

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 north on the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway from Charleston, SC to Wilmington, NC and back, beginning September 13, 2015 and ending on September 26, 2015.

Captain's Log, day one (September 13, 2015)

Yep, the Widmans are on the move again. We usually visit Savannah, GA in early October for their Oktoberfest but after several years of watching other people drink, hearing the same Oompah band playing the same songs (they are good though), eating the same imitation German food from trailers that normally sell burgers and hot dogs and seeing the same cheap trinkets for sale, we thought we would do something different this fall.

So – we are heading to Bald Head Island, NC and Wilmington, NC with a few stops along the way. We'll stop where and when we feel like it. No fixed schedule.

Normally, we have a friend drop us off at the marina and pick us up when we return but we figured that for just a couple weeks we could drive ourselves and leave the car at the marina. It's a good thing we did. We no sooner started getting things in their proper places then Captain Ron said "Where's my computer?"

Well, it's a good thing we decided to get to the marina the night before the trip and it's a good thing we drove ourselves. Captain Ron had to drive back home and get the computer he had carefully packed and left on the kitchen table.

We got everything put in its place and turned in for the night. Sunday morning we got up at first light,

topped off the water tanks, took Kiki the Sea Dog to do her business and cast off.

We were fine in our shorts and T shirts until we got to Charleston Harbor. It was pretty breezy and rough and we had to cover up with long sleeved shirts. Once we got into the Intracoastal Waterway behind Sullivans Island the wind and waves calmed down. Our trip was uneventful. We saw a couple dozen dolphins and stopped a few times to watch them swim and dive. Kiki loves to watch the "big fishies". We saw several small alligators as well.



A local pelican checking on boat traffic

We had decided in advance to anchor for tonight on Minim Creek off the ICW. It's about 53 nautical miles from RiversEdge Marina. We had the current against us most of the day so it took about 8.3 hours to get here. That's an average of about 6.4 knots. Anyway, after all the fishing boats came past our anchorage (without slowing down), it's

quiet and peaceful. Dinner was left over pizza from yesterday.

Kiki can't figure out why she can't get off the boat to walk and do her business. She will have to use her puppy pad tonight.



Kiki the Sea Dog maintaining her watch

We'll get to bed soon and head out tomorrow morning at first light (or whenever we get up).

Captain's Log, day two (September 14, 2015)

Our anchorage last night was nice but as we mentioned, there was quite a bit of boat traffic until after dark. Even after dark a few boats came by. Not one slowed down for our anchored trawler. Apparently, the east side of Minim Creek is on the way to the fishing grounds. The west side would have been better and that's where we will stay the next time.

We got ourselves up, ready and underway by 8:20 AM. Today we had the current with us and were making about 8 knots and more. We had planned on anchoring tonight in Thoroughfare Creek off the Waccamaw River but it was a bit cold today for swimming (Thoroughfare Creek has a good

swimming beach) so we decided to continue on to Barefoot Landing in North Myrtle Beach to make up some time from leaving Sunday instead of Friday. This involved having two swing bridges opened to clear HIGH COTTON but we're old hands at this by now. Neither has a restricted schedule. Oddly, both of these bridges were "replaced" by high rise bridges but the local folks protested so the swing bridges were left in place to appease them. It's a pain for boaters but what can we say? We should get to Bald Head Island tomorrow.



ICW Bridge opening - Socastee Swing Bridge, Socastee, SC

We didn't see any more dolphins or alligators today but we saw a couple bald eagles and lots of turtles along the way. We did encounter a very large dredging barge being pulled by one tug and pushed by another. This was on a blind curve in the Waccamaw River and of course he took his half out of the middle. Sometimes these captains announce their presence on the marine radio. This one did not.



Bald Eagle on the ICW



Tug and dredge on the Waccamaw River

We've been to Barefoot Landing a few times before. It's pretty much a tourist trap but it's a good stop with water and electricity and there are some decent restaurants. We were a little surprised when we called Barefoot Landing to see if they had space for us and the dockmaster said "Sure, we'll put you between the pirate ship and the riverboat." Sure enough when we got there we found the pirate ship and the riverboat and we docked between them.



HIGH COTTON and the Pirate Ship

We got checked in and then walked Kiki the Sea Dog. She was happy to be on solid ground after two days on the boat. After walking Kiki, we went to a restaurant and had dinner. After dinner we went to the boat, got Kiki and walked back to the stores for ice cream. There's something about cruising and ice cream.

Tomorrow we'll leave early for the seven to eight hour cruise to Bald Head Island.

Captain's Log, day three (September 15, 2015)

We forgot to mention the ducks last night. Captain Ron was standing in the cockpit when a duck swam from the other side of the ICW to HIGH COTTON. He went in and got a handful of crackers and tossed a couple to him. Immediately several more ducks swam across and began fighting for crackers. Patti got more crackers and Kiki. Kiki watched as the ducks scrambled for crackers and even jumped onto the swim platform.



Ducks at Barefoot Landing - North Myrtle Beach, SC

We got underway about 7:40 AM heading north towards the Cape Fear River and Bald Head Island Marina. A little over six hours later we were settled into our assigned slip. We saw several dolphins along the way. As usual, Kiki was fascinated with the “big fishies”. We also saw a bald eagle in a tree. The day started out at about sixty degrees but by the time we got to our destination it was in the eighties but windy.



Waterfront Property - Shallotte Inlet, NC

On the subject of days, Captain Ron called Bald Head Island Marina to make reservations and during the conversation Captain Ron had to ask “I’m sorry but what day is today?” If you don’t know what day it is, you must be having fun, right?

We made it past Southport on the western side of the ICW and turned towards the ocean to Bald Head Island. It’s only a mile or so off the mouth of the Cape Fear River. We called the marina for docking instructions and were soon safe in our slip. For some reason, they assigned us one of the few slips that had a boat next to it but with the wide fairways and calm conditions, docking was a breeze.



HIGH COTTON safely in her slip at Bald Head Island Marina

We walked Kiki the Sea Dog, paid for our slip, and then walked (with Kiki) to the beach. Kiki saw the sand and the water and made a beeline for the ocean. She walked out and swam a bit, then returned to the beach and began digging holes in the sand. We found some sticks and threw them in the water so Kiki could swim out and retrieve them. She had a great time but eventually we decided she needed some rest so we walked back to HIGH COTTON.



Kiki digging - Bald Head Island, NC



Kiki goes for a swim - Bald Head Island, NC

We took much needed showers and dressed up in our best boat clothes and walked to one of the restaurants for dinner. Then it was back to the boat, walk the Sea Dog again and turn in for some sleep. Tomorrow we'll rent a golf cart and tour the island.



Dinner in our best boat clothes

Captain's Log, day four (September 16, 2015)

We changed our minds (again). Everybody was tired so we slept in late. Eventually though, Kiki decided that we should get up and get dressed to take her for a walk. The walk took us to the shops around the marina and of course there were shirts and jewelry just begging to be purchased and new smells to be investigated (by Kiki). We stopped by the dockmaster's office and extended our stay another day. Lunch was the rest of the roast beef that we have been eating all week.

After lunch we changed into our swimsuits, grabbed our folding chairs and walked to the beach again. Our intention was to swim but it was a bit windy and cool for the humans. Captain Ron did wade in a bit though. Kiki didn't mind, she swam and dug in the sand as usual.

We stayed as long as we thought we should stay in the sun, then we walked back to HIGH COTTON. Of course Kiki needed a bath before she was allowed inside. Once she was inside, she laid down for a nap. This was one tired puppy! Captain Ron took his shower and volunteered to lie down with Kiki to keep her company.

Eventually, Kiki woke up and wanted to go outside (again). There are two dogs on the boat next to us and she wanted to meet them.

Dinner was leftovers from our meal in Myrtle Beach.

Tomorrow, we'll get the golf cart and take a tour of the island. Friday it's up the river to Wilmington, NC.

Captain's Log, day five (September 17, 2015)

We awoke to clouds today and a Sea Dog with a rumbling stomach. She probably ingested too much sea water and sand. She got a Pepcid and she will be fine.

We ate our breakfasts and walked to the golf cart rental place and rented a golf cart. We rode (with Kiki) to the other side of the island to the Point of Cape Fear. The wind was blowing and the surf was up. Kiki did her digging routine and got her feet wet. It was far too rough for her to swim. Then it started raining so we went back to the marina and the shelter of HIGH COTTON.

There's a row of small shops and a grocery store with a breakfast and lunch counter about halfway between the point and the marina so after the rain stopped, we headed there for lunch in the golf cart. While we were eating it began raining again so we had to drive the golf cart back to the marina in the rain.

After a while the rain slowed down so Patti put a load of clothes in the washer. After they were finished we took the golf cart to South Beach. It started raining again so we drove back to the marina in the rain again.

We drove the golf cart to the restaurant and had dinner. It rained while we were eating but had

stopped by the time we were through. Yep, we had a bit of rain today.

There are no street lights on Bald Head Island and no painted lines on the roads. We got lost trying to get back to the marina but eventually we made it.

We're leaving tomorrow for Wilmington, NC.

Captain's Log, day six (September 18, 2015)

First, the highlight of the day, then back to the log: We docked at the Wilmington City Dock as planned. Patti took Kiki for a short walk while Captain Ron settled with the dockmaster. Patti brought Kiki back to the boat and Patti and Captain Ron set out to find a place to eat lunch. As we walked up the ramp and onto the boardwalk (the River Walk), there were two younger couples walking with a young girl, perhaps five years old dressed in a "princess" outfit. That's when this conversation took place: Patti (to the little girl) "Are you a little princess?" Little girl: "Yes." Little girl to Patti: "What do you have in your belly?" Patti (sarcastically): "Fat." Little girl: "YOU HAVE BIG BOOBS!"

Everybody broke out laughing, the parents started apologizing, and Patti told them not to worry about it.

So now back to the log and a few hours earlier: Still at Bald Head Island Marina, we walked Kiki, put our rain soaked clothes and towels in the dryer, returned the golf cart and got HIGH COTTON ready to cast off.

Kiki normally waits to be carried on and off HIGH COTTON but we were tied up closer than usual to the dock at Bald Head Marina and the dock height was closer to our swim platform. Apparently, Kiki though she could jump from the boat to the dock. She missed but she was wearing her harness and leash so Patti was able to just pull her out of the

water and onto the dock. Hopefully, she won't try that again.

We got underway a little before 10:00 AM. We had the current with us so we were making good time but the wind was against the current and making some pretty big waves. On top of that we had wakes from a couple tugs with barges and the Bald Head Island ferry. Patti made Captain Ron a second cup of coffee and since the cup doesn't fit the cup holders it was on the dash when the ferry went by. It hit the deck, the lid broke and all but the first sip ran all over the deck.



Tug and barge and the Bald Head Island Ferry



That second cup of coffee

The first couple hours were rough enough that Patti and Kiki had to ride below. Captain Ron

considered it but stuck it out on the flybridge. Because we were travelling with the current, we made the trip in a little less than three and a half hours. We passed a couple oil tankers and some barges and ferries along the way.

Once we got ourselves docked and checked in, and after the "bib boobs" incident, we found a restaurant, had lunch, walked back to the boat and Kiki and Captain Ron took naps. Apparently Kiki woke up first because when Captain Ron woke up Kiki and Patti had gone for a walk on the boardwalk.

Kiki got back on the boat and Patti and Captain Ron set out to see the town and eventually eat dinner in a German restaurant in one of the historic buildings.

Back at the boat, it's time to write up the day and download photos and videos. Tomorrow there's a farmer's market, shopping and people watching. It's a tough job but somebody has to do it.



Approaching Wilmington, NC

Captain's Log, day seven (September 19, 2015)

A day in port so there's not much to write about. We went to the farmer's market but since we didn't really need anything we didn't buy anything.

Other than that, it was mostly just walking the town, visiting the stores, eating and napping. There was a bit of excitement when the fire boat went by rocking all the boats at the dock. It turns out a small jon boat had capsized. One of the water ferries rescued the occupant and towed his boat to the dock so there wasn't much for the fire boat to do.

Tomorrow we'll head out and back down the river. There's no good way to avoid the current so it will be a slower trip than coming up the river. We're thinking of stopping in Southport, NC. It's a cute little town where the ICW meets the Cape Fear River and we enjoyed it the last time we visited.



HIGH COTTON at the Wilmington, NC City Dock at sunset

Captain's Log, day eight (September 20, 2015)

Looking at the current predictions for the Cape Fear River, we decided it would be best for us to leave Wilmington as early as convenient. That worked out to be a little after 8:00 AM considering taking Kiki for her morning stroll and getting things shipshape. The tide was going out when we left and we were making 9.3 knots for the first hour or so. Eventually we were fighting the current as the tide was coming in later in the morning and closer to the mouth of the river. By the time we neared

Southport, we were making 4.4 knots at the same engine speed. The Cape Fear River has a pretty strong current!



Yep, 9.3 knots with the current, a 2.3 knot boost



4.4 knots traveling against the current - same engine RPM

We got a large wake from a large powerboat on the way down the river, but this time Captain Ron had the sense to ask Patti to hold his coffee cup. No spills today.

We decided to just go as far as Southport today because of the limited anchorage opportunities for the next several miles. Besides, it's a neat little town and the Southport Marina is really nice (but a tad pricey).

We pulled in about 11:30 AM and got ourselves settled in and registered. Patti took Kiki the Sea Dog for a walk, something she has come to expect whenever we dock. Captain Ron discovered that the marina has cable TV available at each slip so he got that hooked up.



HIGH COTTON docked at Southport Marina - Southport, NC

We haven't had showers since we left Bald Head Island so we headed for the bath house as soon as possible and took long refreshing showers. We can shower on HIGH COTTON but it means either clearing everything out of the head and replacing it afterwards or showering on the cockpit in the open. That's fine in an isolated anchorage but not usually on a city dock.

We walked to town, did some shopping and then ate our lunch/dinner. Once we got back to the boat we fell asleep. There were two tired people and one tired puppy!

Just before sunset we walked back to the Yacht Basin where many of the restaurants are and got ice cream. It got dark and the bugs came out so we walked back to HIGH COTTON. It's time to turn on the TV and see if Philadelphia is making any headway against Dallas. Captain Ron's two favorite football teams are the Washington Redskins and whoever is playing against Dallas.

Tomorrow we continue south on the ICW.



Captain Ron and Patti resting on the swing in Southport, NC

Captain's Log, day nine (September 21, 2015)

We walked Kiki, topped off our water tanks and got underway headed south. Our plans were to anchor in Calabash creek for the night, then head past Myrtle Beach to Osprey Marina to fill up on diesel fuel. Captain Ron did some calculations and wasn't confident that we would make it that far so instead we bypassed Calabash Creek and fueled up and spent the night at Myrtle Beach Yacht Club. It's an actual yacht club but they also accept transients and their fuel prices are some of the lowest in the area. Dockage was a good deal at \$1.00 per foot with a thirty foot minimum. It's a nice place, there's even a pool. We swam a bit but it was a little chilly. If there's a down side it is that there are only two restaurants and one was closed. The other was pricey but good. Later, we figured out that we could have walked across highway 17 and down a bit to the Waffle House but that's not one of our favorite restaurants. Another choice might have been the local biker bar. We made a good choice eating where we did.



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



Kiki the Sea Dog watching for Jet Skis and Big Fishies

We did have an incident on the way from Southport to Myrtle Beach Yacht Club where a boat that should have given way to us according to the regulations decided that if he went fast enough that wouldn't be necessary but no boats or boaters were harmed. Sometimes it pays to assume than you are the only boater who actually knows these regulations.

We also saw a bald eagle sitting high in a tree.



Bald Eagle on the ICW near the NC/SC border

After dinner we rushed back to HIGH COTTON to check out the new season's shows on cable TV. Yep, \$1.00 per foot includes a pool and cable!

Captain's Log, day ten (September 22, 2015)

We weren't in any hurry to get underway this morning. We awoke to grey skies and wind gusts. One of the guys hanging out in front of the marina office said it might rain today. There was a crowd in front of the office with their dogs, sitting and talking and drinking coffee. We didn't stay long but Captain Ron did get a cup of coffee.

Getting off the dock was a breeze. Literally. The wind blew us off the dock; all we had to do was go forward. That's much easier than when it's the other way around.

A sport cruiser pulled out of a marina in front of us shortly after leaving Myrtle Beach Yacht Club. It and another boat were waiting for the Little River Swing Bridge to open and we called and asked to have it left open for us as well. This bridge has only about a seven foot clearance above the water so

nearly any boat of any size has to request an opening and by calling when we heard the other boats requesting an opening, the bridge tender held it open for us.

Back to the sport cruiser. After passing through the no wake zone next to the bridge, it picked up speed and we eventually lost sight of it.

Several minutes later we heard a guy hailing this boat on the VHF. When the boater answered, the guy began yelling at him, claiming to be a marine contractor and claiming that this sport cruiser had made a six foot wake and rocked his barge and if there had been men working in the water, the wake would have killed them. He claimed to have reported the boat to the police and US Coast Guard.

The boater responded that there were no signs indicating that he should slow down but the "marine contractor" just kept arguing with him.

Eventually, he got tired of arguing and the radio went silent. Later we passed the barge. It was moored to the shore and there were no signs or other indication that anyone should slow down. It looked just like any other dock until we got close to it.

We continued through the "rock pile" behind North Myrtle Beach. This time it was low tide and we could see the rocks lining the canal. It's best to stay in the middle here. It's not like around Charleston where you hit sand, back off and continue on your way.



Rocks outside the channel in the "Rock Pile"

Just as we were passing Sandy Island, the school boat pulled out to pick up the students and return them to their homes on Sandy Island. There are no schools on Sandy Island, the students have to take the school boat every day.

We pulled into Thoroughfare Creek (on the other side of Sandy Island) to our planned anchorage near the big sand hill. Today's weather has gone from grey and cool to warm and sunny and everything in between. As we pulled into Thoroughfare Creek the wind started gusting. Then it stopped, then started again. A little wind is good, gusts are not.



The beach on Sandy Island on Thoroughfare Creek

The wind was enough to keep us from getting the dinghy out and going to the beach and exploring the canals but it wasn't enough to keep a half dozen jet skiers from buzzing by us and landing on the beach.

We're planning on visiting Georgetown, SC tomorrow and then heading for home.

Captain's Log, day eleven (September 23, 2015)

We had a nice peaceful night anchored on Thoroughfare Creek last night. No sounds except nature and the water flowing by and no light except for the moon. A boat came by about 8:30 AM and woke us so we decided to get up. The chart showed our trip to Georgetown to be only about thirteen miles so after getting HIGH COTTON ready, we started our leisurely cruise down the remainder of the Waccamaw River and part of Winyah Bay to the Sampit River and Harborwalk Marina in Georgetown, SC. The weather was beautiful and we had a pleasant cruise. There were very few boats out today.



HIGH COTTON at Harborwalk Marina - Georgetown, SC

As usual, Kiki was in a rush to get off the boat and onto dry land to take care of business. She will use her puppy pad if necessary but she would much rather get off the boat and find a grassy area.

We got settled in, registered and then set out for a light lunch at one of the local restaurants. There are about a dozen restaurants within walking distance of the marina. This is the historic downtown so there are lots of interesting shops and historic buildings to see. We returned from the restaurant, got the Sea Dog and walked the length of the boardwalk and the main street.



Shopping on Front Street - Georgetown, SC

Back at the boat, Kiki was tired and ready for a nap so Captain Ron put her in the V berth and hooked up the cable TV. Captain Ron watched while Kiki slept. Patti went to the bath house and took a shower, and then it was Captain Ron's turn.

After our showers, we walked back to the boardwalk for burgers and fries.



Captain Ron and Patti at the restaurant - Georgetown, SC

We're probably going to stay here another night before heading south again. The weather is questionable so we'll have to wait and see.

Captain's Log, day twelve (September 24, 2015)

It rained on and off most of the night. It's a peaceful sound, the rain hitting the deck above the V berth. We woke and walked the Sea Dog, then left her on the boat to walk to town and eat breakfast at an old time restaurant. We came back to the boat and waited for the shops to open (10:00 AM). As we were shopping and checking out the maritime museum, it began to rain hard.

We ran across the street to a department store and looked around and ended up buying two raincoats with hoods.

After checking every shop in town (Patti bought some jewelry, Captain Ron got nothing) we walked back to HIGH COTTON and watched some TV.

There was supposed to be a band playing in the town park this evening but apparently the show was cancelled because of the weather. There weren't any signs but there was no band either.

We went to the River House for dinner and it started raining again. At least we were prepared with our new raincoats.

We're going to pull out of here tomorrow unless the weather is really bad.

Captain's Log, day thirteen (September 25, 2015)

According to the weather forecasts, it was supposed to rain all day today. Up to 80% chance of rain. It rained last night but this morning it was just cloudy. We got the Sea Dog walked and the water tanks topped off and cast off for points

south. We were travelling with the current for most of the day and as the day wore on, the weather got better. There were a few sprinkles for a few minutes, and then the sun came out. It was partly cloudy and a beautiful day to be on the water. We were enjoying the cruise and the weather so much that we bypassed our planned anchorage to get ourselves closer to home.



Leaving Harborwalk Marina - Georgetown, SC

We saw a pair of bald eagles in the trees on the Estherville Minim Canal north of the Santee River Delta. Further on, we saw two small alligators and several groups of dolphins. As usual, Kiki watched the dolphins (big fishies).

We anchored in Dewees Creek on the west side of the ICW, known locally as "Shark Hole". We turned on our computer and were shocked to learn that there had been serious storms in Charleston, SC including a tornado on Johns Island. Our neighbor hasn't called so apparently our home is OK.



Seen from our anchorage in Shark Hole

Dinner was leftovers from Georgetown, shrimp and grits. It's only about a three hour trip from here to our slip at RiversEdge Marina and we want to get in near slack current.

Captain's Log, day fourteen (September 26, 2015)

It rained a bit last night but it stopped before we woke up this morning. We dried things up and had bacon and cheese sandwiches for breakfast.

We got underway earlier than we needed to "just in case". As we were leaving shark hole, a tour boat and another private boat were circling the entrance watching dolphins. We should have waited a few more minutes before leaving. We did see them and Kiki got her look.

As we neared Isle of Palms, we saw a power catamaran pointing towards us but way on the other side of the channel. We soon realized that it was not moving. As we passed it, we could see that it was grounded. This was about two hours before low tide. There was a guy sitting in the cockpit drinking coffee. He will probably be there for several more hours. At least a catamaran sits level on the bottom; it won't tip like most sailboats.



You have to watch the markers on the ICW

Crossing the Charleston Harbor, we ran into what must have been a sailboat race. There were dozens of sailboats milling around and blocking the ICW channel. Just about the time we started to pass, they all came towards us. As most of you know, sailboats under sail have the right of way over powerboats so we had to find a way to pass without getting in their way. A couple headed straight for us so Captain Ron hit the throttle and raced out of their way.



Nearing the City Marina, another sailboat, not under sail but under power slowed down in front of us. Captain Ron tried to hail it on the VHF to find out its intentions but it wouldn't answer. We went on around it keeping a careful watch to make sure it didn't turn into our path.

The rest of the trip up the Ashley River was uneventful but we slowed down to get to RiversEdge at our planned 2:00 PM. Docking went as expected until Captain Ron accidentally hit the throttle lever instead of the gear lever and hit the dock hard. Nobody was hurt but HIGH COTTON is going to need some help from a fiberglass expert.



Almost home - RiversEdge Marina, North Charleston, SC

Captain Ron changed the oil and filters while Patti gathered up the soiled clothes and linens and vacuumed the berth area and cleaned the head. We packed the car and headed home to plan the next trip.