridge we saw one or two more but again, they were diving so we didn't get a good look or photos.

Once we crossed the lake we called the marina and got our dock assignment and instructions. We walked up to the office and paid our \$25 per night plus \$3 for electricity (Boat US discount).



HIGH COTTON at Monroe Harbor Marina

Back at the boat, it was time for chores. It was time for the engine oil to be changed so Captain Ron got out his tools and supplies and got to work. With an electric oil change pump it's not too difficult a task and he has it down to where there's hardly any mess.

Patti's job was to change the bed linens, give the boat a general cleanup and do a load or two of laundry. Just as she was about to take the laundry to the machines, it got dark and a Florida thunderstorm hit.

The rain lasted about an hour so we decided to take showers and get something to eat at the pizza restaurant near the marina. We'll do the laundry tomorrow. There are some alligators in the marina so we decided to carry Kiki instead of letting her run on the docks. Sanford has a nice river walk so we explored a short part of it with Kiki after dinner.

We're getting nearly fifty TV stations here but as before, half are either Spanish or religious stations. All three of us are pretty tired so we'll likely turn in early and sleep in late.

Captain's Log, day thirty four (June 2, 2015)

It rained a little last night but there's something soothing about the sound of rain on the deck when you're in bed. On the other hand, something brought on the "blind mosquitoes", the small insects that don't bite but leave green poop all over the boat. It doesn't wash off either. The locals say you just have to wait for it to wear off. We certainly hope it will wear off, it looks terrible.



Florida's blind mosquitoes

We walked to town and had a nice breakfast in a restaurant that's been around for twenty years or more. It was good old down home food. Captain Ron got grits with his sausage and egg. After breakfast, Patti took the dirty clothes to the laundry and got that out of the way.

The rubber weather stripping fell off the hatch in the lazarette and it's been leaking water when it rains or when we shower in the cockpit. There's a pretty well stocked ship's store in the marina but they didn't have any rubber cement or contact cement and there's no hardware store within walking distance. Captain Ron lucked out and found some at the dollar store so he glued it back on. Hopefully this will keep the water where it belongs.

We'll have a test of the weather stripping because it started to rain and is still raining at 8:00 AM.

Kiki had to take her evening walk in the rain. We didn't get to go to the German Restaurant because of the rain but we're going to stay here a while longer so we'll get there before we leave.

Captain's Log, day thirty five (June 3, 2015)

We got up, walked the sea dog, went to the office and extended our stay and then walked to town to check out the stores. Most of the stores downtown don't open until 10:00 AM and it appears that some owners are a little lax about that. We stopped in the music store but didn't buy anything. We don't need any more guitars or basses. Patti did find some rings she liked in one of the antique stores so she bought a couple.

Some of you know that Captain Ron was a professional musician back in his early days. Well, an old band mate of his now lives a few miles from Sanford so Captain Ron called him up and he drove over to the marina for a visit. They spent a couple hours talking about the "good old days" and what each had been doing for the last fifty (yes, it's been fifty) years.



Kim Tsoy and Captain Ron fifty years later

After Kim left, we went to the German Restaurant with our dock neighbors, Dale and Carol. They are passing through like us and have cruised some of the same areas we have. We had a lovely dinner

and spent the time discussing cruising areas we have been to or are planning on visiting. Their home port is in Alabama. After dinner, they came by and took a look at HIGH COTTON.



Dinner at Hollerbach Willow Tree Cafe

After they left, we walked Kiki the sea dog and they walked their boat cat (on a leash).

We may stay another day here or we may start back north. We haven't decided yet.

Captain's Log, day thirty six (June 4, 2015)

We decided to stay another day. We walked the sea dog up to the office and paid for the next day. Kiki got some treats from the manager. Then we walked to town and the German delicatessen that's connected to the German restaurant. We bought some sausages and cold cuts to eat for lunch the next few days.

Carol (from the boat next to us) decided to drive to the grocery store (they have a vehicle here) so Patti went along and stocked us up on sodas and other supplies. When they returned, Dale (also from the boat next to us) decided to drive to West Marine so Captain Ron went along. Dale picked up what he needed and Captain Ron picked up a spray bottle of marine cleaner priced at \$10.95. Dale said he was a part time employee of West Marine in his home

town so he would use his employee discount card. Captain Ron was amazed when the \$10.95 spray cleaner was discounted to \$3.39!

When Captain Ron returned, it was time for dinner and showers (and another walk for Kiki). We really are going to leave tomorrow and head north.

Captain's Log, day thirty seven (June 5, 2015)

To start with we had to try to get rid of the midges or "blind mosquitoes". They were everywhere. We swept and rinsed but couldn't get rid of all of them. Apparently, this is the time of year for them in central Florida.

We walked the sea dog, topped off our water tanks, turned in our keys and headed out of the marina. Once we crossed the lake we had to wait for the train again. Once it passed, the bridge tender opened the bridge and we headed down (north) the St. Johns River. The St. Johns is one of only a few major rivers that flows from south to north.

We took our time, again looking for wildlife. We saw lots of birds but only a few alligators and no manatees. Kiki kept us warned of approaching boats by barking.



Who's the boss?

There's a drawbridge in Deland that has only a fifteen foot clearance. You're not supposed to ask

for an opening if you can get under the bridge so we have to put the VHF antenna down and take the pins out of the bimini top frame and let it down. It's not difficult so that's what we did each way. We have to do the same thing going up the Ashley River to our marina (RiversEdge Marina) if it's high tide.

Our original plan was to anchor near Blue Springs State Park and watch the manatees but since we haven't seen any in the area we decided to skip that stop and head for an anchorage in the oxbow around Morrison Island.

As we neared the anchorage, we could hear thunder and see lightning in the distance. Fortunately, we got to the oxbow and got ourselves anchored and settled before it began to rain. We didn't get any heavy rain or thunder and lightning, but according to the TV news, it was storming around Orlando and Sanford.

Dinner was warmed up food from the German restaurant. It was good. It's a shame we don't have a good German restaurant where we live.

It appears Morrison Island is a popular bird roosting site. We can see and hear several different varieties of birds in the trees even though we are in sight of some homes.

Tomorrow we'll cross Lake George and continue north, stopping either at Welaka or Palatka.

Captain's Log, day thirty eight (June 6, 2015)

Well, we did both. We stopped at Welaka *and* Palatka. But we're getting ahead of ourselves.

We didn't get any more rain last night and had a quiet night on the hook. We watched a small alligator swim behind our boat and listened to the birds as they settled in for the night. As soon as the sun came up, the local boats began heading out to

fish. We were in a no wake zone but as soon as they got to the end of it, it was full speed ahead.

We got up a little after 7:00 AM and since we couldn't walk the sea dog, we were underway before 8:00 AM. It was only three miles from our anchorage to the southern end of Lake George. The channel across Lake George is about twelve miles long. They say it can be a rough ride in high winds but this morning it was as smooth as glass.

About two thirds of the way across, we met a group of a dozen or more boats heading south. Most likely they were headed for Silver Glen Springs where we had been a while back.



Locals headed for Silver Glen Springs

We got to Welaka about 11:00 AM so we decided to stop at the town dock and walk around the town and get some lunch. We took Kiki with us.



HIGH COTTON at the Welaka town dock

We found a restaurant named "Shrimp R Us" and they have an outside pavilion where Kiki could sit with us while we ate. While we were eating, a dog came by and sniffed Kiki. It had a collar but no tags and the waitress didn't know who he belonged to. He hung around while we ate and he and Kiki sniffed a bit but there was no fighting or growling. Eventually, he left and walked towards some homes on the next block.

As we were returning to the boat dock, a lady and young boy were leaving. The boy warned us to beware of an alligator near the dock. We could see one, perhaps four feet long and not afraid of humans. There were some older men sitting on a bench and they said there were three alligators that hung around the docks all the time.



Alligator at the Welaka town dock

We carried Kiki to the boat and got underway again. There were boats everywhere, coming and going. We passed a sandbar where a dozen or so boats were anchored with people in the water enjoying the sun and water.

We got to Palatka about 3:00 PM and got tied up on the facedock of the Boathouse Marina. It's a low key, inexpensive marina and the only one in town. We left Kiki on the boat and walked to town to look around. Then we came back to the marina for showers.



HIGH COTTON at the Boathouse Marina - Palatka, FL

Anyone who visits Palatka pretty much has to eat at Angel's Diner at least once. It's a local institution. It's advertised as Florida's oldest diner. It's made out of a railroad car like they made them many years ago. We got the traditional diner hamburgers with onion rings and fries. It was good, just like what we might have had fifty years ago. We should have tried the milkshakes as well but for some reason, we didn't.



Angel's Diner – Palatka, FL



Inside Angel's Diner

Back to the marina, it was time to walk the dog, feed the dog and turn in. It's been a long day.

Captain's Log, day thirty nine (June 7, 2015)

We started out today with good intentions. Ortega Landing in Jacksonville would have been about a seven hour cruise up the St. Johns River. We decided to forego breakfast at Angel's Diner and get underway. We walked the sea dog and started getting ready to cast off. The man on the boat next to us said he wanted his wife to see Kiki so we brought her back out. They have a Yorkie also.

One thing led to another and we all got on their boat (a houseboat) and the dogs examined each other. Then we toured their boat and they toured

ours. They told us about Palatka and the Boathouse Marina. They live in Jacksonville but keep their boat in Palatka and drive there on weekends. It's about an hour's drive by car.



Kiki makes another friend

We didn't get underway until after 11:00 AM so making it to Ortega Landing wasn't practical. Instead, we changed our destination to Black Creek, north of Green Cove Springs. You can actually see the tall buildings of Jacksonville from the entrance to Black Creek but it's still three hours away by slow boat.

As we were approaching Green Cove Springs we saw what looked like a marina in the distance but as we got close we realized that it was another local sandbar "hangout". Patti counted over forty boats anchored there. Remember, this is Sunday and a beautiful summer day in sunny Florida.



Hanging out on the local sandbar - St. Johns River, FL

When we anchored in Black Creek in 2012, it was as described in the cruising guides, a quiet area with lots of wildlife. Not today! It's a zoo with jet skis and boats pulling tubers. They don't slow down for anchored boats. It should be fine tonight though.



Our anchorage on Back Creek near Green Cove Springs, FL

Dinner was leftovers. The boat traffic slowed down as predicted and the temperature has dropped to a more comfortable level. Captain Ron somehow strained his back getting the anchor set so he put some Biofreeze (pain spray) on it and will take a muscle relaxer pill before going to bed.

Captain's Log, day forty (June 8, 2015)

Black Creek did settle down once it began to get dark and we had a peaceful sleep but it was hot and we didn't have much of a breeze. Captain Ron's back pain went away so we were able to get underway without any problems.

We exited the creek and continued on our way to Jacksonville. Off to our starboard side we could see a passenger ship being towed by one tugboat and pushed by another. It looked for a while like our paths would cross but it was actually going a little slower than HIGH COTTON so when we got to the actual channel we were in front of it. There were announcements on the marine radio warning boaters about it.

We turned out of the channel towards the Ortega River drawbridge and passed through without having to stop. We decided to top off our fuel tanks today so there would be no delay when we left Jacksonville. We have three more days of our paid up week at The Marina at Ortega Landing so after fueling at Lambs Marina we turned around and headed for our slip. This time, the bridge was open with no waiting for a train.



The Railroad Bridge on the Ortega River

Just across the dock from us was another Camano Troll, "TIKA". It belongs to Kevin and Marlene, a

couple we met at the East Coast Camano Owners Rendezvous in Myrtle Beach at the beginning of our trip. They live nearby and this is where they keep their boat when not cruising.



TIKA with HIGH COTTON in the background

We got settled in and took showers, then went for a dip in the pool. Kevin and Marlene showed up and we had a nice conversation about cruising and boats, then we toured each other's boats looking at how we had personalized them.

Later, we all went to dinner at a restaurant they were familiar with and they drove us around the area. After that we sat on the flybridge of TIKA until dark. Then it was time for bed.

Captain's Log, day forty one (June 9, 2015)

We stayed up past our bedtime last night talking to Kevin and Marlene on the flybridge of TIKA. Kiki even got to visit. Since their boat is the same as ours, she felt right at home. We didn't get out of bed until 9:00 AM and our new friends had already gone home.

Captain Ron tried to clean up the mess the blind mosquitos had left but was only partially successful. If the black marks don't go away naturally, he'll

have to use stronger products after we get back home.

We walked to the shopping center so Patti could get a manicure and pedicure. Captain Ron got them too. After that we walked around the corner for Chinese food for lunch. We remembered this restaurant as being pretty good on our last visit. Perhaps it was what we chose to order, but it didn't seem as good this time.

We stopped in Publix on the way back and they had a sale on soda so we bought a couple six packs and brought them back to the boat.

We walked Kiki, and then went to the pool area for some swimming and soaking in the hot tub. We talked to some of the other boaters but the pool guy came and closed the pool to add chlorine so we went back to the boat.

Later, we walked back to the shopping center, this time with our folding cart. We ate at another restaurant and then went back to Publix and filled the folding cart with sodas. They say walking is good exercise. If it is, we're staying in shape.

Back at the marina, we took showers and washed a load of clothes. Once they are done, we'll be in bed late again.

Captain's Log, day forty two (June 10, 2015)

Staying in port can result in some bad habits. We didn't get out of bed until 9:00 AM again today. It's OK though, we don't have to be anywhere.

There are more clothes to wash and Kiki is getting low on treats so Patti did another load of laundry and made a fresh batch of treats for the sea dog. Patti decided to vacuum the boat and put things in order so Captain Ron went to the pool and hot tub. That lasted a half hour or so and then the storms

came. According to the TV weather forecast, each day or the past week it has stormed somewhere in northeastern Florida. Today was our turn. The storm only lasted twenty minutes or so and then the sun came out. We went back to the pool but it started raining again so we went back to the boat and fell asleep.

Kiki writes: I don't know what this "pool" thing Mawmaw and Pawpaw keep talking about but they make me stay on the boat when they go. That's not fair. I should get to go too!!

We used up the propane in the first tank so Captain Ron swapped it for the spare tank that we keep on the flybridge. We should have plenty for the rest of our trip. We could take the empty tank to Publix and exchange it but we'll wait until we get home and have the empty tank filled at the Ace Hardware store down the street. With a fresh tank of propane, Patti baked another batch of doggie treats.

We took unplanned naps and then got dressed up and walked to Longhorn Steak House for dinner. We took our cart along and stopped at Publix on the way back and got ice and iced tea.

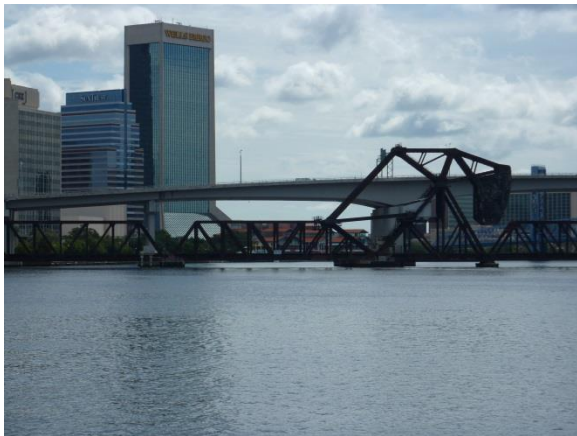
Back at the marina, it was time to walk the sea dog, take showers and go to bed. The plan is to split the distance between here and Fernandina Beach into two days so we don't have to leave here early.

Captain's Log, day forty three (June 11, 2015)

Getting away from Ortega Landing was pretty routine; walk the sea dog, top off the water tanks, say goodbye to some new friends, unplug the electric cord, untie the lines and leave. We thought we were doing pretty well until we got to downtown Jacksonville and the railroad drawbridge was down. We called and asked for an opening and

the bridge tender informed us that there was an electrical problem and it couldn't be opened until people came to repair it. We were later told that this bridge is well known for having mechanical problems.

We drifted and circled a bit and then saw a dock that appeared to be for a hotel. There was nobody there and no threatening signs so we pulled up and tied off to it. Eventually, the bridge opened without any word from the bridge tender so we quickly untied HIGH COTTON and headed through before it closed again. Any thought of making it to Fernandina Beach today was put to rest.



No train but we had to wait for repairs

The rest of the trip down the St. Johns River was uneventful. We passed the cruise ship terminal and one of the Carnival cruise ships was in port exchanging passengers. We also passed a couple of very large barges being towed by tug boats.



Cruise ship getting ready for the next cruise



A very large barge being towed on the St. Johns River

We turned to port out of the St. Johns River into Sisters Creek and the ICW. Just as on the way south, we pulled into the free dock run by the city of Jacksonville.

As we were tying the boat up, a large turtle surfaced directly behind the boat. By large, we mean about three feet in diameter with a head the size of a human head. It didn't hang around, it slid back under the boat but we did see something we haven't seen before.

The self-appointed greeter showed up again and while we were talking, a large sailboat came in so we helped him tie up. The boat is based in downtown Jacksonville but the owner had taken his friend out for some ocean sailing. His friend looked

a little green. A woman met them and they all drove somewhere. When they came back, the two women decided to jump in the creek for a swim. Not something we would have done but they are from here so they must know what they are doing.

From the dock, we saw the cruise ship that we had passed a couple hours ago leaving on the St. Johns River in the distance and heading out to sea. That might be fun, but we have our own cruise ship and we can go when and where we please.



The cruise ship headed out to sea

We walked Kiki to the park and let her go down the sliding board. She seems to like that. On the way back we met a local woman who fishes from the dock. She told us that there are alligators, dolphins and even a manatee in the creek. We'll keep watch tomorrow morning.

Tomorrow we head for Fernandina Beach for two nights.

Captain's Log, day forty four (June 12, 2015)

We had a quiet night last night but the wind that was blowing as we went to bed soon died down and it got pretty warm. One of the advantages of anchoring over tying to a dock is that the boat usually swings into the wind and there's a cooling breeze. Of course, tied to a dock there's no chance

of dragging anchor and we don't need the anchor light and anchor drag alarm on.

At first light, a person came down to the land next to the dock and began feeding the seagulls. Then a couple small boats passed us going up the creek and rocked the boat. Apparently, they didn't see the no wake sign.

So, with all that ruckus, we decided to get up. As usual, we walked the sea dog so she could do her business the way she prefers, in the grass. She walked too close to a nest of feral cats and got hissed at.

We've been looking for the alligators, dolphins and manatee that the lady spoke about but all we've seen are the seagulls. We did see a lot of dolphins later on our way from Jacksonville to Fernandina Beach. Kiki likes seeing the "big fish"; when we slow the boat down she starts looking for them.



Some folks still have to work for a living

We pulled into Fernandina Harbor Marina about noon. It's right in the center of town and the best choice if you want to see the historic town. There weren't a lot of transient boats when we arrived but the transient spots filled up fast, mostly with boats much larger than HIGH COTTON. Several are a hundred feet or more in length. That would be over two hundred dollars a night for dockage!

The marina rents some strange looking little outboard boats. We've never seen anything like these before.



HIGH COTTON and the strange little boats

We walked the sea dog, brought her back to the boat and went back to check out the shops and restaurants. There's a bar in town that's supposed to be the oldest bar in Florida. We were going to eat lunch there but the bartender said they don't serve food, only drinks so we went next door to a Cuban restaurant for lunch. Then we came back to the boat and took naps.



Palace Saloon; drinks but no food – Fernandina Beach, FL

After the much needed naps (this boating is hard work), we each walked to the bath house and took showers. We found an Irish Pub on the Internet that sounded promising, but it turned out that it is closed. We found another restaurant and ate

dinner while being entertained by two guys singing and playing guitar.

We walked around a little more and heard live entertainment coming from a couple of different restaurants. Then we walked back to the boat, got the sea dog and walked her. It's a really long walk from our dock to the grassy area. Since it's Friday night and the marina docks are open to the public, Kiki got to meet a lot of new friends.

Time now for some much needed sleep in air-conditioned comfort.

Captain's Log, day forty five (June 13, 2015)

We're in port today so there's not much to write about. Captain Ron woke up with a sore foot so that may impact our plans. They were advertising a boat show in the marina parking lot so we walked up to take a look. They had about six boats, all trailerable. There was a guy playing guitar and singing but he had pre-recorded musical and vocal backup. It sounded like five or six people but it was only one.

For food, they were selling hot dogs and potato chips. We each got a hot dog but even as early as we went they were overcooked and dry.

Captain Ron went back to the boat to rest his foot and Patti checked out the shops in town again. She came back with several T shirts. Later we walked to the restaurant that's on the marina grounds. It's highly recommended and we both got chicken fried steak with mashed potatoes and green beans. It lived up to its reputation.

By doing a little sleuthing earlier today, we discovered that the TV set in the captain's lounge was able to get RFD TV, the network with several country music shows so we came up with a plan to

take our shower supplies and watch our shows and take showers afterwards. We also discovered that while dogs aren't allowed in the restrooms, there were no posted restrictions for the captain's lounge so Kiki got to go with us.

All cleaned up and with our fill of old time country music, we returned to HIGH COTTON for a good night's sleep.

Captain's Log, day forty six (June 14, 2015)

We woke about 8:00 AM. Captain Ron's foot still hurt a bit so we cancelled the Cumberland Island stop. That meant we wouldn't be needing Q-Tip so we let the air out and folded it up on the bow for better visibility. We topped off the water, dumped the trash, got a bag of ice and got underway. We soon crossed the line from Florida to Georgia and followed the ship channel for submarines headed for the Kings Bay submarine base. There were no submarines to be seen but there was a boat patrolling the entrance to keep civilians out.

We continued north alongside Cumberland Island and saw a lone horse on the beach. St. Andrews Sound was pretty calm and comfortable but when we got to Jekyll Creek we had trouble finding water deep enough for HIGH COTTON. Most of the depth readings were less than four feet and HIGH COTTON needs three and a half feet. We probably cleaned the barnacles off the keel.

We decided that if we're going to get back home at a reasonable date we better start spending more time running the boat each day so we motored nearly nine hours today. It's not so bad when we share the time behind the wheel. The bad part is, the temperature has been in the mid-nineties for the past week and it's not supposed to get cooler anytime soon.

We found ourselves a nice anchorage off the North River near Darien, GA and anchored the boat. There is nothing around, no homes, no buildings so we have the place to ourselves. We get to shower in the open cockpit. Even Kiki got a shower.

We're planning on getting underway early tomorrow. We'll see how that works out.



[Sunset on the North River near Darien, GA](#)

Captain's Log, day forty seven (June 15, 2015)

The anchorage we chose last night was great, but the wind died down to nothing and it was hot, really hot. We didn't get a good rest because of it. Nevertheless, we got up early and got ourselves underway. We finally saw lots of dolphins. There were groups of twenty or more circling in several different places. Kiki got a good look and that made her day. Whenever we slow the boat down she jumps up to look.

We saw very few boats on the water and only two trawlers. Surprisingly, one was another Camano Troll, a sister ship to HIGH COTTON. It was Sea Lady and belongs to David and Wendy from Palm Coast Florida. We first met them at the Camano rendezvous in Myrtle Beach the first week of our trip. They had taken their Camano from Palm Coast to Bald Head Island, NC and were on their way back home to Florida.

Our original plan was to find an anchorage again tonight but with the temperature in the mid-nineties and our experience last night, we were open to suggestions. Talking to David on the radio, he suggested Delegal Creek Marina. He said they often stay there and that it's a nice place.

We looked it up on the Internet and decided that we could use a good night of air conditioned comfort and long showers so we made that our plan.

There's a notorious shallow spot on the Intracoastal Waterway, "Hell Gate". As luck would have it, we made it there at dead low tide. The navigational buoys were sitting on the mud. We saw some impossible depth readings on our depth sounder so we might have to recalibrate it but we made it through, again scraping the bottom on the mud. That's not good boating practice but HIGH COTTON has a keel and skeg that protects the running gear.

The entrance to Delegal Creek is just a quarter mile or so from Hell Gate and since it was still low tide, we had trouble getting through to the creek and marina. Once past the entrance, the creek deepens and we had no problem.

The dock master, Billy met us at the dock and caught our lines. He was very helpful providing information about the area and loaned us a golf cart so we could go to the restaurant and Publix. It's a really nice marina in a gated community with landscaped golf cart paths and beautiful homes. Surprisingly though, the restrooms and showers are not air conditioned. With outside temperatures in the mid-nineties, that would have been nice.

We walked the sea dog so she could do her business, took showers and took the golf cart for dinner at the restaurant and supplies at Publix.



Grocery run to Publix

It's supposed to reach ninety seven degrees tomorrow and the TV news people are warning people to watch out for pets and the elderly. Captain Ron warned Patti that she is traveling with two of those so she should take good care of them!

We decided to stay here an extra day so we could travel when it cools down to ninety four degrees on Wednesday.

Captain's Log, day forty eight (June 16, 2015)

The air conditioner ran full time yesterday from the time we docked until late in the evening and had a hard time cooling the boat so Captain Ron put the canvas cover over the front windows to keep the sun out and reduce the heat load. It was in the mid-eighties outside at 8:00 AM. This is the new air conditioner that he installed several months ago. At least this one doesn't freeze up and stop working like the previous one did.

Looking at the weather forecasts, we'll try to spend the night in marinas from here on to get some relief from the heat. Got to watch out for those pets and the elderly!

We went for a short walk after lunch but it was too hot so we came back to the marina carrying Kiki. Around 6:00 PM we took the golf cart back to the

same restaurant for dinner and then to Publix for a few more things. We saw lots of squirrels on the way so when we got back to the boat we got Kiki and took her for a ride. By that time, the squirrels had gone to bed, so she didn't see any.

So, it's showers and to bed. We should be on the water about seven hours tomorrow.



Delegal Creek Marina

Captain's Log, day forty nine (June 17, 2015)

We got a good night's rest and got underway a little after 8:00 AM. Heading back down Delegal Creek, we looked over to our right and were surprised to see several feral hogs grazing in the marsh. This is a new one on us.



A feral Hog across from Delegal Creek Marina

We got back on the Intracoastal Waterway and headed north again. This part of the waterway has numerous no-wake zones, presumably to protect the docks and boats of the rich and famous, not wildlife or shorelines. Near Thunderbolt, a suburb of Savannah, we saw a pod of dolphins swimming. These dolphins were apparently acclimated to humans because they swam up to the boat and even rose out of the water to look at us. Kiki was excited as were we. She barked. We didn't.



A dolphin inspecting HIGH COTTON and crew

As we approached the Savannah River we saw an alligator swimming from left to right in front of us. We stopped to watch but a speed boat passed us and the alligator dove under the water. When it came back up it was facing the other way and swam back to where it started.

We continued our journey, crossing back into South Carolina. Captain Ron had to go below and take a nap so Patti and Kiki manned the helm. It was in the upper nineties again today and you know how that affects the elderly! We've been drinking lots of water and draping wet towels over ourselves and Kiki.

Around 3:00 PM, we called the Skull Creek (yep, that's its name) Marina and told them we wanted to come in for diesel fuel and a night's dockage. We tied up at the fuel dock, topped off our tanks and settled the bill. Captain Ron needed a cold shower

but for some reason the showers only went from warm to hot. Well, warm is better than nothing so he got himself wet and cooler and returned to the boat where he and Kiki retreated to the V berth for some rest and cooling off.



HIGH COTTON at Skull Creek Marina

Dinner was leftover shrimp and grits for Captain Ron and salad from Publix for Patti. Kiki got her usual dog food. Patti took her shower, we walked Kiki and for good measure, Captain Ron took another shower. This time the shower controls went from cold to hot as expected.

Tomorrow's run should be five hours so we'll get up when we get up. No hurry.



Sunset over Skull Creek

Captain's Log, day fifty (June 18, 2015)

It's surprising how far it is at some marinas from the dock to a grassy area but that's where the sea dog wants to go so that's where we take her. We didn't plan on getting up early today but we were on the fuel dock and Skull Creek Marina is home to one of the boat clubs where you pay so much a year and get to use the boats whenever you want to so they were bringing them in and fueling them up for the day.

We got underway about 8:30 AM. Most of today's run was in fairly large bodies of water but most of the way it was pretty smooth. We also lucked out and had the current with us most of the way.

We pulled into Dataw Island Marina about 1:30 PM. Dataw Island Marina is on a private island in a gated community. It's also owned by the same company that owns our home marina, RiversEdge Marina so we get to stay here for free.



HIGH COTTON on the face dock at Dataw Marina

Once we got ourselves tied up, we took Kiki to do her business and then sat in the marina office/lounge while our boat cooled off. Patti found the snack bar and got us a hot dog to split for lunch and a piece of cake for desert tonight.

We took showers, rested a bit and then went to the on-site restaurant for dinner. It was good. Then we

went back to the boat, got Kiki and took her to do her business. By this time all the squirrels had gone to bed so we walked back and ate our cake.

Tomorrow we leave a little after 9:00 AM to try to make slack current at RiversEdge just before 6:00 PM.

Captain's Log, day fifty one (June 19, 2015)

When we pulled into Dataw Island Marina yesterday, we were put on the face dock between two other boats. This was fine because we docked into the current (the current at this marina is strong, much like at RiversEdge). When it was time to leave this morning, the other two boats were still there, but the current was strong and in the same direction HIGH COTTON was facing. Just untying the lines and trying to pull out wasn't going to work because the current wouldn't have let us clear the boat in front of us. So, we used a "trick". We ran a dock line from a bow cleat to the dock cleat (just around it, not tied) and back to the bow cleat. Captain Ron then turned the helm towards the dock and gave the boat a little power in forward. This pushed the stern out into the current and the boat began to turn. When the boat was nearly perpendicular to the dock, Patti released the dock line and pulled it in while Captain Ron backed the boat away from the dock and the other boats. Once clear of the dock and boats, we turned around and were on our way.

It was in the upper eighties by the time we got underway at about 9:15 AM and kept climbing so we spent most of the day with wet towels draped over our heads or shoulders. Even Kiki had a wet towel to wear. If you've never been on the ICW, it's not a straight run like Interstate 95; it twists and turns using mostly natural creeks, rivers, and sounds. This means that if there's a breeze blowing,

it might be in your face for a few minutes and then on one side or another. Sometimes it's behind you and if you're travelling at the same speed as the breeze, the net effect is that there is no breeze at all. When it's ninety five degrees out, this can become important.

We did see some dolphins today and stopped to watch them. At one point we had an adult dolphin swim beside the boat for several minutes and then he dropped off and a mother and her calf swam with us for several minutes. No matter how often this happens, it's a thrill.

There were a surprising number of boats out for a Friday (in our day, Friday was one of the days we were expected to show up for work). Small boats were speeding by us on both sides and in both directions. They kept the sea dog busy but she did a good job of notifying us each time one approached.



Nearing Charleston, SC - The Limehouse Bridge

As we were passing through Wappoo Cut, a guy waterskiing decided it would be fun (for him, at least) to see how close he could come to HIGH COTTON without smashing into it. There's not much we can do with this level of stupidity except hope that nothing bad actually happens and that we don't have to wait around for hours of questioning.

Some people apparently leave common sense at home when they get out on the water.

As we were heading up the Ashley River we could hear thunder and see lightning in the distance. Fortunately, wherever it was, it stayed there. We had timed our trip to arrive at RiversEdge Marina at slack tide and we came pretty close. We got our lines and fenders ready and headed down the fairway and backed into our slip perfectly. It seems this only happens when nobody is around to observe.

We hooked up the shore power, unloaded the boat into two dock carts, and wheeled them up the ramp (it was dead low tide) to meet our friend who drove

us home. A pleasant surprise was, the city had repaved our pot hole ridden street while we were gone. Not so pleasant was the fact that Captain Ron had set the thermostat in the house to eighty eight degrees so the air conditioner wouldn't run needlessly while we were gone. It was eighty eight degrees in the house and it didn't really cool down until sometime early the next morning.

We had a great time as always but we're happy to be back in the cool house for a while. Kiki is happy to be home as well. We've got to check to see that we paid all our bills and deal with the mountain of (mostly junk) mail that our neighbor brought in for us while we were gone. It's time to begin planning the next trip.

Epilogue

Duration	51 days
Distance	1086 nautical miles
Time underway	170 hours
Fuel used (diesel)	301 gallons
Fuel consumption	1.77 GPH
Fuel mileage	3.61 NMPG
Fuel cost	\$895
Nights anchored	12
Nights on free docks	5
Marina in marinas	33
Marina cost	\$1329

People often ask us if we would do a trip like this again. The answer is a definite “yes”. We had a great time, saw lots of interesting sights and wildlife, including manatees, alligators, dolphins, turtles and many birds, and met some nice and interesting people along the way. Many of these people cruise for months at a time. Some live on their boats and have no land based residence.

Having a portable wireless hotspot and a laptop PC on board allowed us to pay our bills online and keep in touch with friends and family. It also allowed us to find anchorages and marinas and read reviews of these places by other cruisers.

Cell phones, of course, made it easy to contact marinas ahead of time to inquire about slip availability and make advance reservations.

Two of the online resources we used were <https://activecaptain.com> and <http://cruisersnet.net>.

Other resources were:

Dozier’s Waterway Guide Atlantic ICW
Dozier’s Waterway Guide Southern
The Great Book of Anchorages Norfolk to FL
Boating and Cruising Guide to the St. Johns River

Our neighbor kept our lawn mowed, brought in the mail and packages, and kept an eye on the house for us.

For anyone else considering an extended boat cruise, we have to say “Go for it!” For us, it’s time to start planning the next trip.