

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 the Chesapeake Bay and back.

Captain's Log, day one (May 17, 2016)

Well, we are up to our usual antics, another boat trip. We normally set out on or about May 1 but this year we let our quarterly health checkups get out of hand so we had doctor's appointments on May 16.

From the doctor's office, we came home, gathered the rest of the boat stuff and Kiki the Sea Dog and called a friend to take us to the marina where we spent our first night.

We woke at 5:30 AM, walked the puppy, cast off our lines, left RiversEdge Marina and headed down the Ashley River for Charleston and the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW). Kiki the Sea Dog was excited to hear the engine start and actually leave the dock for a change. Patti and Captain Ron were excited as well.



Leaving Charleston - The Isle of Palms Connector Bridge

The weather forecast called for rain much of the day but luckily it was wrong and it only started to drizzle lightly once we got ourselves anchored in late afternoon. It was cloudy most of the day with the sun breaking through the clouds briefly. The temperature was comfortable.

Our actual trip today was pretty uneventful. We heard a shrimp boat captain arguing with a bridge tender at the Ben Sawyer Bridge (he lost), we were passed by several faster boats and we passed one slower boat (a sailboat). We saw lots of dolphins and Kiki got to see the "big fishies" playing in the water. Heading up Winyah bay we saw a bald eagle sitting on a day marker. We usually don't see them that close.



A bald eagle on ICW, Winyah Bay, SC

Our anchorage for tonight is on the other side of Butler Island from the ICW channel, a few miles up the Waccamaw River from Georgetown, SC. It's a wide spot in the river with room for several boats. The trip from RiversEdge to here takes about ten hours at our speed. So far, we have just one other boat in the anchorage, a very nice looking trawler, considerably larger than HIGH COTTON.



The view from our anchorage on the Waccamaw River, SC



Our neighbor in the anchorage

Dinner tonight was left over chicken and salsa with black beans and rice brought from home (and heated in the microwave). Tomorrow we'll have to be more creative.

Captain's Log, day two (May 18, 2016)

Some folks say the definition of "cruising" is fixing your boat in exotic places. Georgetown, SC isn't very exotic, but that's where we fixed it. HIGH COTTON is a little over sixteen years old. That doesn't seem old, but in "boat years", it's up there. Not as old as Captain Ron or Patti, but it's up there.

Last night as we were ready for bed, Captain Ron went to turn on the GPS so he could set the anchor drag alarm. Nothing! He checked the circuit breaker and it was on. He went to the flybridge and tried that GPS. Nothing there either. Well, that's good, it's unlikely that they both broke at the same time; it is probably a power issue. Captain Ron broke out the digital volt/ohm meter and began checking things.

The way HIGH COTTON is wired, there's a circuit breaker that feeds a fuse panel for all the electronics. Since the navigation system was added after HIGH COTTON was built, there's a fuse on that panel that sends power to another panel where the GPSs, depth sounder, antenna, etc., get their power. As Captain Ron was checking the fuses, he found that one of the fuses was loose in the holder and a simple turn of the fuse restored power to everything. More permanent repairs can wait until we return home.

With that settled, we went to bed and had a quiet night's rest. No noise and near darkness. There was a little rain for a few minutes.

Up at the crack of seven, we got ourselves ready, weighed anchor and headed up the Waccamaw River. We got through the Socastee Swing Bridge and through the ICW behind Myrtle Beach. There's a well-known spot nicknamed "the rock pile" where the channel was blasted out of rock and the edges are jagged rock. It's important to stay in the middle of the channel in this area.



The "Rock Pile" - those are rocks along the shore

Just as we entered the rock pile, Patti noticed a boat catching up to us at a rather high speed. Instead of hailing us on the VHF, he gave a horn signal. He signaled for a starboard side pass but actually passed us on the port side. And as he was passing perhaps six feet from our side, he called on channel 17, not 16 and warned us not to get too far over because this was the "narrowest part of the whole ICW". We wouldn't have been near the edge if we weren't worried he was about to hit us!

Anyhow, once he got passed us, he hit full throttle and was soon a speck in the distance. He was from New York.

Most of the day was cloudy and breezy. We alternated driving from the flybridge and inside. Patti did see an alligator from the flybridge while Captain Ron was below making coffee. Kiki kept watch for dolphins and jet skis. We made it to the Little River swing bridge and followed a sailboat through without having to stop. We eventually passed the sailboat and made it to our selected anchorage where Calabash Creek meets the ICW. It's the only practical anchorage for thirty miles each way and someone has filled it with crab pots.



The Little River Swing Bridge awaits HIGH COTTON

We were able to find a spot between the crab pots and got ourselves anchored. Just as we were backing down on the anchor, the sailboat we had passed pulled in. Eventually, two other sailboats joined us in the anchorage. Total: Three sailboats and two trawlers. We don't know if it's the wind or the current but each boat is facing a different way. We did a complete circle a while ago.



Our Calabash Creek Anchorage

The first two days are all we really planned so we have to decide how far we will go tomorrow and where we will stay. Most likely, it will be a marina.

Captain's Log, day three (May 19, 2016)

Somehow, the Birthday Bunny managed to sneak into the locked boat and leave two birthday cards

for Captain Ron. He manages to do this every year and Captain Ron can't figure out how he does it. Yep, he has aged another year.

Anyway, we got ourselves up and headed out of the anchorage. The other trawler left before us but the sailboats stayed. We soon decided it was a bit cold and windy to be on the flybridge so we went below to drive. That's when we noticed that the head (toilet for you landlubbers) would not flush!

We can do without a lot of things on a boat cruise, but a working head is not one of them. Captain Ron did have the foresight to have spare parts on hand so fixing the head became one of the top priorities.

Our schedule had us cruising up the Cape Fear River just as the current coming the opposite way was at its strongest (and being in a marina was the best place to be when repairing the head) so we called Southport Marina and asked for a slip. They were all booked up. We called Deep Point Marina which is a couple miles up the Cape Fear River and they had available slips so that's where we went. We've been here before and it's a great marina but not within walking distance of any stores or restaurants.



That's a nearly four knot current we're fighting.

Captain Ron got to work on the head. This being a "family" blog, we'll leave out some of his comments, but repairs were made and the mess cleaned up.

The marina is close to a small beach so we took Kiki over for a visit. As soon as she saw the water she headed straight for it. She had a great time swimming and playing in the water and digging in the sand. Such a great time that she had to have a shower before getting back on HIGH COTTON. She is a tired but happy dog.



Kiki goes for a swim in the Cape Fear River



The crew of HIGH COTTON on the beach

Captain Ron took a long, hot shower while Patti whipped up a dinner of German sausage, red cabbage and spätzle. Yum! Then Patti took her shower and it's time for bed.



Dinning on HIGH COTTON

We'll move on tomorrow but we're not sure how far. Bad weather is being forecast for the next two days.

Captain's Log, day four (May 20, 2016)

Looking at the projected and actual weather and considering our marina or anchorage options for the next two days, we decided to extend our stay at Deep Point Marina. The wind was howling in the opposite direction we would be heading and it was cold with drizzle.



HIGH COTTON in her slip at Deep Point Marina

We were talking to some of the other boaters here and one lady volunteered to drive us to Walmart so

we went and restocked our food, paper towels and toilet paper. We have found marina people to be pretty friendly and helpful like this.

The rest of the day was spent walking the Sea Dog between showers and talking with the other boaters. At least we have decent TV reception.

Captain's Log, day five (May 21, 2016)

There are very few jobs where you can screw up fifty percent of the time and not get fired. Forecasting the weather seems to be one of them! Today was forecast to be mostly cloudy with rain and a chance of thunderstorms. It was supposed to be much worse than yesterday. That's why we paid for two more nights at the marina.

Well, it was cloudy until about 9:00 AM and it must have rained last night because water was running off our flybridge, but it cleared up after that and was warm, dry and sunny. A perfect day for boating and here we are sitting in a marina.

They do have nice laundry machines here and they are free so we washed what needed washing. At least that's done with for now.

Kiki got her heartworm medicine so she couldn't go into the water but we did walk her to the beach and she met some other dogs.

We (mostly Patti) cleaned up the boat a bit and got ready to head out tomorrow morning. We'll fill the water tanks and buy some ice. The plan is to anchor in Mile Hammock Bay on the Camp Lejeune military base for the night. It's nothing special but it's a popular anchorage, probably because there are few options in this area.

Captain's Log, day six (May 22, 2016)

We got the Sea Dog walked, filled our water tanks, bought ice and headed north. Cruising up the Cape Fear River wasn't as bad as expected but we did decide to drive from inside. We passed by Carolina Beach where we originally planned to spend the night. We'll get there someday! Further north on the ICW, we passed Wrightsville Beach where "plan B" had us stopping. We've been there before. By this time it was warming up and the sun had come out so we decided to drive from the flybridge so we could see the sights.

For those of you who read about our trip north in 2014, you might remember the incident where a boater towing two girls on a tube nearly ran the tube into HIGH COTTON. Well, today, in the very same place, three guys were on standup paddleboards. HIGH COTTON was following another trawler north and a commercial shrimp boat was traveling south. Patti and Captain Ron were wondering out loud if these guys would be stupid enough to try to cross in front of the boats. Well, they were! All three started out paddling as fast as they could. One (the smart one) changed his mind and stayed back.

The other two made it past the trawler we were following but when they hit the wake from the shrimp boat, both fell off their boards and into the water just in front of and beside HIGH COTTON. We were able to avoid them but not by much. Let's hope they learned something today.

In the distance we could see a swing bridge that only opens every half hour. Looking at the time, we figured we should speed up a bit to catch the opening. When we got there, there were three or four other boats waiting and one was a Camano Troll just like HIGH COTTON.

We waited our turn and when the bridge finally opened and we went through, we noticed that the

bridge clearance was twenty one feet, plenty for the other Camano and one of the other boats to pass under without an opening. If we had known that (we should have) we could have just gone around the other boats and under the bridge.

The next bridge only opens on the hour and by the time we got to it, it was about fifteen minutes after the hour so we had to wait about forty five minutes for it to open. Between the two bridges, our wasted time was about an hour.

By the time we got to our anchorage (Mile Hammock Bay), there were eight or nine boats already anchored including some that had passed us. One was the Camano from the bridge and another (trawler) we would meet up with several more times on our trip. We found a spot and anchored. Since then a few more have come in.



Our anchorage on Mile Hammock Bay

Dinner on the boat tonight was steamed shrimp and coleslaw. You might think being on the water, they would have been fresh caught shrimp from one of the shrimp boats. No such luck, they were frozen shrimp from Walmart.

Anyway, we had a longer than usual day today so it will soon be bed time. Tomorrow is another day on the water.

Captain's Log, day seven (May 23, 2016)

We had a nice peaceful night at anchor. No lights, no noises, no current running under the boat. We got up bright and early and got underway following the other Camano out of the anchorage and onto the ICW.

Not early enough, it turned out. Today was a day the Marine Corps closes the ICW for live firing exercises. It closed at 8:00 AM, just as we were approaching the Onslow Beach Bridge. There was little point in going back to the anchorage, there was nothing to do there and since the ICW was closed, anchoring in the middle wouldn't be a problem.

Once we were anchored, the bridge tender called and said he would be opening soon to let a southbound boat through and we (and the other Camano) could go through and go as far as the guard boats so that's what we did and anchored again.

About 11:00 AM, one of the guard boats passed by us and stopped by the other Camano and talked to them. We called them on the radio and learned that the ICW would be opened from noon to 1:00 PM to let boats through. At noon, the guard boat signaled that we and the several other boats stacked up behind us could pass through and be on our way. As we did, several fast military "stealth boats" sped by severely waking us and the other boats. No "slow pass" for them.

Since we lost approximately four hours at Camp Lejeune, we decided that our goal of reaching Beaufort was unreasonable so we opted for Casper's Marina (a ghost town) in Swansboro, NC instead. It was time for diesel fuel anyway and their prices are pretty low.



Kiki keeps watch

Swansboro is a nice small walkable town. The downtown has a lot of small shops and restaurants. It's possible to walk to the supermarket and a strip mall as well but we didn't need anything.

We walked the town with Kiki, and then came back to the boat for a while. After that we walked (without Kiki) back to a restaurant for dinner.

Kiki writes: I love visiting new places and smelling new smells but Mawmaw and Pawpaw forget how short my legs are and how fast I have to move to keep up with them. I get tired and have to rest sometimes.



HIGH COTTON at Casper's Marina in Swansboro, NC

There are no drawbridges and no military bases between here and Beaufort so we should make it

in four hours or so. We might even have a “real” breakfast in town before we leave.

Captain’s Log, day eight (May 24, 2016)

We forgot to mention in last night’s post: Nearing Swansboro, we saw something in the water ahead of us. As we got closer, we realized that it was a deer swimming across the ICW. We slowed down and watched as it reached the shore, climbed out and ran across the marsh. Apparently, the grass really is greener on the other side.



A deer swimming across the ICW

We decided this morning to pass on the restaurant breakfast so we had the standard cruiser’s breakfast, something wrapped in cellophane. Today’s choice was chocolate cupcakes.

We got ourselves unhooked, untied and on our way a little after 8:00 AM, headed north on the ICW. The route is mostly straight but it’s a dredged channel through some wide sounds. Stray out of the channel and it’s just a couple feet deep for most of the way.

To get to Beaufort, NC (“Bowfort”) as opposed to Beaufort, SC (“Bewfort”), we have to leave the ICW at Morehead City and head out towards the ocean and then back towards land and the town of Beaufort.

We got to the Beaufort Town Docks about noon and Captain Ron backed into our assigned slip like he knew what he was doing. He attributed this feat to “luck”.



HIGH COTTON in her slip at Beaufort, NC

As usual, Kiki the Sea Dog had to get off the boat right away, before we got everything set and the power connected.

Eventually, we got settled and took Kiki to the dockmaster’s office where we paid our bill and the ship’s puppy got a dog biscuit. We walked around a little more and then took her back to the boat so the humans could find a place to get lunch. For some reason we settled on Mexican even though we were in a waterfront town.

Later, we got Kiki and walked up the ramp to the ice cream shop (yeah, it’s right behind our boat). We each got a cup. There was a field trip of fifth grade school children, perhaps sixty or so all eating ice cream. They spied the Sea Dog and began petting her, five or more at a time. Then Patti let her eat some ice cream out of a spoon and the kids thought that was hilarious.



Kiki makes new friends

After that we walked along the boardwalk and to the park. A tour bus came by with the same kids on it and of course they recognized Kiki and started waving.

The island across from the marina is known for its wild horses and we could see one grazing. The last time we were here, we took the dinghy and went to the island but it was a bit too windy today.



A wild horse across from Beaufort, NC Town Docks

We came back to the boat and each walked up to the bathhouse for long hot showers. Unlike last time, our slip is just a short walk to the bathhouse.

As we were contemplating a plate of cheese and crackers, our slip neighbors came back from a day trip so we helped them dock.

Time for bed now, tomorrow is a day in port with sightseeing, dining and more ice cream.

Captain’s Log, day nine (May 25, 2016)

There’s usually not a lot to write about when we spend a day in port and today was no exception. We got up, walked the hound, went to a restaurant for breakfast, went shopping in the little shops and then back to the boat to walk the Sea Dog some more. All this walking is supposed to be good for you. That’s what they say anyway.

Later, we went to the maritime museum. Some marinas bring you a bottle of wine when you take a slip and some deliver fresh donuts to your boat every morning. The Beaufort Town Docks gives you two tokens for beer in their restaurant. Not wanting to waste our tokens, we went there for lunch. Patti had to drink both beers as Captain Ron is no longer allowed to drink alcohol.

The original plan was to take the dinghy across the creek to Carrot Island where wild horses roam but it was a bit too windy so we didn’t.

More walking, then dinner and then to bed. We pull out tomorrow morning.



A visitor checks out HIGH COTTON



The sun sets over the water at Beaufort, NC

Captain's Log, day ten (May 26, 2016)

Beaufort, NC is a stop for many of the larger boats going north and south along the US east coast. Not on the ICW, on the Atlantic Ocean. These boats are fifty feet or more long and stop in to take on five hundred or more gallons of fuel before heading back out. Many spend the night, some do not.



A "big boat" at Beaufort, NC Town Docks

We woke up this morning to one of these mega yachts docking near us so we decided to get up and get under way. Between walking the ship's puppy, getting ice and getting the boat ready, we missed the 8:30 AM bridge opening and had to wait until

the 9:00 opening. In the meantime, the bridge tender told us how much she liked the boat's name "HIGH COTTON".

Once we made it through the bridge, we followed Gallants Channel to where we rejoined the ICW. We took the ICW to the Neuse River where the ICW heads east. We turned west for New Bern, NC, about twenty miles off the ICW. As we neared our destination, a boat following us called on the radio and told us we had a "cute boat".

We got through the drawbridge, into the marina and into our slip. When we went to the office to register, one of the dockmasters got down on the floor and played with Kiki. Kiki played back.



HIGH COTTON at New Bern, NC

New Bern is a nice town with a pretty lively downtown with restaurants and shops. New Bern is the birthplace of Pepsi Cola and the original store where it was first invented is still open with Pepsi products. They also have a thing with bears. There are dozens of fiberglass bears all over town.

New Bern was named after Bern, Switzerland. According to legend, the founder of Bern, Switzerland vowed to name the new city after the first animal he killed while hunting in the area which turned out to be a bear. It's lucky it didn't turn out to be a chicken!



The birthplace of Pepsi Cola, New Bern, NC



Kiki and the bear

We both felt like eating pizza so we stopped a stranger on the street and she recommended a place nearby. It was very good.

Back at the boat, we walked the Sea Dog again and then went to the bathhouse for long, hot showers. We have cable TV in our slip so we'll get to watch some of our favorite shows tonight.

We're not too sure about the weather for the next several days so we will stay here a couple days or more, and then resume our journey.

Captain's Log, day eleven (May 27, 2016)

Today being a day in port, we slept in until Kiki decided it was time to get up. We got dressed and took her for a walk. After that, it was an actual cooked breakfast on the boat. Later, we took the Sea Dog for a walk in town and ran into a couple (and their dog) that we had met in Beaufort a few days ago.

We brought Kiki back to the boat to rest and walked back to a restaurant for lunch.

Back at the marina, we heard a bunch of commotion and found a small sailboat with a broken outboard motor being towed in by the marina's pump-out boat. It ended up in the slip next to us.

Later, we took Kiki for another walk, this time to the town park. There's a small beach and Kiki found a spot in the sand that suited her and rolled on her back for several minutes. Then she ran into the water, then back to roll in the sand. She retrieved a few sticks that Captain Ron threw into the water and then dug a couple holes in the sand. As usual, she had to have a bath before she was allowed back on HIGH COTTON.

We haven't been able to get much of a weather forecast so we'll probably stay here at least another night. Rain won't stop us but strong winds would make it uncomfortable or even dangerous on Albemarle Sound or even the Neuse River just outside the marina.

Captain's Log, day twelve (May 28, 2016)

We went to the local farmer's market today and got the makings for salad for a few days. We came back to the boat and Patti made a salad for the both of us. It was so good we walked back and got more onions and tomatoes.

Later, we took the Sea Dog back to the little beach in the town park for more digging in the sand and swimming. Again, she had to have a bath before she was allowed back on HIGH COTTON.

We paid some bills by way of the Internet, took showers and dressed up in our best “boat clothes” for dinner in town.

We’re still waiting for the big storm to pass. So far there’s no sign of it so we’re still undecided as to when to leave. We might end up paying the weekly rate here. We shall see.

Captain’s Log, day thirteen (May 29, 2016)

The rain finally started last night but it wasn’t hard rain. It rained off and on until 8:30 or so, then it stopped and the skies cleared. We had intended to stay in New Bern another day or so but looking at the weather forecast for the next few days, we decided to leave and try to get to Albemarle Sound before the winds were forecast to increase on Wednesday.

By the time we made our decision, filled the water tanks, bought ice and paid our bill it was 10:30 AM or so when we got underway.

We got the drawbridge opened and headed back down the Neuse River. The Neuse River is long and wide and if the winds are from the right (or wrong, depending on your perspective) direction, it can have a nasty chop. The further we went, the worse it got. It didn’t take us long to decide to operate from the lower helm (inside). When it became apparent that things weren’t going to get any smoother, we set up the folding helm chair but it got bad enough to where the chair was sliding and we had to abandon it. One wave was so bad it rocked the boat enough to overturn the Igloo cooler and dump all the water, drinks and ice all

over the sole (“floor” for the landlubbers reading this).

After what seemed like forever, we got to where the ICW turns off the Neuse River and enters a canal and then a creek. No wind, no waves. We thought about anchoring for the night but realized that would make for a long day tomorrow so we pressed on onto the Pamlico River and turned into the Pungo River. We found an anchorage on Slade Creek and settled in for the night. It was after 7:00 PM.

Captain’s Log, day fourteen (May 30, 2016)

Last night’s anchorage should have been close to perfect. A beautiful wide creek with no other boats and just two houses along the shoreline. It was except for two things. One, one of the houses had a dog that apparently lives outside and barks a lot. Every time the dog barked, Kiki thought she had to respond so each time we would drift off to sleep, the barking began again.

The other thing; At 12:30 AM, a boat went by us full of loudly singing and screaming partiers. The creek was plenty wide but they came as close to us as possible. A tribute to the power of alcohol.

We wanted to get an early start so we got up and got ready to go. We noticed a commotion in the water next to HIGH COTTON. We think it was two stingrays mating.

Just as Captain Ron was about to go on the bow and weigh the anchor, it started raining. He put on his raincoat but his shoes and pants got soaked. Then there was the problem of dodging all the crab pots and shallow water while trying to see through the fogged up windshield.

Eventually, the rain stopped for a while and we were able to operate from the flybridge but the whole day was on and off rain and switching helms.



An oncoming tug and barge on the Pamlico River



The Alligator River/Pungo River Canal – twenty miles of this

It was raining as we pulled into our anchorage just before Albemarle Sound. There was another boat already anchored, one that had been at the New Bern Grand Marina while we were there. We didn't see them pass us so they must have left before we did.

Tomorrow, we'll get going at the crack of dawn and hope for a smooth passage across the Albemarle Sound and into Elizabeth City, NC or further on the Dismal Swamp Canal.

Captain's Log, day fifteen (May 31, 2016)

Captain Ron was concerned about some unexplained water in the bilge of HIGH COTTON until Patti reminded him about the cooler overturning and dumping water on the sole. Unexplained water in a boat is cause for alarm.

We said we would be leaving early this morning and we did. We were underway at 6:00 AM! We had a smooth crossing of Albemarle Sound (dodging the crab pot markers) and the Pasquotank River and backed into a free slip at Mariner's Wharf in Elizabeth City, NC. The slips are part of the town park and cruisers are welcome to spend the night.

Kiki writes: "I'm sure glad to get off the boat and walk on dry land after two days at anchor. Those puppy pads are OK, but I would much rather do my business in real grass. Besides, when we are docked I get to meet new people and get petted. People think I'm cute."

Unlike our last time here, the slips are nearly empty. There are just us and one sailboat. They are heading for Maine. We will both leave in the morning for the trip up the Dismal Swamp Canal.



HIGH COTTON at the Elizabeth City free docks

Captain's Log, day sixteen (June 1, 2016)

"Every time it rains it rains

Pennies from heaven.

Don't you know each cloud contains

Pennies from heaven."

OK, probably only the most geezerly among us remember this song made popular by Bing Crosby, among others. This morning it did not rain pennies, it rained water, lots of water.

We woke to gray skies, a little late for the 7:30 AM bridge opening. We walked the ship's puppy, did our usual boat checks and ate a breakfast of sausage links. Then we pulled out of our slip and waited for the drawbridge.

The Elizabeth City Drawbridge is restricted in the morning and afternoon so the next opening was at 8:30 AM. It wasn't raining when we left our slip but as we were waiting for the bridge opening, it began to drizzle. Once we got through the bridge it started raining harder.

As we approached the South Mills Lock, the rain stopped, allowing us to go through the forty minute process standing outside without getting wet.



In the South Mills Lock

As we approached our destination for the day, the Dismal Swamp Welcome Center, we noticed that

the dock was full and one boat was already rafted (tied up together for you landlubbers) to another boat that was tied to the dock. Just past the pair of boats was a boat we had been playing hop scotch with up the ICW for several days. We asked if we could raft up to them and they agreed. It means climbing on their boat to get to shore and back but it's pretty well expected in places like this.



HIGH COTTON and several other boats at the Dismal Swamp Welcome Center

At the very north end of the dock was another Camano Troll like ours. Talking to the owners, we found that they live in Canada and are finishing up the Great Loop. The boat we are rafted to is doing the same and will be done when they get to Solomons, MD.

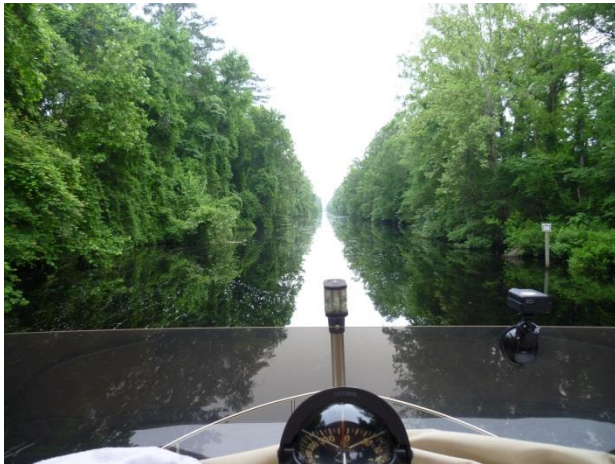
As usual, the ship's puppy was anxious to get off the boat and on land but she was confused when she had to board another boat to do it. She eventually invited herself inside and took a self-guided tour.

The welcome center is part of a North Carolina State Park and there's a one half mile boardwalk through the swamp so Captain Ron, Patti and Kiki walked the boardwalk. The Dismal Swamp Welcome Center is unique because it is a highway welcome center on one side and a waterway welcome center on the other.

We will finish the canal tomorrow; stop at a marina to fill our fuel tanks and then head for Waterside Marina in Norfolk for a couple of days.

Captain's Log, day seventeen (June 2, 2016)

We didn't plan on leaving as early as we did this morning but the boats started clearing out and Patti was having trouble sleeping so we got up checked the boat, walked the hound and untied ourselves from the other boat a little before 8:00 AM. This meant we would be able to lock through the Deep Creek Lock at 11:00 AM and not have to wait until 1:30 PM.



HIGH COTTON on the Dismal Swamp Canal

We actually got to the lock about 10:00 AM and rafted to the other Camano which was tied to the dock waiting for the lock. This is actually just a short distance from a shopping center with a grocery store so we all walked over and Patti stocked up on diet Dr Pepper. There's also a Hardee's so we got sandwiches and a coffee for Captain Ron.

Kiki writes: *And I walked all that way and got nothing at all! I did leave some marks so if any dogs come by they will know I was here.*



Waiting for the Deep Creek Lock to open

In addition to the other Camano, there was another boat waiting so we all had a discussion on who was traveling the fastest and what order we should go into and out of the lock so we wouldn't have to pass each other. Surprisingly, HIGH COTTON was traveling the fastest (seven knots) so we lead the pack. That's a first for us.



Lowered eight feet and waiting to exit the lock

As we were nearing Norfolk, the other Camano called us on the radio and asked about the marina where we were planning on fueling up. We told them and they followed us to refuel their boat ("Canadian Flyer") as well. Their plan is to anchor between Norfolk and Portsmouth, while we were heading for the Waterside Marina in Norfolk. We can see their boat and several other anchored boats from the marina.

Speaking of fuel, we took on seventy and one half gallons of diesel this time. That's a total of one hundred and thirty gallons so far from RiversEdge to Norfolk. Including our side trip to New Bern, that's about five hundred and twenty miles.



Lots of big ships in Norfolk



A railroad lift bridge on the ICW in Norfolk

Waterside Marina is part of a large city owned waterfront shopping and dining complex that was not doing well two years ago when we were here. Now it's been closed and it's being torn down and rebuilt. This doesn't really affect the marina except for the bathrooms and laundry which are gone. They have a trailer with nice bathrooms and showers and we took our laundry to the nearby Sheraton Hotel.



Temporary heads at Waterside Marina

One thing we liked about this marina is that it's right downtown and there is a large shopping mall and dozens of restaurants within walking distance.

We've paid for two nights but we'll extend our stay if it fits our mood.



HIGH COTTON at Waterside Marina - Norfolk, VA

Captain's Log, day eighteen (June 3, 2016)

We took our showers last night and went to bed with clean bodies and clean sheets for a change. We had a nice quiet sleep in the protected marina basin.

We got up to walk Kiki and met one of the other boaters from a nearby boat. He mentioned to us

that the marina calls and pays for a taxi to and from the local Harris Teeter grocery store for anyone who wants to go. We decided to take advantage of this amenity so we went and stocked up for our next few days.

After we got back and got everything put away, we walked to the local mall and did some shopping and had lunch. We noticed that the boat we had rafted with at the Dismal Swamp Welcome Center was now in the marina. We saw and talked to the owners as we were heading for the “First Friday” street party.

We didn’t see anything worth buying at the party and we didn’t care for the reggae music so we came back to the marina, took our showers and prepared for bed.



Captain Ron makes a friend in Norfolk, VA

We’ve seen conflicting weather forecasts for the next few days so we may stay here or we may move on. We haven’t decided where yet.

Captain’s Log, day nineteen (June 4, 2016)

We woke and looked at the weather forecast and considered our options. It appeared that today would be a decent day to travel, while Sunday was forecast to have high winds. So, our options were

to stay in Norfolk for two more days, head for Cape Charles on the eastern shore and be stuck there for two days or find another destination.

Two years ago, on a similar trip, we had Salt Ponds Marina penciled in as an alternate destination but never got there so we thought that might be a decent place to stay for one or two nights. We called and made a reservation, filled our water tanks and headed north out of Norfolk.

It only took us about two and one half hours between marinas but we’re heading in the right direction. It’s taken us nineteen days, but we’re finally in the Chesapeake Bay.



HIGH COTTON at Salt Ponds Marina - Hampton, VA

The restaurant at the marina is closed for renovation but they have nice facilities including a swimming pool and it’s just a short walk to a nice beach on the Chesapeake Bay.

We got ourselves settled in, rested a bit and then asked Kiki if she wanted to go to the beach. Her actions indicated that she did so we got our swimsuits on, hooked her up and walked to the public access path. Once she saw the water she took off running. She swam for a few minutes, then came out of the water and started digging in

the sand. The humans went for a dip also. We didn't dig in the sand though.



Kiki at the beach

This went on for a couple of hours and then we walked back to HIGH COTTON. Everybody had to get rinsed off before they were allowed inside the boat. The Sea Dog had to get rinsed twice.



Patti at the beach

We all rested a bit, then the humans went to the marina's pool while the ship's puppy took a nap.

Dinner was leftover microwaved Italian food from the restaurant in Norfolk, VA. How did we ever get by without the microwave oven?

We have an anchorage picked out for our next stop but we'll probably stay here another day.

Captain's Log, day twenty (June 5, 2016)

It rained last night. Patti had left towels to dry on the rails so she had to get up and bring them in.

The weather forecast was calling for strong winds today. It was correct for a change. Even in this protected basin, all the boat flags were waving in the wind. We'll be staying another night.

We spent a while figuring out where we want to go next and how to get there (planning the routes so we can upload them to the GPS). It occurred to Captain Ron that he could have done this several months ago. Not completely, plans should be flexible, but he could have made a list of places to visit and ones not to bother with on this trip.

We got some new slip neighbors and helped them into their slips. Both boats were far bigger than HIGH COTTON but they made it into their slips just fine. One belongs to a couple that has a condo in the community, the other, like us, is just passing through.

After a lunch of the remaining tomatoes and scallions from the farmer's market at New Bern, NC, we asked Kiki if she wanted to go back to the beach. She seemed to want to (who would have guessed it) so we put on our swimsuits, hooked her up to her leash and headed for the beach.

Just as she did yesterday, once she saw the water she ran straight for it, jumped in and swam a bit. Then she started digging in the sand. Once she wore herself out, we headed back to the mother ship to clean up and rest.

The hound needed a rest so the humans walked up to the swimming pool where a birthday party was going on, complete with a live mermaid. Captain Ron wanted to get his picture taken with the mermaid but she left before he could ask her. This was a live mermaid, not like the ones in Norfolk.

We talked for a while with the couple from one of the boats about our various trips, then it was time to go back for dinner on HIGH COTTON. We had leftover steak from a previous stop, chopped up and added to chopped potatoes and onions (“steak hash”) and fresh broccoli. Just like home cooking.

We took long, hot showers and returned to the boat and turned on the TV. Across the bottom of the screen we could see storm warnings for the area. No matter as long as they are gone by morning so we can continue north.



Now this is the way to travel! (Salt Ponds Marina)

Captain’s Log, day twenty one (June 6, 2016)

The big boat next to us left early and that woke Patti so she got up. That woke Kiki and she woke Captain Ron. We decided it was time to leave Salt Ponds and continue our cruise. We walked the dog, checked the boat and topped off the water tanks, paid our bill and cast off.

It was when Captain Ron took the helm that he realized that he had forgotten to load today’s route from the computer to the SD card and then to the chart plotter (yea, technical stuff) so he had to go below and do this while Patti exited the marina basin.

We thought the winds this morning would be light, but that was not the case and they were out of the west so that made for beam seas with us traveling north. We ended up tacking (zig zagging back and forth) to avoid taking waves on the beam but that made the trip a bit longer.

We had picked an anchorage that was only a five hour cruise from Salt Ponds but we were tired because of the rough ride so we ate lunch and took unintentional naps. All three of us.

There were just two sailboats here when we arrived. Eventually, there were six plus us. No other trawlers.



Our anchorage – Little Bay, VA near the Rappahannock River

We are still in Virginia. It will be a day or two more before we make it to Maryland. Apparently there’s another storm on the way so that may impact us.

Captain’s Log, day twenty two (June 7, 2016)

Last night was like sleeping in a washing machine. Not that we’ve ever actually slept in a washing machine, but we can imagine what it would be like. The boat was rocking, the water sloshing and every now and then, there was a loud thump as the water and the boat hit just right.

Eventually, there were seven sailboats with us in the anchorage. Only one left at daybreak so that was a weather hint. We checked several forecasts and learned that the winds were pretty strong on the Bay but should calm down after 8:00 AM. We took our time getting ready and left the other six sailboats behind in the anchorage. It was relatively calm exiting the anchorage and into the actual Bay, but the winds and waves soon picked up and again we had beam seas to contend with. Patti and Kiki stayed below until we entered Onancock Creek on the other side (eastern shore) of the Chesapeake Bay.

Just after we got HIGH COTTON settled in, we looked up and here came FRYEDAZE, the boat we have been playing hopscotch with since Camp Lejeune in North Carolina.



HIGH COTTON at the Onancock Wharf and Marina

We walked the Sea Dog, then we walked to town just in time to find the breakfast and lunch restaurant closed for the day. We're figuring on a nice dinner tonight so we walked back to the boat and had cheese and fresh peaches (not together).

The Onancock Wharf and Marina features free laundry so Patti gathered up everything that wasn't clean and fresh and did a load. We talked to some of the other boaters and helped to tie up a sailboat that came in after us.

The marina has a nearly new bathhouse and nice, spacious showers so we each took a shower, got out our best boat clothes and walked to the Irish Pub in town. As we were finishing our dinners, a couple from one of the other boats came in and sat down. We got to talking about where we are from and where we are going and it turns out that the woman from the other boat went to the same high school in Maryland as Patti and knew her sister. Sometimes it's a small world.

We walked back to HIGH COTTON, took the Sea Dog for a walk and put another load in the washing machine. We don't know if we'll stay or if we'll go. The marine forecast is not good for tomorrow.

Captain's Log, day twenty three (June 8, 2016)

Based on the wind forecasts, we planned to stay in Onancock another day. There's a small ferry boat (passenger only, not cars) that runs from here to Tangier Island and back. When it docked, we walked over and talked to the captain. He said it wasn't too bad on the Bay so far.

We thought about changing our plans and heading out but when we climbed to the flybridge to uncover things, we realized that it was still pretty windy so we reverted to our original plan and signed up for another day. It was probably a good thing as it's been really windy here today.

We walked to town for breakfast, came back to HIGH COTTON, walked the ship's puppy (again) and then took naps. This boating is hard work!

Later, we decided to walk to the ice cream shop. We knew the address but didn't realize how long a walk it would be. We got our ice cream and sat at a table outside where Kiki could share Patti's dish of ice cream. It was windy enough that when Captain Ron tried to take a photo, the camera blew over on the table.



The crew gets its ice cream ration in Onancock, VA

On the way back, we stopped in the local building supply store to look around. One of the local residents stopped to pet Kiki, then asked where we were from. When Patti told her and told her about our boat trip, she graciously offered to drive us back to the marina and we accepted. Small town folks are often nice like that.

Kiki writes: It was nice of that lady to give us a ride back to the boat in her car. My legs were getting tired and her car smelled interesting.

The wind has been so strong today that HIGH COTTON and the other boats are moving back and forth in their slips. The docks here are not floating; there are short finger piers and pilings to tie the bow off to. Because the docks and pilings do not rise and fall with the tide, it's impractical to tie the boat up tightly so it doesn't move.

There's a nice restaurant just a few steps from the marina so we walked over and had dinner. After that, it was time for showers and to bed.

Tomorrow should be an early departure hopefully before the winds pick up.



Patti finds a resting spot at the Onancock Wharf and Marina

Captain's Log, day twenty four (June 9, 2016)

We wanted to beat the wind and high seas so we got up at (almost) the break of dawn and were underway by 6:30 AM. It didn't work. Apparently, this area is still feeling the effects of the latest tropical storm even though the storm went out to sea and missed us.

Our destination for today was Pocomoke City. We traveled through Pocomoke Sound and up the Pocomoke River to where the city maintains a free dock with free electricity and water. It's hard to beat that deal! Along the way we saw several bald eagles. We did have a hard time staying in the channel near where the Pocomoke River and Pocomoke Sound meet because it was low tide and the sound is very shallow, but we eventually made it. We crossed back and forth over the Maryland/Virginia border today but we ended up in Maryland.

We're tied up along the dock with two other trawlers and a sailboat. The trawler people helped us tie up (we could have done it ourselves but help is always appreciated).



HIGH COTTON on the Pocomoke City free dock

We talked a bit and then walked to the city hall to register. The folks there were happy to see Kiki and she was happy for all the attention. It's probably not too often that a cute little dog walks in with its owners to register a boat.

Pocomoke City (at least the part by the water) is not very big and there's not a lot going on. We walked the downtown section and Patti went into a small convenience store to see if there was anything we might need. She picked up a can of baked beans that the label had yellowed and noticed that the expiration date was 2012. She didn't buy anything.

We stopped in the hardware/appliance/lawn equipment store and bought a pack of hose washers for our water hose and walked back to HIGH COTTON.

It turned out that there was a free concert in the park next to the dock from 6:30 PM until 9:30 PM. The restaurant next to the dock (one of three in town) had a Thursday special of \$5.00 burgers so we walked over, ate our burgers and then walked back to hear the concert. Captain Ron thought the musicians were pretty good for a change, but they were playing jazz so we stayed for a few songs and then went back to the boat. Kiki entertained some of the other boaters with her antics along the way.

We haven't decided on tomorrow's destination yet. If we can make it to Smith Island early enough, that will be it. If not, we'll figure out somewhere else to stay.

Captain's Log, day twenty five (June 10, 2016)

We made some adjustments to shorten the route to Smith Island and left about 6:30 AM, heading down the Pocomoke River. The bridge tender was quick to open the bridge for HIGH COTTON and we were on our way. Heading down the river, we saw several nice homes, several large chicken farms and fifteen bald eagles.



One of several bald eagles we saw along the Pocomoke River

Once we hit Pocomoke Sound, the wind and waves began to increase and Kiki and Patti decided to ride below. By the time we hit the open Bay, it was full roller coaster mode. At least we were going into the waves so there was no side to side rocking, just up and down.

Once we got into the Smith Island channel, the water was as smooth as glass. We had called the marina earlier on the phone (they don't use the VHF radio) and they told us to call back when we

got close. We did but got no answer so we just pulled into a vacant slip. It's a small marina with just six slips and there was only one slip occupied.

Nobody was at the marina so we tied ourselves up and Captain Ron connected the electrical power. Because the water was shallow at the shore end of the pier, we pulled bow in which made the electrical connection so far away that he had to use both of HIGH COTTON's power cords. He switched the circuit breaker on but nothing happened. He tried all the outlets on the pedestal but none seemed to work.

The dockmaster finally showed up and couldn't find anything wrong. He said the problem must be on HIGH COTTON.

Even though the shore power worked fine the night before, Captain Ron got out his tools and began troubleshooting. He used a meter to check the cords, the inlet plug on the boat and even the main circuit breaker on the electrical panel. He couldn't find a problem.

Eventually, he plugged everything back together and flipped the circuit breaker on the dock one last time. For some reason, the power came on. Captain Ron decided to leave everything just as it was and put his tools away. An hour or so wasted.



HIGH COTTON docked at Smith Island Marina



Smith Island Marina

By this time, it was nearly 4:00 PM and we hadn't had lunch so we walked to the restaurant (about fifty feet from our slip) and had lunch/dinner. There was only one other couple in the restaurant and they invited us to sit with them. The woman works in the restaurant but had just finished her shift and she and her husband were having their dinner. They are not originally from Smith Island, they moved here ten years ago so they don't know all the local history but we did learn a lot.

After our meal we gathered up the ship's puppy and began to walk around the island. We didn't get far before a man in a golf car stopped to talk and pet the puppy. Kiki jumped right up into the golf car and onto the seat next to him.

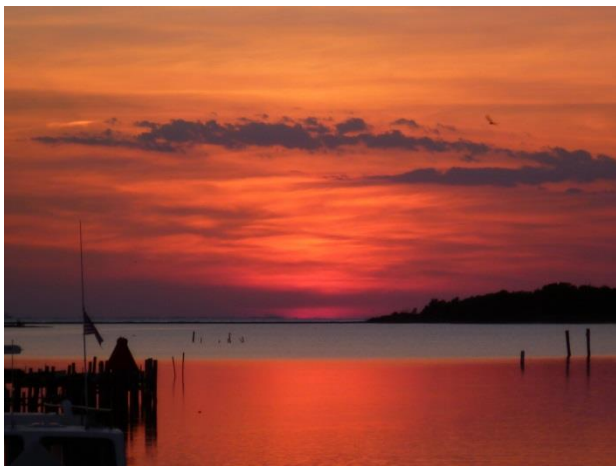
We talked a bit and then continued our walk. A couple minutes later, he passed us. After a few more minutes, he showed up again, this time with his wife and two small dogs. We talked some more and then came back to HIGH COTTON to rest.

There is a small uninhabited island next to Smith Island with a herd of wild goats living on it. We saw them standing on some fallen trees and doing "goat stuff".



Wild goats on "Goat Island" near Smith Island, MD

Since we didn't get much of a chance to see the island because of the late arrival and the electrical problems, we'll probably stay here an extra day.



A Chesapeake Bay sunset from Smith Island, MD

Captain's Log, day twenty six (June 11, 2016)

We did decide to stay an extra day. We walked through most of the town. We saw what must have been the recreation center where Captain Ron played music for a dance back in 1969 or so. He looked through the locked doors and recognized the stage. It brought back old memories for him.



Smith Island Community Center where Captain Ron played music in 1969

We toured the Smith Island Museum and of course we bought the T-shirts! It's well done with exhibits on the lifestyle and history of the island and its residents and a video with interviews with some of the old lifetime residents.

Tour boats arrive at the island about noon and the tourists walk or rent golf cars and that's when the few businesses open. The tour boats leave at 4:00 PM and that's when most of the businesses close.

We did eat a nice lunch at the combination restaurant and grocery store. We also took Kiki to the ice cream shop just before it closed and had our usual and customary ice cream.



Yep, another ice cream stop

It turns out that the lady working the ice cream shop is also the owner of the marina so Patti went back and paid our bill. Smith Island is truly a unique place and way of life. It would be pointless to try to describe it here but there are several books about it and of course lots of information is available on the Internet.

Dinner was leftovers from the Irish restaurant in Onancock and a piece of Smith Island ten layer cake from the restaurant near the marina. We eat pretty good on HIGH COTTON.

We're planning on going to Crisfield, MD tomorrow. The winds look iffy but it's a pretty short trip.



Leaving Smith Island, MD

Captain's Log, day twenty seven (June 12, 2016)

There was supposed to be Internet access at the marina at Smith Island, but the guy who met us never gave us the security code. No matter, our Verizon Hot Spot worked just fine. Just fine until yesterday afternoon when it just stopped working. After rebooting everything without any improvement, we set up Captain Ron's smart phone as a "hot spot". That worked for a while but then became intermittent. The good news is, it's

probably not the hot spot, it's the service that was bad.

Internet access is pretty important to our cruising because we're using it to get reviews and information about marinas and anchorages as well as weather forecasts. And of course, our reports back to friends and families. We still didn't have access this morning as we set out for Crisfield, MD. Once we got settled in we hooked up the hot spot and everything was fine. Also, the marina supplies wireless Internet service and that saves our data usage.

We got to Somers Cove Marina about 10:00 AM. We stopped and filled our fuel tanks and then headed for our assigned slip. Somers Cove Marina has a special deal where you pay for two days and get the third day for free and since there's a swimming pool and nice facilities as well as an interesting town, we chose the special.



Crisfield, MD

The office staff gave Kiki a dog treat and she entertained them for a bit. They were trying out a new popcorn machine so they gave us some fresh popcorn for our breakfast. Then they gave us some fresh tomatoes and cucumbers to take back to the boat for lunch.

HIGH COTTON needed an oil change after one hundred hours. That's part of Captain Ron's job so after checking in and enjoying the air conditioning in the office and captain's lounge, he set to work at it.

It turns out that when the oil change pump overturned a couple weeks ago it damaged the electrical switch but it still works as long as you push down while working the lever. There's no guarantee how long it will continue to work in this condition but it made it through this oil change.

Meanwhile Patti took the sheets and blankets to the laundry room and made the bed with the extra set. Kiki took a nap.

After the oil change routine and cleaning up, Captain Ron headed for a long shower while Patti finished with laundry duty. Then she went for her shower.

We walked to Main Street to find a place to eat dinner and found a place we had eaten at on our last visit to Crisfield. It's more of a place for locals rather than tourists but it was very good.

We came back to HIGH COTTON and rested a bit. We considered walking back to town for ice cream, but taking advantage of modern technology, we called them on the phone to see if they were open and they didn't answer. We'll go tomorrow.

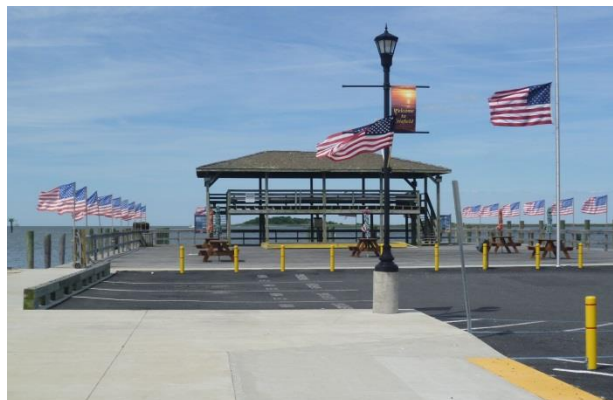
Captain's Log, day twenty eight (June 13, 2016)

It's a day in port and a day of rest. We took the Sea Dog to the marina office and she went right to where they keep the dog treats. She got a few and then entertained the staff by running around the office. Then we took her back to the boat and walked to town for breakfast even though it was closer to lunch time by then. Captain Ron had his

favorite, a scrapple and egg sandwich. Patti had waffles, eggs and bacon.

After breakfast we explored the town, stopping in the shops. There are two marine stores, one is mostly a small boat dealer with a good selection of standard boat products; the other resembles a flea market with stuff everywhere but no marked prices. We didn't really need anything so we didn't buy anything. We did find a pharmacy where Patti was able to find some shampoo with conditioner, something she had run out of.

Back at the marina, we contemplated a dip in the pool but it was really windy so we retreated to the boat for a little resting and TV. For some reason, there were far fewer TV stations available today than when we pulled in and first scanned for stations.



Yep, it's pretty windy today in Crisfield, MD at the City Dock

We walked to a Mexican restaurant but it was closed so we went and had pizza. Then it was back to the boat, walk the ship's puppy, take nice long showers and go to bed. We have another day in port here and then we'll be on our way north.

Captain's Log, day twenty nine (June 14, 2016)

We forgot to mention yesterday's trip to the ice cream store: Kiki went with us and when we went

into the store, they gave her her very own dish of ice cream. We walked out onto the town dock and ate our ice cream, all three of us.

We got up late today, took the ship's puppy to the office for her treats and then just relaxed on the boat and the marina grounds for a while. This is a state owned marina with over five hundred slips and several bath houses with laundry facilities. There's also a pavilion and a large swimming pool. It's fully staffed and well taken care of.

About 11:00 AM, we put the Sea Dog on the boat and walked to the town museum. It's all about the history of Crisfield, oystering and crabbing. At one time, Crisfield had railroad tracks right to the city dock and shipped trainloads of oysters all over the east coast. Unfortunately, they overfished them and that industry failed. Condos now stand where the oyster, ice and crab facilities were. There's just one crab processing facility left in town.

We were walking back to the marina when we decided to stop in the Chamber of Commerce welcome center. We were greeted by the town's mayor and had a nice talk.

When we finally got back to the marina, a flotilla (group of boats) began to arrive. There were about fourteen boats traveling together and visiting various locations on the Chesapeake Bay. Most were sailboats but three or four were trawlers. They have big plans for tonight with beer, crabs and two guys singing and playing guitar. We talked to some of them and Kiki got to meet some new dogs. Apparently, there's another group coming in tomorrow but we'll be gone by then.

We've been eating at the same restaurant each day we've been here so we were determined to try someplace different. We went to another restaurant that we had visited on our last trip and had a nice meal with leftovers for another day.

Captain Ron finally got around to rinsing the dried salt off the boat. He didn't wash it, that would be pointless but three weeks of spray from waves had left a coating that could be felt. Then it was time for showers, walking the Sea Dog, and off to sleep. We'll head for an anchorage tomorrow.



Patti, Kiki and HIGH COTTON at Somers Cove Marina, MD

Captain's Log, day thirty (June 15, 2016)

We got up, took the Sea Dog to the marina office to say goodbye, got ice, stored our cords and lines and headed out of Crisfield. We ended up in the midst of the flotilla as they were leaving also. They were headed for Solomons Island; we were headed for Deal Island. Deal Island would have been only about two and a half hours from Crisfield and the next day would have been about eight hours from there to Oxford, MD, our next planned port of call. Once we got out into the bay, we decided that since it was such a nice day on the water, we should take advantage of it so we scrubbed the Deal Island destination since it was only an anchorage, not a destination, and picked an anchorage closer to Oxford. Unfortunately, by starting out for Deal Island, our trip was longer than it would have been because we were on the wrong side of a pair of islands but it was a nice cruise anyway.

One of the things we have to watch out for on the Chesapeake Bay is fish traps. These are a series of stakes and nets set into the water to direct fish into an area where they can be just scooped or sucked out of the water and into the commercial fishing boats.



One of the many fish traps on the Chesapeake Bay

We heard a US Navy range boat calling the boaters we had met last night and telling them they had to detour because the Navy was practicing firing at a target ship. This apparently happens from time to time. It's a charted firing range.

This part of the Chesapeake Bay is relatively narrow and although we are off the Eastern shore, we can see the Calvert Cliffs on the Western shore from our anchorage behind James Island at the mouth of the Little Choptank River. The designation "Island" is pretty generous, it's just a few high spots with trees growing on them.

We dropped anchor and opened the windows and the hatch to let the fresh air cool the boat. We left the door open so the ship's puppy could go in and out. That turned out to be a mistake as the boat filled with flies. Patti got out the fly rod (swatter) and began reducing the population of them. Even one will keep the Sea Dog up all night.

We had fried chicken left over from our restaurant meal last night so Patti added some mashed potatoes and gravy and green beans.



Our fried chicken dinner on HIGH COTTON

This anchorage should provide a great sunset but unfortunately, the clouds have come in and the sun is hidden. Oh well, there will be others. Tomorrow we should be in Oxford, MD.

Captain's Log, day thirty one (June 16, 2016)

Our anchorage last night was not what we had hoped. We rocked and rolled all night and the sound of water slapping the hull had us waking up several times during the night. Even Kiki had a hard time sleeping.

Patti and Kiki got up sometime around 6:30 AM. Captain Ron tried his best to sleep but he soon gave up and got up and dressed. He did his routine boat checks and we got underway around 8:00 AM. We called the Oxford Marina and made reservations for tonight and then called Higgins Boat Yard in St. Michaels and made reservations for Friday and Saturday night. We were doing fine, driving from the flybridge until all of a sudden there was a downpour. We had just enough warning for Captain Ron to take the ship's puppy below and take the helm. They didn't get wet.

Patti remained on the flybridge to cover everything. She got drenched.

The rain lasted only a few minutes but it reduced visibility enough to make things difficult. Once it cleared up, Captain Ron returned to the flybridge to continue on to Oxford Marina and dock the boat.



HIGH COTTON docked at Oxford Marina, Oxford, MD

Once we got settled in, we checked the weather forecast and decided that we would be better off staying in Oxford another night and moving to St. Michaels for Saturday and Sunday so we made arrangements with both marinas for the change.

There's a small beach near the marina so we took Kiki to it. As soon as she saw the water she took off, ran straight in, came back out and started digging in the sand. Then she went back into the water. We found some sticks and spent some time throwing them into the water for her to retrieve. There was a family with two small children on the beach digging in the sand so Kiki helped them dig. Of course, by then she was a very dirty dog and had to have a shower when she got back to HIGH COTTON. She knows what to expect and waits patiently for Patti to hose her down with the cockpit shower. This time she had a shampoo as well.



Kiki plays at the beach in Oxford, MD

We left the Sea Dog to take a nap while we walked to the ice cream shop and then to the small grocery store for a few supplies. There's an actual full sized grocery store just a couple blocks from the marina in St. Michaels so we'll wait until we get there to restock the boat.

The group of boaters we met in Crisfield is now here in Oxford. They went to Solomons Island yesterday; we anchored on this side of the bay. Captain Ron got off HIGH COTTON to stretch his legs and a guy walked down the dock and asked if this was his boat. Captain Ron thought it was one of the group, but it wasn't. It was another Camano owner who lives in Tennessee but was nearby visiting his daughter and just happened to see HIGH COTTON on the dock. They talked about Camanos and exchanged stories and boat cards.

We walked to a restaurant for dinner, walked the pooch, took showers and we're ready for bed. So far, there's no sign of the predicted storms but the TV is showing severe weather on the other side of the Chesapeake Bay.

Captain's Log, day thirty two (June 17, 2016)

According to the weather forecasts, we were supposed to have bad storms last night and rain

most of the day today. It did rain a bit last night and according to Patti, there was some thunder, but there was no serious bad weather and today started out cloudy but the sun soon came out and it was a beautiful day. It would have been a nice day on the water but we had a good time in Oxford anyway.

Patti and Kiki got up early, Captain Ron did not. Once he got up, we all ate breakfast and then we took the hound back to the beach. There were a couple families already there and playing in the water and the ship's puppy joined right in.

After her swimming and digging, we came back to HIGH COTTON for another bath and a nap. Mawmaw and Pawpaw left her napping and went for a walk without her. We saw some more of the historic homes and businesses in Oxford. Most of the homes and businesses here seem to be well kept up with mowed yards and flower gardens, unlike some of the towns we have visited.

On the way back, we stopped for ice cream (again). When we got back to the marina, we found that HIGH COTTON had been moved further down the dock. They had warned us that they had more boats coming in and we might have to move, but apparently, they were expecting another boat and didn't know when we would be back.

We had lunch of fresh tomatoes and cucumbers from the marina a couple days ago and pasta salad from the local deli.

After a short rest, we decided to go to the pool. The water was a bit cool so Patti didn't get in. Captain Ron got in up to his waist.

While we were sitting poolside, we learned that there would be a live band and "light fare" (food) from 5:00 PM until 7:00 PM so we decided to go back to the boat and get dressed and walk the pooch. We walked back to the area where the

food and music was and they were getting ready to start so we found a seat, got some food, and listened to the band. For once, Captain Ron thought they were pretty good so we (and the Sea Dog) stayed for the entire two hours.

We saw the boat that we assumed would be behind us coming up the creek so Captain Ron went to check on things. The dock hands were there ready to tie it up but it circled around and continued up the creek and anchored. Apparently they changed their minds. At least we don't have to worry about them being in our way when we leave tomorrow.

In South Carolina and other areas with large tidal swings, we are accustomed to floating docks. That is, the docks float up and down as the tide raises and lowers the water level. We tie the boats to the docks and they go up and down together.

In some places where the tidal swing is just a couple feet, the docks are a fixed height. This means the boat will rise and fall with the tide while the docks do not. The boat has to be tied loosely enough to the dock or pilings to allow for this movement.

When we came back and found HIGH COTTON had been moved, Captain Ron thought it was tied a little tight for the state of the tide, but since these are professionals, he ignored his concern. When we came back from the show, HIGH COTTON was tight against the dock and the lines were so tight, he had trouble untying them. He finally got the lines loose and retied them with enough slack to account for low tide. The moral of the story is, if you don't think someone did something right, you are probably right and should do it yourself.

Tomorrow we're heading to St. Michaels for two days. The weather is supposed to be warm and sunny. Let's hope so.

Captain's Log, day thirty three (June 18, 2016)

We need to look on the back of HIGH COTTON to see if there's a target painted on it. Two years ago, the US Coast Guard decided it would be a good idea for them to board us and do a safety inspection. Today, as we were leaving Oxford and heading for St. Michaels, another bunch from the US Coast Guard decided to do the same thing. So, we had to let them on board, show photo IDs (why is it you need a photo ID to drive a boat but not to vote for the President of the USA?), show the boat's documentation papers and all the required placards and safety equipment.

It wasn't too bad, but it does seem like a violation of personal space. Imagine the police knocking on your door and demanding to see your ID cards, deed to your home and all the smoke detectors.

We seem to have gotten a bit ahead of ourselves though. This morning we got up, walked the ship's puppy and got HIGH COTTON ready for another day's voyage. We waited for the marina to open so we could get ice. Captain Ron noticed that they had complimentary coffee so he went back to the boat for his travel mug. When he returned, he noticed that they had put out English Muffins, bagels, and jam. He got his coffee and went back to the boat and told Patti. Well, this sounded better than our usual breakfast of cookies or Hostess cupcakes so we all went back to the office and had breakfast. We are in no rush today.

Other than the boarding, our voyage was pleasant and uneventful. The weather was great and the seas were relatively quiet. We went through the Knapps Narrows drawbridge without having to wait.

It being Saturday in June and beautiful weather, there were a lot of boats out on the water. Not just the usual watermen, but pleasure boats big and small. When we got near St. Michaels, it

seemed like there were a lot more boats and people than there should have been. It turns out, this weekend they are having a large antique boat show. It's a good thing we reserved a slip in advance.



St. Michaels from the water

We backed into our slip, got tied up and settled with the marina office. We took Kiki with us but by this time, it was pretty hot out so we decided to take her back to the air conditioned boat and head for town by ourselves.



HIGH COTTON docked at Higgins Yacht Yard

We had a light lunch and then decided that with this antique boat show going on, we might as well attend. The show was put on by the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum so we had to pay for that as

well but the admission is good for two days so we can go back tomorrow. In addition to the antique boats, there is a lot to see about boat building and life and working on the Chesapeake Bay.

At the show was a live band playing “antique” music. Music from the early 1900s. Captain Ron was most impressed. These were “genuine” musicians. Drums, sousaphone, tenor banjo, clarinet/saxophone and trumpet/vocalist.



Drew Nugent and the Midnight Society band at the antique boat show

After all the day’s excitement, we retired to HIGH COTTON to rest. We didn’t even go out to eat, we had leftover chicken in cream of chicken soup over rice with a side of baby lima beans. There’s no cable TV and very little antenna TV so it looks like we’ll take our showers and turn in early tonight.

Captain’s Log, day thirty four (June 19, 2016)

We must have worn ourselves out yesterday because the whole crew slept until after 8:00 AM. We finally got ourselves up and dressed and set out to walk the ship’s puppy. The first stop was at the Acme grocery store for a large cup of coffee for Captain Ron and a diet Dr Pepper for Patti. Kiki got nothing.

We walked to the town park where Kiki played on the sliding board (she seems to like this). On the way back she saw a squirrel and chased it. It went up a tree inside a fenced yard and Kiki kept trying to get through the fence to go after it.



I know that squirrel is in there somewhere

We went back to the museum (it’s really a campus with several buildings) to see what we had missed the day before. There are several old boats once used in oystering and crabbing, an exhibit on picking crabs and the old Hooper Strait Lighthouse which was moved to the museum grounds after it was taken out of service.



The view from the old Hooper Strait Lighthouse at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum



The crew in St. Michaels, MD

After finishing our museum tour, Captain Ron returned to HIGH COTTON to walk the pooch, while Patti walked to town to shop.

Captain Ron worked on plans for the next couple days, then we went to dinner at the local Irish Pub. Patti's Irish stew was pretty good but Captain Ron's corned beef and cabbage was just boiled cabbage, boiled potatoes and sliced corned beef like one might put on a sandwich. In fact, that's exactly what we did with the leftovers. After dinner, we walked back to the marina and took showers in preparation for bed and tomorrow's voyage.

Captain's Log, day thirty five (June 20, 2016)

We had no compelling reason to get up early today so we didn't. The four legged alarm clock finally got us up a bit before 8:00 AM. Patti and the Sea Dog set out on a walk to take care of business while Captain Ron walked the two blocks to the Acme supermarket for a large coffee. If he'd been smart, he might have picked up some donuts or bagels while he was there.

We hadn't taken on any potable water at Oxford so the tanks were low. Captain Ron filled them and got the shorepower cable unhooked and put away while Patti found the dockmaster and arranged for ice. We untied our lines and headed out.

Leaving St. Michaels, we were amazed at how the place had cleared out, both the marinas and the anchorages. We were second in a line of three boats but as soon as we cleared the no wake zone, the others left us in their wakes.

Our next port of call is Chestertown, MD and we could have made it there in one day but we like to anchor out now and then and we're trying to schedule Baltimore for the weekend so family and friends will have a chance to visit. So, we picked out a recommended anchorage on the Chester River. It's called Conquest Beach and is a local beach accessible only by boat.

Our route took us through the Kent Narrows Drawbridge. If you drove across the Chesapeake Bay Bridge by car many years ago, you also drove across this bridge but there's a high rise bridge now for Route 50 traffic. The old bridge was left in place for local traffic.

Fortunately, HIGH COTTON clears this bridge by a couple feet so we don't have to wait for it to be opened, but it's a very narrow bridge with a strong current that can push a boat out of the channel. The channel leading away (in our case) from the bridge is also narrow and winding and a few moments of distraction can put a boat in very shallow water. Bigger boats often go around Kent Island rather than deal with this bridge.

After leaving Kent Island, it was just a matter of following the route and the markers. This part of the Chester River is pretty wide.

Captain Ron had created a waypoint on the chart plotter for Conquest Beach so once we got to the waypoint, we turned towards the shore and continued until the depth sounder showed about seven feet. We set the anchor, shut everything off and opened the boat up to the breeze. There was one other boat (a sailboat) already anchored when

we got there but we were able to stay far away from it.

There's not much point in anchoring off a beach and not actually going to the beach so Captain Ron set about inflating Q-Tip (our dinghy). Kiki saw him and began to get excited about going to the beach. When she sees this or hears the outboard motor, she knows what's next and can't wait.

We got Q-Tip inflated, clamped on the outboard, put the DFD (doggie floatation device) on the hound and off we went. Once we reached the beach, Kiki was the first out of the boat. She jumped in and swam around Q-Tip (OK, that's not very far). We took her DFD off and she did her usual swimming and digging in the sand. Patti found some sticks and threw them in the water and Kiki swam out to get them and bring them back. Patti and Captain Ron got in the water as well but this beach is a bit too shallow for adults to actually swim. It has a nice sandy bottom though.



Q-Tip on the beach and HIGH COTTON anchored at Conquest Beach on the Chester River, MD

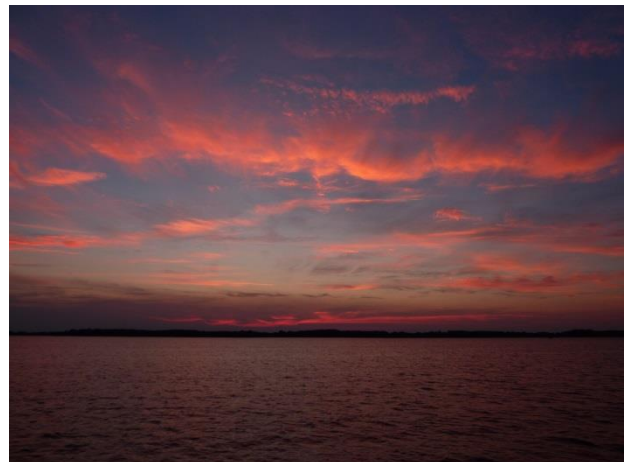
After we wore the Sea Dog out, we got back into Q-Tip and headed back to the mother ship. We all got a shower in the cockpit and went inside to rest. After his nap, Captain Ron went back out in the dinghy just to explore. He left it tied behind HIGH

COTTON so we can leave the hatch open for ventilation.



Captain Ron explores the Chester River in Q-Tip

Dinner was leftover Irish stew from St. Michaels over noodles with a side of green beans. After dinner we all went up on the flybridge to just sit and enjoy the view. There is still the one sailboat anchored quite a ways from us. Tomorrow we will leave the anchorage and head for the Chestertown Marina.



Sunset on the Chester River, MD

Captain's Log, day thirty six (June 21, 2016)

Boats in Maryland have to meet certain noise restrictions. They have to have mufflers or other sound reducing systems (like the common practice of directing the exhaust underwater). For some reason, commercial watermen are exempt from these requirements. They can direct their exhaust directly from the engine to the atmosphere with no mufflers.

This morning, just before dawn, a commercial crabber set up a trotline starting a couple hundred yards behind HIGH COTTON and running along the shoreline. Back and forth he went pulling up crabs and keeping us awake.

Eventually, we decided to get up. The anchorage is just a couple hours from Chestertown so we were in no hurry. We ate breakfast (real breakfast this time, not something wrapped in cellophane), put Q-Tip on the bow and let the air out and got underway.

When we got close to the Chestertown Marina, we called them on the phone as instructed. We called several times with no answer. Then we tried calling on the phone. Again, there was no answer.

Captain Ron decided to tie up at the fuel dock behind another trawler when a guy called on the radio and instructed us to come into the marina and he would help us tie up. It turns out that he lives on his boat and has been at this marina for several months. It also turns out that there are no marina employees working on Tuesdays, something that the person we talked to on Monday neglected to mention.

Anyway, we got into a slip, got tied up and connected the shorepower so we could have air conditioning. Patti took the ship's puppy for a walk but soon returned because of the heat.



HIGH COTTON docked at the Chestertown Marina

We put the Sea Dog on the boat and set out in the summer heat to find a place to eat lunch and then explore the town. We settled on a restaurant, partly because of the air conditioning, and ate lunch. When we finished, we stepped out to find a much cooler Chestertown with dark clouds overhead.

We checked out a couple shops but we began to hear thunder so we headed back towards HIGH COTTON. We got on board just as it started to rain. We turned on the TV and saw severe storm warnings for the Baltimore area with the storms heading to the east (where we are).

Patti gathered up the dirty laundry and was just about to step off the boat with it when the downpour came. She decided the dirty clothes could wait for the rain to stop.

The rain did eventually stop and the sun came out so we put the clothes in the washing machine, took our showers and walked around the town a bit. There were five or six people setting up a Bocce Ball game. We talked to them for a bit and they recommended a good restaurant for our dinner. We walked back to the boat to drop off the Sea Dog and when we left for the restaurant, we could see dozens of people in the park where the game was being played.

We walked to the restaurant, ate, and walked back to HIGH COTTON, retrieving our clothes on the way.

We saw some shops we missed today because of the rain so we'll probably stay late so we can visit them and leave about noon or so for an anchorage down the river. We're trying to work it out to be in Baltimore, MD for the weekend.



Chestertown Marina – Chestertown, MD

Captain's Log, day thirty seven (June 22, 2016)

Our plan was to sleep in, walk to town for coffee and donuts, and check out the shops we missed yesterday. We were going to head back down the river and anchor for the night.

The first part went as planned but when we got back to the marina we started talking to some other boaters and they said that the weather forecast for Wednesday night and Thursday was calling for storms and high winds. We decided a better plan would be to head closer to Baltimore and stay in a marina tonight and possibly Thursday night.

We called Rock Hall Landing Marina in Rock Hall, MD and made reservations. We figured the trip

would take four and a half to five hours so we had to rush to get underway.

Luck was on our side today as we had favorable currents and made it in just four hours. The sun was out and the sky was blue, but once we neared the mouth of the Chester River and the Chesapeake Bay, the winds picked up and the waves were three feet high or so. We were lucky again that for most of the voyage, we were traveling directly into the waves so the boat wasn't rocking from side to side, just fore and aft.

We pulled into our assigned slip at the marina and checked in at the office. As usual, Kiki was a big hit with the dockmaster. We walked a bit, then came back and got HIGH COTTON straightened out (more or less).



HIGH COTTON returns to Rock Hall, MD

We studied our dinner options and selected the restaurant that's about fifty feet from our slip. After dinner, we took our showers and got the ship's puppy ready for her late evening stroll.

That's when Captain Ron went for an unintended swim! He had Kiki in his right arm but when he stepped from the swim platform to the dock, he missed. Kiki went flying but landed on the dock. Captain Ron was not so lucky; he went feet first into the drink. His arms landed on the swim

platform and the dock so he only got wet from the waist down. This was the first time in eight years of owning HIGH COTTON that this has happened and we've seen other people fall in twice in one day so perhaps it was his turn.

So, Captain Ron got out and dried himself off. Kiki thought this was great fun so Patti took her for her walk and she came back to the boat ready to play.

We have the option of staying here tomorrow night or anchoring out. We'll probably stay. There's a nice grocery store in town for provisioning and a West Marine. Captain Ron can't pass up a West Marine even if he doesn't need anything.

Captain's Log, day thirty eight (June 23, 2016)

We had some rain last night, but no storms. Nothing to be concerned about. We were safe in a slip anyway. The rain stopped and we got up so we could go to the office and reserve our slip for another night and go to the various stores. Patti decided today would be a good day to clean and vacuum HIGH COTTON so she started while Captain Ron made reservations for Baltimore and planned the next few steps.



Patti cleans up with the boat vacuum

We took the Sea Dog for her second walk of the day and went to the marina office to pay for our stay. Kiki entertained the staff again in exchange for dog biscuits. After that, we put her back on the boat, got our folding cart out and headed for town. Our first stop was at a boat repair shop that also sells boat parts. Captain Ron looked at several items but in the end, Patti bought some T-shirts. Then it was on to the Dollar Store, West Marine and the grocery store with a stop at the ice cream shop. Captain Ron bought a new battery operated fan to replace one that failed last year. We stocked up on groceries and supplies and headed back to the marina.



Another ice cream stop in Rock Hall, MD

We ate lunch and Patti resumed cleaning the boat. Patti realized that she had forgotten to buy eggs and Captain Ron realized that the broken fan had been left at home so he had no batteries for his new fan. We thought about going back to the store but we'll be near enough to one tomorrow in Baltimore so we didn't.

Speaking of Baltimore, a year or so ago, a suspected criminal was arrested by the police, but died while in police custody. This set off several

days of rioting, looting and burning. Several police officers were charged with crimes including second degree murder. Today, the officer charged with murder was acquitted of all charges. As expected, some citizens are not pleased with the verdict so we are monitoring the situation closely. We may have to change our plans.

Captain Ron decided to go to the swimming pool but found it a bit cool for his liking. Patti went to the gift shop at the adjacent restaurant. Dinner was chicken and dumplings from the restaurant in Chestertown with a side of green peas from the grocery store here.

Tomorrow, we'll get up, walk the puppy, and get the boat ready for travel. If we don't see smoke to the west, we'll head for a weekend in Baltimore.

Captain's Log, day thirty nine (June 24, 2016)

It's only about eighteen nautical miles from Rock Hall to Baltimore so we were in no hurry to get underway. At the same time, we had no reason to hang around either. We walked the ship's puppy up to the marina office to say goodbye and get some dog treats. The weather forecast seemed to be changing every time and every place we looked so we just took off to the west (after checking the Baltimore news stations for any issues).

The skies were clear in every direction except the one we were traveling. Eventually it began to rain and we went to the lower helm. This lasted until we were nearing the Francis Scott Key Bridge when the rain stopped so we went back to the flybridge.



The Francis Scott Key Bridge on the Patapsco River entering Baltimore, MD

We called the marina and they sent two dockhands out to assist us into our slip. The Sea Dog was ready to get off the boat and investigate the marina so she and Patti headed for land while Captain Ron connected the shore power and closed the windows. Captain Ron grabbed his wallet and went to the office to check in and found Patti and Kiki sitting in the office. Apparently the "no dogs" policy was changed since the last time we were here two years ago. They didn't have any treats though.



HIGH COTTON docked in Baltimore, MD

After checking in, we went back to HIGH COTTON to eat our lunch. It started raining again. It's been raining off and on most of the day. We walked to a

pizza place for dinner and stopped at a store for eggs and batteries. It started raining and we got a bit wet walking back to the marina. Not hard rain, just drizzle.

After dinner, Patti called her nephew Brock who lives in Baltimore and he and his three year old daughter Aubree came to visit and play with Kiki for a while. As we were sitting and talking, a sailboat entered the fairway behind our slip. They were supposed to be on the other side so once they realized that, they tried to turn around but couldn't. Finally, the dockhands told them to take any slip they could get into. With fifty or so empty slips in the marina, they pulled in next to HIGH COTTON. Let's hope they are not a partying bunch because there are two tired humans and one tired puppy on HIGH COTTON.



Aubree, Brock, Patti and Kiki in Baltimore, MD

Captain's Log, day forty (June 25, 2016)

We all three quickly fell asleep last night. No sign of the three young guys on the boat next to us. Around 2:00 AM, they returned after apparently picking up some females. They were talking but didn't have any music on. Soon they got into an argument with the females and they all left. Later,

the guys returned and were still arguing. This is just ten feet or so from our V berth.

Needless to say, they woke Patti and Captain Ron. At least the Sea Dog slept through it all. We talked to the dockmaster about this and he apologized and said the boat would be leaving today. Well. It didn't, it's still next to us. The dockmaster told us to call security (yes, they have full time security here) if it happens again. We'll see what happens tonight.

Since we didn't take showers last night, we took them this morning and then set out to find breakfast. The restaurant that seemed so close on the phone turned out to be a mile away. And it was expensive and not very good. We know one place not to go back to.

After breakfast, we were already just a couple blocks from the actual Inner Harbor so we walked through the shops and then headed back to HIGH COTTON and the ship's puppy. We were too tired to walk her but she didn't seem to mind.

Captain Ron's son Andrew called to say he would meet us at the marina with Captain Ron's grandchildren Chloe and Nathan. An hour or so later, they all showed up so after a few minutes of conversation, we all headed for a Mexican restaurant that Andrew was familiar with. We had a delicious meal and nice conversations with Andrew and the grandchildren.

After dinner and photos and shopping for a new pair of shoes for Nathan, they headed for their home near College Park, MD and we headed back to HIGH COTTON and Kiki.



Nathan, Andrew, Chloe, Patti and Captain Ron in Baltimore, MD

Captain Ron, Patti and the Sea Dog walked the two blocks to the ice cream shop and had ice cream watching the comings and goings of the native Baltimoreans.

Back on HIGH COTTON, it's time for bed and the hopes of a quiet night's rest.

Captain's Log, day forty one (June 26, 2016)

Our hopes for a quiet night did not pan out. True to form, the guys on the sailboat came home from a bar with women a little after 2:00 AM and began partying. Patti called security and they came and the noise stopped for a bit. Then it started up again with the people inside the boat this time. Patti called security again but got a recording. She left a message. After several more minutes, Captain Ron called and again got a recording.

Captain Ron then got dressed, went out and got the boat brush, and using the handle, tapped on the sailboat's bow rail. The boat's owner came out to see what was happening and Captain Ron politely asked him to "SHUT THE F*** UP! The owner was pretty vocal about Captain Ron tapping on his boat, but surprisingly, the noise stopped for good.

Of course, by this time it was 4:00 AM and we had been up for a couple hours and it took another couple hours to fall back to sleep so we didn't get up until 9:00 AM. We've been lucky, nothing like this has happened before in our travels.

We walked the ship's puppy and then went to the office for free coffee and to complain about our slip neighbors again. They had a box of fresh donuts so that was our breakfast for today.

We came back to the mothership and Captain Ron watched a couple of his favorite home improvement shows on the TV.

We left Kiki to guard HIGH COTTON and walked back to the Inner Harbor. We walked around to the other side this time. We got a bit hungry from all the walking so we had a late lunch/early dinner.

On the way back to HIGH COTTON we saw the crew setting up for a concert on Pier Six. The band was Bare Naked Ladies. There were three tractor trailer trucks and five motor coaches. We didn't go back to see the concert though and surprisingly, we didn't hear it either. Once we got back to the boat we watched TV, rested and then took Kiki to the ice cream shop (yes, again). From there, Captain Ron walked her back to the marina while Patti went to the Whole Foods store for fresh fruit.

Kiki writes: "I do like cruising on the boat because it means I get ice cream when we visit towns. I don't usually get ice cream at home."



Captain Ron and Patti tour downtown Baltimore, MD

We took showers and did a load of laundry in anticipation of pulling out tomorrow and heading south.



Kiki gets her ice cream again

Captain's Log, day forty two (June 27, 2016)

We did have a nice quiet sleep last night and with only a three hour voyage planned for today, we were in no hurry to get up or get underway. Once we woke up, we got dressed, took the sea dog for her morning walk and stopped in the marina office for some coffee for Captain Ron. Then we went back to the boat where Patti cooked up a "real" breakfast of a scrapple and egg sandwich for Captain Ron and bacon and eggs for Patti. Kiki had her customary dog food and got to lick the human's plates.

Captain Ron checked the oil and coolant levels, filled the water tanks and we cast off our lines about 10:30 AM. We decided to circle the Baltimore Inner Harbor before heading down the Patapsco River and heading south on the Bay.

The seas got rougher as we neared the Bay and Patti and the ship's puppy decided to go below. Captain Ron eventually decided to join them and Patti took us to the Magothy River where we found calmer water.

As many folks know, we used to live in Maryland and spent some time on the Magothy River in our previous boat. There are several good anchorages on the Magothy River, but one of our favorites (it's a local hangout) is behind Dobbins Island. There's a beach and the island provides wind protection.

We got ourselves anchored and had a lunch of fresh tomatoes, cucumbers and spring onions from the Whole Foods market in Baltimore. There were already several local boats beached or anchored close to the shore. Captain Ron started the process of inflating Q-Tip and the Sea Dog barked and whined in anticipation of a trip to the beach.



The beach at Dobbins Island on the Magothy River

We all climbed aboard the dinghy and quickly made it to the beach. Kiki, as usual, was the first one out of the boat and swam around Q-Tip and along the shoreline. Then she started digging holes in the sand.



Patti, Q-Tip and Kiki hit the beach

While the sea dog dug, the humans had conversations with several of the locals. They were impressed that we had come all the way from Charleston, SC. Most of them came from the other side of the Magothy River. They did say that they hoped someday to buy larger boats and travel like we are doing.

As the humans talked, the ship's puppy dug and swam. By the time we were ready to head back to

the mother ship, she was covered in salt water and sand. She got a dip in the river to get most of the sand off, but she had to have a shower before she could go inside the boat. She will sleep well tonight. Captain Ron and Patti rinsed off as well.

All the small boats left about 6:00 PM but three larger sailboats are sharing the anchorage with us tonight. Tomorrow we have a short hop to Annapolis, MD where we will probably stay for two days in the hopes that Captain Ron's daughter can come and visit.

Captain's Log, day forty three (June 28, 2016)

We had some rain last night. No big deal after we closed the windows and the hatch over the V berth. The three sailboats were still in the anchorage as we eased out and headed for the mouth of the Magothy River and the Chesapeake Bay. It was cloudy but the winds and seas were light as we went under the Chesapeake Bay Bridge.



Approaching the Chesapeake Bay Bridge

We threaded our way through the dozens of small sailboats from the local sailing schools and backed into our slip in "Ego Alley", the Annapolis City Dock. The dock has this nickname because owners of expensive or high powered boats often just cruise the length of the dock and turn around and exit, just to show off their boats.



HIGH COTTON docked at "Ego Alley", Annapolis, MD

Captain Ron's daughter Robyn was to meet us for lunch so after finding HIGH COTTON and playing with Kiki, we walked around to a restaurant on the other side of the water and had a pleasant lunch. After lunch, we walked back to HIGH COTTON, got the Sea Dog, and went for ice cream. Photos were taken, hugs were exchanged and Robyn returned to Virginia.



Captain Ron, Patti, Kiki and Robyn - Annapolis, MD

We rested on the boat for a while and then set out to explore the city with the ship's puppy. She soon tired so we had to carry her back to the mother ship. We gathered our shower supplies and walked across the street to the showers. By the time we finished, we were in the midst of a heavy downpour so we waited in the dockmaster's office until the rain slowed to a drizzle and then walked back to the dock and HIGH COTTON.



The rainbow after the storm

Speaking of the dock, the Annapolis City Dock is in the center of town and next to the city parking lot. It's a tourist location and boats docked there are pretty much on display for all to see. We just keep the curtains closed.

We'll be here another day and then head south, probably to an anchorage where we can take the Sea Dog to the beach again.

Captain's Log, day forty four (June 29, 2016)

It was a quiet night last night after the rain ended. The entire crew had a good night's sleep. We woke and dressed and set out to walk the Sea Dog. Captain Ron hadn't had his morning coffee yet so when we passed Sofi's Crepes (a place recommended to us by friends), we decided to get Captain Ron a large cup of coffee and split a crepe. Our intention was to eat at the outside tables, but between the ship's puppy begging for a taste and the nearby garbage truck making its rounds, we changed our minds and headed back to HIGH COTTON. The crepes were very good and the coffee did its job. Kiki got a bowl of dog food and after realizing that she was not getting crepes, she ate the whole bowl.

After breakfast, we (the humans) set out alone to see the town. Captain Ron bought a new pair of walking shoes and a new swimsuit, Patti bought some jewelry, a purse and a dress, and we both got the usual souvenir T-shirts. We stopped for a light lunch and then Captain Ron headed back to the mother ship while Patti continued shopping.

When Patti returned, she noticed a familiar dog on the boat in the next slip over from us. It turned out to be the people we were chatting with Monday at Dobbins Island. A bit later, Captain Ron walked down the dock to watch a boat coming in and ran into “Günter”, the guy who helped us dock in Chestertown. His boat is in a slip just up from us. Ego Alley is beginning to fill up for the holiday weekend. In addition to the boats in the slips and on the seawall, there’s a constant parade of boats coming in, going down to the end and going back out. Hopefully, things will settle down when the sun goes down.

Captain’s Log, day forty five (June 30, 2016)

Things did settle down last night. The band on the other side of the canal stopped at 9:00 PM and many of the boats left. We didn’t take showers last night because of the crowds and the fact that the bathhouse is across the street and the parking lot from the slips.

So, we got up this morning, walked the ship’s puppy and each took a shower. Once we made ourselves presentable we walked to the famous “Chick and Ruth’s Deli” for breakfast. We were seated near another couple and we began talking with them and found out that they live on a boat and were just passing through and visiting just as we are. Armed with leftovers for another day, we headed back to the dock, filled the water tanks with good city water and cast off for points south.

Our run to today’s anchorage on the Rhode River was only about two hours so we were not in a hurry. We were getting a bit low on fuel though so we found a marina with diesel fuel near our destination and filled our tanks. From there it was only a half mile or so to the anchorage.



The Thomas Point Lighthouse on the Chesapeake Bay

There used to be three islands near the head of the Rhode River, High Island, Flat Island and Big Island. All are uninhabited and High Island has actually eroded away and is now just a shoal marked with a couple danger markers. Flat Island has a small beach and is a local hangout. It’s also very near a summer camp for children.

We went to the upstream side of Flat Island and anchored. Kids from the camp had canoed to the island with their adult supervisors. We had a lunch of tomatoes and cucumbers on HIGH COTTON and then set Q-Tip in the water. Kiki saw this and knew she was going for a boat ride and a swim. We had trouble making her wait until the motor was clamped on and everything was in the dinghy.

Kiki writes: “Q-Tip is just my size and I love riding in it because I know we are going to the beach where I can swim in the water and dig in the sand.”



The camp kids on Flat Island

By the time we got to the beach, the camp kids were gone but there were some young adults from a boat they had beached and another group that came over a couple at a time in a dinghy. Even though it's a really small beach, there was room for everyone.

As usual, Kiki was the first one out of the boat. She swam around Q-Tip and then started digging holes in the sand. It seems the more we take her to the beach, the more she swims. Eventually though, she got tired so it was time to return to the mothership for a doggie nap. She had to take a shower in the cockpit first to get the sand and salt out of her hair.



Kiki goes for a swim



Captain Ron goes for a swim

Because of the Independence Day holiday we thought we should call ahead and make reservations at the marina we planned to stay at Saturday and Sunday. Well, it seems they are full Saturday so we are on a waiting list. If necessary, we will just extend our stay where we are staying Friday night or just anchor somewhere. We're not really looking to be around fireworks, they upset the puppy.

As often is the case, dinner was microwaved leftovers from a restaurant in our recent past. We're looking forward to a nice peaceful night as soon as the island crowd clears out. The weather today was beautiful.

Captain's Log, day forty six (July 1, 2016)

We woke up this morning to find that Patti was a year older than she was yesterday. We've both aged a year on this trip. Kiki is still three years old.

With a very short trip scheduled today, we slept in. Kiki thought we were going to the beach today and was anxious to get her harness on, but we had different plans. Besides, she wore herself out on the beach yesterday and needs a good rest.

The crabbers did not sleep in so at the crack of dawn they were setting up their trotlines. Then the water skiers showed up.



HIGH COTTON at anchor on the Rhode River, MD

We headed out a little past 9:00 AM and running slower than we normally do, got to Pirate's Cove Marina in Galesville, MD about 11:00 AM. We couldn't raise them on the radio and got a recording when we called. Then we noticed a guy sitting on a bench at the end of the dock. We called out to him and it turned out, he was the guy we were trying to contact. He directed us to a slip and helped us tie HIGH COTTON up safely.



Pirate's Cove Marina (with the ship's puppy)

It's unclear if this is a marina with an attached restaurant or restaurant with an attached marina.

The marina part is one very long dock with about thirty slips on each side and another ten at the end. There are restrooms, showers and laundry facilities. Patti and Ron remember eating at the restaurant about twenty years ago when they lived in MD.

We took showers and Patti did two loads of laundry and cleaned the boat. Then we had a nice dinner in the restaurant. As we were walking back to the boat, the wind picked up to where it was difficult to walk on the dock. We helped a sailboat tie up and he said the wind was blowing 37 MPH out on the bay.

It rained for a few minutes and then the rain stopped and the wind died down. Looking at the radar, there were severe storms all around us. The rain started and stopped intermittently. During a lull, we took the Sea Dog for a walk. Of course it started raining again before we got back and we all got wet.

We haven't decided what we'll do next. We may stay here another night (it's cheap), we may find another marina for tomorrow night or we may head directly for Solomons Island.

Captain's Log, day forty seven (July 2, 2016)

Well, yesterday's post is a day late. Captain Ron got into a conversation with some of the other boaters and by the time it broke up, it was past his bedtime!

We were on a waiting list for Herrington Harbor for Saturday night and they didn't call so our choices were to stay at Pirate's Cove in Galesville or move on down the Bay. There are other marinas near Herrington Harbor but that was going to be a "resort" stop more than a practical stop.

Captain Ron did some figuring and realized that by heading straight for Solomons Island rather than hugging the shoreline as we would to go to Herrington Harbor, the trip would be less than six hours. Since the weather was forecast to be nice, we decided to head on out.



It's best to stay out of the way of the "big boys"



Staying well away from the Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Plant

The weather was beautiful and the wind and seas were relatively calm until we turned up the Patuxent River towards Solomons. The winds picked up and there were gusts strong enough that Captain Ron had to remove his hat so he wouldn't lose it. We called Calvert Marina and they assigned us a slip but said the dockhand was on the fuel dock and wouldn't be able to help us. No problem. We've done this before.



The Sea Dog takes the helm

When we got to our slip, there was a man and woman from another boat walking up the ramp and they stopped and caught our lines. Most boaters are friendly and helpful this way.



HIGH COTTON at Calvert Marina, Solomons, MD

We took the ship's puppy and went to the office to check in. They had their own dog and a couple cats so Kiki had to stay outside. We paid for three night's dockage at \$1.00 per foot plus \$5.00 for electricity and then went to the little restaurant for lunch. After lunch we took Kiki back to the boat and went back to the office to borrow the loaner vehicle for a trip to the store. The last time we were here, the loaner vehicle was an old pickup truck. This time it was an old Mercedes car with 220,000 miles on the odometer.

We restocked HIGH COTTON with essentials and bought a rotisserie chicken and some potatoes for dinner. A scan for TV stations turned up zero so we walked the Sea Dog and returned to the boat. As mentioned above, Captain Ron got into a conversation with some other boaters while Patti and Kiki tucked themselves in for a good night's sleep.



Dinner on HIGH COTTON

Captain's Log, day forty eight (July 3, 2016)

Yesterday was a beautiful day on the water and on land. Last night, it rained. Not hard, but it rained. Rain is forecast for today and tomorrow and the Independence Day fireworks have been postponed. We got up, walked the ship's puppy and then each took showers. Calvert Marina is built on an old World War II Navy base and it's a bit "rustic". The bathhouses are painted cinderblock but everything works. For \$1.00 per foot, we don't expect a country club. There is a nice swimming pool but it's been a little too cool to use it.

After showering, we walked to the restaurant for breakfast. Then we came back and got into more conversations on the dock. Everyone has their stories to tell of where they have been and where

they are going. HIGH COTTON is the smallest boat on the dock (but it's the cutest).

We decided to take the Sea Dog for a walk to explore the grounds and she somehow found the small "dog beach" where she learned to swim two years ago. Once she saw it, she ran straight for the water, swam and then came out and started digging in the sand. She had a great time but needed a shower on the back of HIGH COTTON before she was allowed inside. The "lady of the boat" insisted on it.

Eventually, Captain Ron decided that he should have bought the new drinking water hose he had in his hand at West Marine the other day so we got the loaner car and went to West Marine and bought it while it was still on sale. Patti had already made a new list of the things she forgot to get at the grocery store yesterday so we stopped there as well for more groceries.

When we got back to the dock, some of our slip neighbors were crabbing so we gave them some suggestions and loaned them our crab net. They were finding crabs on the dock pilings, something we don't often see at home.

Dinner was leftover beef brisket from Annapolis and coleslaw and fresh corn on the cob from the grocery store. While we were eating, our new friends caught about a dozen crabs.

There's still no TV so it's surf the net or early to bed. It's one or the other.

Captain's Log, day forty nine (July 4, 2016)

Today was another day in port so there's not a lot to post. We walked the Sea Dog, then we came back to the boat for breakfast. Our slip neighbors were crabbing again so we talked to them for a while.

The potable water pump on HIGH COTTON has been cycling on and off, indicating a problem with the accumulator tank. It was about two years ago that we had the same problem and Captain Ron installed a new one. The symptoms indicate the air pressure is low in the tank so Captain Ron borrowed a bicycle pump from one of our slip neighbors and tried to re-pressurize the tank but the pump wouldn't lock on to the air valve of the tank. We still have water; it's just annoying and shortens the life of the pump. There's also a one foot piece of hose on the flybridge drain that had cracked and leaks water onto the cockpit floor.

Since we had nothing else to do, we borrowed the loaner car again and went to West Marine for the hose and the Ace Hardware store for a bicycle pump.

First stop was West Marine. It was busy and short on employees, but we finally got two feet of hose. Then we went to the hardware store where we had a choice of two pumps. Captain Ron chose the smaller one.

Patti saw a sign for Ledo Pizza, her Maryland favorite, so our Independence Day meal changed from the traditional hot dogs and baked beans to pizza. She ordered the pizza while Captain Ron was in the hardware store but when we went to pick it up, it wasn't ready. While Patti was in the pizza shop, Captain Ron examined the pump he had just purchased and realized that it was for inflating balls and wouldn't work as a traditional pump.

By this time we were already late returning the loaner car and were waiting for a pizza we had already paid for and had to go back to the hardware store and buy the correct pump. We finally got our pizza and exchanged the pump for the correct one.

Back at the boat, we ate pizza and then Captain Ron tried pressurizing the tank with his new pump.

It was the same as the one he borrowed and wouldn't fit the tank properly. Then he looked at his hose and realized that he had been charged for the "good" hose but given the cheap hose. Some days are just like that, a whole lot of scurrying around and nothing accomplished.

There's a Russian family (they live in the US in Rockville, MD now) on a sailboat at the end of the dock and they have a daughter about twelve years old. She was watching the other people crabbing so Patti got to talking to her and the two of them eventually went off with our net and bucket scraping crabs off the pilings.

They ended up with four or five crabs so Patti explained to them how to cook them and once they were done, the girl brought one to our boat and Patti showed her how to pick the meat out of it.



Patti teaches her new friend how to pick a crab

There are no "official" fireworks here because of the weather and with no TV reception; we won't be watching them on TV either. We have been hearing some individual fireworks but we haven't seen them.

The weather forecast seems to change by the hour so we'll get up and see what's actually happening

tomorrow. If we choose to stay, at least it's inexpensive here.

Captain's Log, day fifty (July 5, 2016)

When in doubt, wait it out. We got up this morning not sure whether to stay another day or head south on the bay. As usual, the forecasts and what we saw out the windows did not agree. Even though it seemed calm in our slip, all the forecasts were calling for strong winds until noon or so and then dropping off. Light winds are forecast for the rest of the week.

Some of our slip neighbors decided to leave and some decided to stay. After considering everything, we decided to stay another day and then head out Wednesday morning. We have multiple anchorages plotted out and we'll see how things go when we get out on the Bay.

We were talking to some boat neighbors and they mentioned going to West Marine and Food Lion so Captain Ron got the loaner car and all four of us went. Captain Ron found out that someone at West Marine had put the wrong number on the box of hose so everyone, not just Captain Ron was paying nearly double the actual price. He got this straightened out and got a refund. We got a few more things at Food Lion and CVS and got back to the marina in slightly less than the allotted hour.

We asked Kiki if she wanted to go to the beach and of course she did so we took her. She is becoming quite the little swimmer. Of course she dug several holes in the sand as well.



Calvert Marina's "dog beach"



The Sea Dog takes advantage of the dog beach

We came back to HIGH COTTON where Kiki got her customary shower in the cockpit before she was allowed inside. Captain Ron plotted routes for the next few days along with several options.

Captain Ron decided he wanted to try out the swimming pool and Patti decided she would watch. The bathhouse is as rustic as the rest of the facilities, but the pool is modern, large and beautiful. Captain Ron swam enough to get cooled down and refreshed. Patti watched just as she had planned on doing. Calvert Marina really is a bargain at \$1.00 per foot.

We plan on leaving early (for us) tomorrow morning so we topped off the water tanks and will get to bed early.



Captain Ron tries out the swimming pool

Captain's Log, day fifty one (July 6, 2016)

We actually did get underway today a little after 7:00 AM. The Sea Dog wanted to sleep in but she was outvoted two to one. There was a little rain last night and it was cloudy when we left. We did have about ten minutes of rain while underway. Other than that, it turned into a beautiful day on the water. So beautiful that we passed up all our potential anchorages and went on to Deltaville, VA on the Rappahannock River. We were on the water for seven and a half hours.



The Sea Dog watching for "big fishies"

Along the way we saw a large pod of dolphins swimming in circles and diving. We took the boat

over and stopped to watch them. These are the first dolphins we have seen in the Chesapeake Bay. Kiki, of course, was thrilled to see the "big fishies" again. We've also seen lots of what we thought were stingrays but it turns out they are actually called "cownose rays". They swim near the surface but dive when we get too close. Kiki did get to see a couple of these before they dove. We saw another Camano Troll a bit south of the Potomac River. It was heading north and we were heading south. They slowed down and we did as well, then we had a conversation on the VHF radio. That's the second one we've seen on this trip.

Dozier's Regatta Point Yachting Center (try saying that three times in a row on the VHF radio) is a very nice marina, almost a resort. There are nice long floating docks, a swimming pool, laundry facilities, a loaner car and loaner bicycles and a nice captain's lounge. We enjoyed our stay two years ago and expect to enjoy it just as much this time.



HIGH COTTON at Dozier's Regatta Point Yachting Center

Kiki went to the office and barked at the treat jar. Once she got one she entertained the staff by playing with it. After we got settled in we took her for a walk and she went straight to the office for more treats and attention.



The ship's puppy waiting at the Doggie Center

Dinner was roast chicken and mashed potatoes with a side of spinach. We took our showers, walked the ship's puppy and are ready for a good night's sleep. This boat driving is hard work!

Captain's Log, day fifty two (July 7, 2016)

Patti decided this would be a good place to do a load of laundry so she got up early and gathered up the clothes and took them to the machines. We took the ship's puppy for her usual and customary walk and then had scrambled eggs for breakfast. By the time we were finished, it was time to take Kiki to the marina office to entertain the staff and beg for treats.

After that, we got the loaner car and went to the grocery store to stock up and buy dinner for tonight. Captain Ron also bought a USB thumb drive for the computer to make transferring routes to the chart plotter simpler.

We had a lunch of homemade chicken salad and fresh tomatoes and then changed and went to the pool. For once it was comfortably warm so we stayed for a while and talked to some of the other boaters.



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

After our pool time, we took Kiki back to the office and when they closed, went to the captain's lounge where we again talked boating with one of the other boaters.

Dinner on HIGH COTTON was steak, baked potatoes (for Captain Ron), sweet potatoes (for Patti) and Brussel sprouts.

Considering the weather, we'll probably stay here another night, head up river to Urbanna, VA for one day and night, then either anchor or take a slip halfway between there and Hampton, VA.

Captain's Log, day fifty three (July 8, 2016)

Yes, the Captain's Log is late again. Captain Ron got distracted watching the old time country music shows on the cable TV in the captain's lounge.

It was just a normal day in port anyway. Get up, walk the dog, get coffee (for Captain Ron), etc. We got the loaner car again and went to the dollar store and hardware store to get a few things we had missed the day before. We decided to get lunch and take it back to the marina since we only had the car for one hour.

There is a Chinese restaurant in Deltaville and since we hadn't had Chinese food since we left home, we decided to try it. This turned out to be a bad decision. The egg rolls were pretty good, the soup passable, but the main course wasn't up to our expectations. Oh well, live and learn. Perhaps the folks in Deltaville haven't been exposed to good Chinese food.

We spent the rest of the day in the pool talking to the other boaters about their boats, travels and destinations.

We had a dinner of sliced tomatoes and cucumbers and went to the lounge to watch RFD TV on cable again.

Captain's Log, day fifty four (July 9, 2016)

We got up early so we could get underway for Urbanna, VA before it got hot or windy. Surprisingly several other boaters got up before us and someone had already made the coffee. Captain Ron had some computer issues and had to reboot his computer before it would allow him to copy the next few days' routes onto an SD card for the chart plotter. He is thinking it's time to see what is new in the computer world.

We managed to pull out of Deltaville about 8:30 AM and head up the Rappahannock River towards Urbanna. Urbanna is out of the way but we heard it's not to be missed so we're traveling the fifteen miles each way to visit. We had the current against us the entire way so it took longer than expected but it was a pleasant trip.

The Urbanna Town Marina is relatively new and pretty nice but the docks are fixed and higher than we're used to. Tying up was a little difficult and the dockhand was friendly, but young and inexperienced. Once he went back inside we rearranged the lines more to our liking.



HIGH COTTON at the Urbanna, VA Town Marina

We went into the office to fill out the forms and pay for our night's stay. Kiki got some dog treats and entertained the dockhand.

We put the ship's puppy back on the boat and walked to town. Unlike Deltaville, Urbanna has a "downtown" even though it's only about three blocks. We met a local lady who suggested that we eat lunch in the historic drug store at the lunch counter. It was just like in the 1950s. The food was mediocre.



Downtown Urbanna, VA

After lunch, we walked the town, checked the shops and Patti bought some jewelry, a blouse and two "Urbanna, VA" T-shirts. There's a food market so we bought some more tomatoes and cucumbers

and bagels and cream cheese. We took everything back to HIGH COTTON, put it away, and rested a bit.

When we first pulled in to the marina, there was a very small sand beach next to the dock. We decided to take Kiki but by this time the tide had come in and it was mostly grass. The water was still fine and there was just a bit of beach left so we asked her if she wanted to go to the beach.

Of course, she did so we took her and she had a ball swimming and digging in the little patch of sand that was left. Several other people showed up including a couple who keep their boat at the marina and their dog. Both dogs played in the water (but not together).

Finally, it was time for the ship's puppy to get a shower and take a nap. She went with Patti into the marina shower and came out mostly clean. Then Patti and Captain Ron took their showers.

The humans got dressed and walked back to town for a nice dinner. Back at the boat, it was time to walk the hound again and turn in for the night. Tomorrow we head back down the river and back into the Chesapeake Bay.

Captain's Log, day fifty five (July 10, 2016)

Our intention today was to anchor out about four hours away near the New Point Comfort lighthouse. This would be two hours back down the Rappahannock River and two more hours south on the Chesapeake Bay.

We got up around 7:00 AM, took the Sea Dog to do her business, did the customary boat checks and got underway about 8:30 AM. We had the current with us most of the way and were making good time but as we were leaving the Bay for the anchorage, we turned on the marine weather

forecast. What we heard didn't sound very good so we decided to skip the anchorage and head for Hampton, VA. The route to the anchorage was a bit out of the way so the run for today was about seven and a half hours. The humans took turns driving while the K-9 stayed below most of the time biting at flies.

We got to Hampton and backed into our slip at the Downtown Hampton Public Piers. We were here two years ago and it's a decent place, right in the middle of town. We were too tired to explore so we finished our leftover steak and potatoes and took our showers. Tomorrow we'll have time to explore and shop.



Approaching Hampton, VA



HIGH COTTON at the Hampton, VA Public Piers

Captain's Log, day fifty six (July 11, 2016)

Early last night we saw a small sailboat approaching and looking like it was going to dock. The marina staff had gone home so we went out to help them. It turned out it was the same Russian family we had met in Solomons, the one where Patti taught the daughter how to cook and pick crabs.

We had a good night's sleep and woke at the crack of 8:30 AM. We got dressed and took the Sea Dog for her morning walk. We talked with some of the local folks and then went to the marina office where Kiki entertained the staff playing with the dog biscuit they offered her. The dockmaster had lived in Maryland for several years so we talked about the places we had lived and the things we had done.

We dropped off the pooch and put on our walking shoes. We hit the two drug stores and all the shops. The ice cream shop is gone, soon to be replaced by a bar. We stopped for lunch and then we walked back to HIGH COTTON to digest our food.

After his nap, Captain Ron copied his maps to his newly purchased "mini" USB drive and worked on plans for the next few days. Once we get back across Albemarle Sound, we will be retracing our wake and won't need to do so much planning. The Russian family left while we were napping so we didn't get to say goodbye.

We took Kiki for another walk around the waterfront. She kept leading us further and further. Finally, she tired herself out and Captain Ron had to carry her back to the marina. That is except for the part where she spied a squirrel and jumped out of his arms to chase it. Perhaps she was just fooling us about being tired.



The Captain and crew of HIGH COTTON on a land break

We didn't really need more food but Captain Ron had spotted paella on a restaurant menu and just had to have some. We walked the three blocks or so to the street where most of the restaurants are and had dinner. Captain Ron reports that his paella was "pretty good". Patti had nachos and reports that they were "excellent". It seems a bit odd to find both in the same restaurant but it's really a bar with food and apparently, they have a good cook.

We've decided we'll probably skip Portsmouth, VA and try to get to Coinjock, VA by tomorrow evening. We're taking the Virginia Cut this time, not the Dismal Swamp route that we have taken three times. This part of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway (AICW or ICW) has two options. The Virginia cut is a bit shorter and deeper and it's the main route. The Dismal Swamp Canal is the slower, scenic alternative.

We'll take our showers and get to bed early for an early start tomorrow.

Captain's Log, day fifty seven (July 12, 2016)

We actually did get an early start today. After finishing our usual routine, including filling the water tanks, and walking the dog, we got

underway about 7:00 AM. From Hampton to Portsmouth is about a two hour trip for us but we had already made the decision to bypass Portsmouth, so bypass it we did.



One of many shipyards in Portsmouth, VA

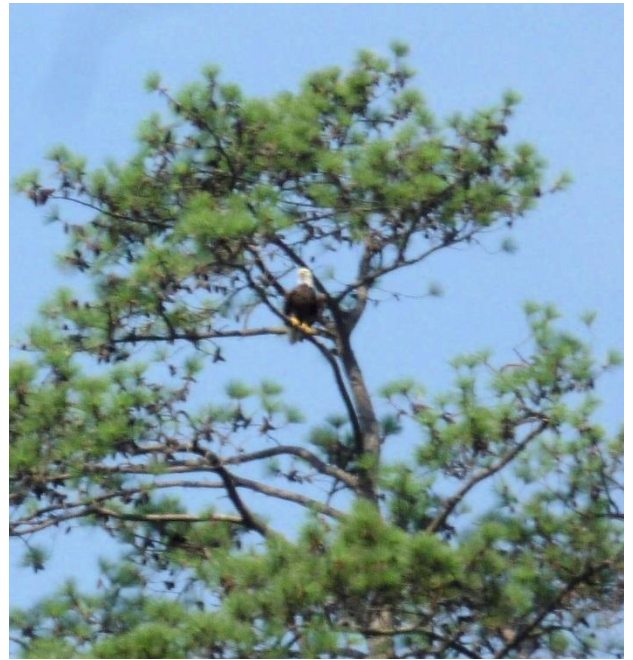


One of the railroad lift bridges on the ICW in Norfolk, VA

We were doing fine until we got to a railroad bridge that was down when it didn't need to be down. There was no train. The bridge is operated remotely and is supposed to be left open unless there's a train coming. Eventually, after another recreational boat and a commercial barge arrived, it opened.

We called our destination marina and their price for diesel fuel was \$2.25 per gallon including a 10 cent per gallon credit card surcharge. We were

passing a marina where diesel fuel was \$1.90 per gallon with no surcharge so we stopped and took on about fifty gallons.



A bald eagle on the ICW south of Norfolk, VA

Shortly after leaving the marina we got pulled over by the police for "speeding". Actually, we were making a small wake under a bridge and construction equipment had blocked the no wake sign. We got just a warning and went on our way.

There is one lock on the Virginia Cut route and when we got to it we were able to enter right away and tie up. It was about fifteen minutes before we actually started moving up.

We finished locking and the lockmaster opened the gates and let both boats out early. This wasn't really a help because we had to wait for a bridge that only opens on the hour. This left us circling around in a small space trying not to go aground or hit the other boat. Once the bridge opened, we had to dodge a tug pushing a barge and several northbound boats.



The Great Bridge Lock on the ICW Virginia Cut

It was a few miles to the next swing bridge and fortunately, we made it just in time. We were not so lucky for the one after that; we had to circle for twenty minutes. With the wind, it wasn't possible to just stop and wait for the bridge.

We called Coinjock Marina to reserve a space. They don't actually have slips, it's one long face dock along the canal. They had room for us and said they were open until 8:00 PM so we continued on our way. Captain Ron handed the helm over to Patti for a couple of hours and took the Sea Dog below for a nap.

We got to Coinjock about 5:30 PM and got settled in. The marina has a restaurant that is famous for its prime rib. There's a 32 ounce cut and a 14 ounce cut. Patti had the 14 ounce cut. Captain Ron had seafood. The steak and seafood were very good but the vegetables appeared to be directly out of a can.

We took our showers, walked the ship's puppy and we're ready for bed. Tomorrow we will cross the Albemarle Sound if the weather permits.

Captain's Log, day fifty eight (July 13, 2016)

Which is better, the Great Dismal Swamp route or the Virginia Cut? The answer is, "it depends". For commercial traffic, the answer is, the Virginia Cut. It's deeper and for most of the way, there are no speed restrictions. There are several short no-wake zones though. Fast boats in a hurry or larger recreational boats might prefer the Virginia Cut as well. The down side is there are three bridges and one lock, all on restricted schedules.



HIGH COTTON docked for the night at Coinjock Marina

The Great Dismal Swamp route is mostly restricted to 6 MPH and is only about six feet deep. There are two locks with adjoining bridges. There's a welcome center with a dock where boats can tie up at no charge.

For us, it's probably a wash. Take one one time, the other the next time.

Anyway, we got up early this morning to try to cross the Albemarle Sound before the winds picked up. One of the boats at the marina left just a few minutes before we did so we just followed it. Another boat left later but we soon saw it chasing us, throwing a big wake. It passed us and then passed the boat in front of us.



It's not supposed to be a race

Our strategy of leaving early worked. The water was calm heading towards the Sound and the Sound was relatively calm. We made it in about four hours so we decided to continue up the Alligator River and anchor near where the Alligator River Pungo River Canal starts. The canal is over twenty miles long with no place to anchor and we didn't feel like running the three more hours this would take. We did run almost seven hours today.

Once we cleared the Alligator River Bridge, Captain Ron turned the helm over to Patti and went below to take a nap. This went well for a half hour or so and then a group of military fighter jets decided to practice going as fast and as loud as they could directly above HIGH COTTON. This, of course, woke Captain Ron so he went up to see what the fuss was about. The fighters continued back and forth across the river for an hour or so. Even as the sun sets, we can hear them somewhere around us, just not close.

We are anchored with no air conditioning and it's been very hot today and it's still hot as we write this. We're going to stop in a marina (with a pool) tomorrow.



The view from our anchorage

Captain's Log, day fifty nine (July 14, 2016)

It cooled down a bit last night and there was a breeze so we got a good night's sleep. A couple sailboats came up the ICW but continued on to the next anchorage. They were a mile or so from us. Just as it was getting dark, a trawler came into the anchorage but stayed quite a ways from us. This was an area with no signs of civilization (other than navigation aids and the other boats).

We wanted to get an early start to avoid the heat so we got underway a little after 7:00 AM. The other trawler left a few minutes before we did but it was headed north and we were headed south.

It took three hours to transit the Alligator River Pungo River Canal and another hour to reach the Dowry Creek Marina. We saw several bald eagles along the way, but again, no bears.

The marina put us on the long fuel dock so docking was a breeze. We took Kiki to do her business, paid our bill, had a quick lunch and headed for the pool. The pool water was warmer than we would have liked but it was still refreshing.

There was a lady from a small, rather unique boat in the pool and we began talking to her. We

mentioned that we had seen a boat like hers somewhere and had even been invited on it. We talked about places we had been and she mentioned St Marys, GA. We've been there too and we talked about the marina and the town.

Once she got out of the pool and left, we realized that the boat we had seen was actually her boat and we had seen it in St Marys, GA. Small world! Later, we saw her and her husband in the Captain's lounge and they remembered us as well and we had a nice talk.

Dowry Creek Marina laundry facilities and unlike most marinas, they are free so Patti decided to wash everything that wasn't fastened down. Some of Patti's non-boating friends have asked her what we do about laundry when we're cruising and she tells them we put the dirty clothes in a mesh bag and drag them behind the boat! The reality of course is that perhaps half of the marinas we stay in have laundry facilities.



Dowry Creek Marina, NC

We'll leave early tomorrow for River Dunes Marina near Oriental, NC. River Dunes is part of an upscale development and is like a country club for boats. There is a pool there as well. With the upper ninety degree temperatures we are having, a pool is a great way to cool off.

Captain's Log, day sixty (July 15, 2016)

We did what we said we would do, we left early, about 7:00 AM. Putting the canvas cover over the windshield not only kept the interior of the boat cooler, it kept it darker and it was easier to sleep.

A sailboat came in yesterday evening and they put it right behind us on the fuel dock so we couldn't back out. With the help of the bow thruster, we made a tight U turn and headed out past the sailboat and into the narrow channel.

Our route took us down the Pungo River past Belhaven, across the Pamlico River and finally into the Neuse River. It was already windy when we left and by the time we got to the Neuse River, we were rocking and rolling. Fortunately we only had a short way to go on the Neuse River before turning into Broad Creek and River Dunes Marina.

We docked HIGH COTTON, walked the Sea Dog and checked in. This place is like a country club, everything goes on a "tab" and you pay when you leave. There's a snack bar next to the pool so we had burgers for lunch and then headed to the new general store. They have a strange assortment of merchandise, from motor oil to frozen chicken pot pies (\$18 each) and even a West Marine first aid kit. We bought ice cream and T-shirts and headed back to our boat.

About this time, the marina started filling up and we ended up talking to some of the boaters. It turns out they are part of a boat club and had about a dozen boats cruising together. Their home marina is in Virginia Beach, VA.

The sky began to turn dark and we could hear thunder in the distance so we decided not to head for the pool.

Instead, we took the ship's puppy for a walk to check out the bathhouse/fitness center/lounge. Captain Ron tested the treadmill for about three

minutes. Patti laughed. There's a TV set with a satellite connection that gets our favorite old time country music shows. Farm news was on so we went back and had dinner on HIGH COTTON. Hot dogs with sauerkraut and baked beans. We'll do better tomorrow.



Captain Ron tries out the treadmill

We took our shower supplies and walked back to the bathhouse and took our showers and watched our shows. Then it was back to the boat and bedtime.

Captain's Log, day sixty one (July 16, 2016)

Well, today was a little different than our usual day in port. We woke late, walked the hound and had a home (boat) cooked breakfast. We decided to see if the marina's loaner car was available and it was so we signed it out and headed to town for the grocery store.

The closest town is Oriental, NC and it used to have a nice independent grocery store. A couple years ago, Walmart put in a Walmart Express store and put the local store out of business. Then Walmart closed their store so there is no grocery store in Oriental anymore. Piggly Wiggly will be opening a store in a few weeks but that won't help us.

So, we had to go three or four towns away to get groceries and other supplies. We were driving along a country road, far from any houses when we came upon a dog standing in the middle of the road. Captain Ron was driving and he slowed down and went around it. We looked back and the dog was following us. Captain Ron pulled the loaner car off onto the shoulder and got out. The dog came up to him and wanted to get into the car. The dog had no collar or tags but was very friendly.

We didn't really know what to do, we couldn't just leave the dog in the middle of the road but we didn't know of any shelters or other places to take it. A couple of minutes later a young woman drove by and stopped to see what was going on. We explained the situation and she agreed to take the dog home with her and clean him up and find a place for him. That was a break for us.

We went to three grocery stores and couldn't find fresh shrimp but we did get pork chops and vegetables. We brought the car back and got our stuff onto the boat just in time to avoid a thunderstorm. The marina staff told us where we could have gotten fresh shrimp.

We had a lunch of fresh tomatoes, cucumbers and mozzarella cheese and then decided that since it was still raining and we had nothing better to do, we should get the car again and go buy the shrimp.

We ended up at this shack on the waterfront with a bunch of people sitting on boxes on the porch, but it was the seafood place and we bought two pounds of fresh shrimp with the heads still on. Since we hadn't found shrimp the first time, we hadn't bought fresh corn, but the shrimp people told us where to find that so we went to the produce stand and bought fresh Silver Queen corn and a bunch of other nice looking produce. On the way back, we passed a turtle trying to cross the road so Patti got out and put it in the woods. That's two animal rescues in one day.

Patti pulled the heads off the shrimp and shucked the corn and we had a great dinner of fresh shrimp and fresh corn.

After dinner, we headed for the lounge and watched an hour of old time country music.

Back on the dock, we walked the pooch and talked to the people from the boating club again. They invited us to their party but it's our bed time so we declined.



HIGH COTTON at River Dunes Marina

Captain's Log, day sixty two (July 17, 2016)

Yep, the log is late again. We're taking advantage of the marina's "pay for three nights, get the fourth night free" plan so we're still here hobnobbing with the rich and famous.

Most of the day was spent in the pool and hot tub, the rest walking the hound and talking to the folks from the visiting boat club. One needed a fuse so Captain Ron gave him one from his "spares" collection.

Captain Ron spent some time planning the next few days' travel plans. There will be another oil change in the near future and it's more convenient

to do this at a marina, especially if it's one that accepts used oil.



This boat cruising is a tough life

Patti whipped up a "boat cooked" meal of pork chops, baked sweet potatoes and baby lima beans. Yumm!

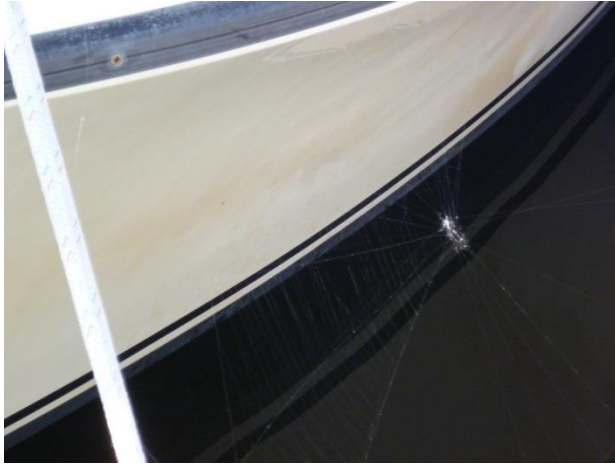
That's pretty much it so we'll make it short and sweet for today.

Captain's Log, day sixty three (July 18, 2016)

Today was pretty much a repeat of yesterday. Get up, eat breakfast, go to the pool, eat lunch, go to the pool, etc. We were talking to a couple at the pool and they said we looked familiar. After a bit of guessing, it turned out that we had shared a table for breakfast at the deli in Annapolis a few weeks ago.

We had a short conversation and then we had to go. We were beginning to turn pink from the sun.

We will check out early tomorrow and head for Morehead City where Captain Ron plans to change the oil in the engine. Sadly though, we realize that we are on our way home.



Spider webs on your dock lines mean it's time to move on

Captain's Log, day sixty four (July 19, 2016)

Our plan for today was to get up early and hopefully beat the wind for our two hours on the Neuse River. One website predicted winds of five to seven miles per hour. Another predicted ten to fifteen miles per hour (this turned out to be the correct prediction).

River Dunes Marina (we always wonder where they came up with that name, it's not on a river and there are no dunes) is not like most marinas. Most marinas charge you when you check in. You tell them the length of your boat and how many nights you plan to stay and pay then. At River Dunes, you "check out" and pay when you leave. They add up how many days you stayed and any food you ordered (you can't pay cash for your food; it goes on your tab).

So, we waited until they opened at 8:00 AM and settled our bill. Somehow, they had charged us for 50 amp electrical power instead of the 30 amp power that we used and it took two people to figure out how to correct the bill.

The wind was already blowing as we left our slip and by the time we got out of the creek and onto the Neuse River, we were heading into three foot

seas. At least they were head on, not on the beam so there was no rocking, just up and down motion.

This went on for a couple of hours and then we turned into Adams Creek and out of the wind.

Our plan was to get a slip at Portside Marina where Captain Ron could change the oil. They didn't have a slip for us but they also manage the Morehead City Docks so they directed us there.

The Morehead City Docks are in better shape than the ones at Portside Marina and they are more sheltered from the wind and waves. There are heads and showers but no laundry facilities. We washed everything that needed washing at River Dunes so that wasn't an issue. There are no dockhands but the wind was blowing hard enough that Captain Ron just pulled into a slip and let the wind hold HIGH COTTON against the dock until we could get the lines tied.



HIGH COTTON at the Morehead City Docks

Kiki got her customary walk and then Patti and Captain Ron walked to a nearby restaurant for lunch. As we were eating, it began to rain but it had stopped by the time we finished eating.

Back on the boat, Captain Ron began the task of changing the oil. He has figured that he can keep from spilling oil in the bilge by placing an eight inch disposable aluminum baking pan under the filter to

catch the oil that comes out when the filter is unscrewed. This works well, but today, he pulled it out from under the filter, set it on the floor and then put his elbow in it while climbing out of the bilge. Now he has a dedicated oil changing T-shirt!

After the cleanup, the entire crew set out for a walk to the marine store and the ice cream shop. The ship's puppy entertained the staff at the marine store while Captain Ron searched the shelves for something he could convince himself that he needed. He found a repair latch for the cooler and drain hoses for the flybridge. He hadn't gotten around to installing the ones he bought at West Marine and these were better and less expensive.



Patti meets King Neptune in Morehead City, NC

After the marine store, we stopped at the ice cream shop and the entire crew was treated to ice cream.

After the ice cream shop, we were walking towards the dock when we came upon a store called "Sea Paws". Well, since one of us actually has paws, we decided to go in. Inside the door was a fence and gate and inside that was a pet supply store guarded by a white Husky.

The owner suggested that we let Kiki off her leash so we did and she investigated everything in the

store including the Husky. She and the Husky played until Kiki spied the rack with the dog treats and stood at the base barking to get our attention. Needless to say Kiki got a bag of treats and a dog toy.



Kiki in the pet store

We came back to HIGH COTTON thinking we would walk to one of the restaurants for dinner. We actually got the boat closed up and started walking to town when it began to rain along with thunder and lightning. We decided we might be just as well off dining on HIGH COTTON. Just a salad, we weren't actually that hungry after eating a pizza for lunch. And the new drain hoses worked as planned.

We took our showers and then took the hound out for her evening walk. We saw several people looking for Pokémon on their phones. We wondered if that was a good idea so close to the water. Some of the people stopped to pet the Sea Dog and we talked to some of the local folks.

It's time for bed. We're planning on anchoring at the Camp Lejeune Marine base tomorrow night but we will have to work with the weather to get there.

Captain's Log, day sixty five (July 20, 2016)

When we checked our phone this morning, it said to bring an umbrella, it's going to rain today. We

sit here anchored at 5:00 PM and we haven't seen shade, much less rain so far.

We got up, did the usual dog walk and boat checks and got underway a little after 8:30 AM. The City Docks were actually a pretty good stop. The bathhouse is a little strange because there is no sink or toilet in the shower room. You have to go outside and into a different room.

Our trip today was pretty uneventful. We stopped at Dudley's Marina in Swansboro to fill up with cheap diesel fuel and dispose of our used oil and filters. That was a bit tricky because of the shallow water, but we made it in and out just fine. Later we had to speed it up a bit to make the opening of the Onslow Beach Bridge. This bridge only opens on the hour and half hour and if you arrive at any other time you have to wait.

A mile or two before you get to the bridge (if you are headed south) there is a really bad shoaling spot and you have to head almost to shore and then back towards the other side of the ICW. It's marked with floating buoys but if you didn't know better, you would think they are misplaced.

There was a sailboat a half mile or so ahead of us and all of a sudden we could see it sideways in the channel. It tried several times but couldn't figure out how to get past this spot. We slowed down a bit and following the markers, we cruised on through with about seven feet of water. Captain Ron tried to raise the sailboat on the VHF and tell him to go through the same way we did but they didn't answer. This is the same sailboat that didn't answer the radio when we passed it a few hours ago.

We pulled into the anchorage at Mile Hammock Bay, chose our spot and set the anchor. A half hour or so later, another boat that had been behind us but missed the bridge opening pulled in and anchored. Even though this is a very large

anchorage, they picked a spot just a hundred yards or so away from us.

All of a sudden, two fairly large military boats pulled in at high speed, seemingly ignoring the presence of the two anchored boats and rocking both of us. The boats stopped just a hundred feet or so from us and after some conversation, several divers jumped into the water. The boats then each launched a smaller boat from their deck.



The US Marines operating in the anchorage

The large boats left and the smaller boats and the divers went away from the anchored boats. Next, a small private center console with a family showed up and decided to pull the kids in a tube in circles around the anchored boats. Eventually, Captain Ron went out to the cockpit in his Speedo and they left.

We mentioned the sailboat that couldn't get through the shallow place on the ICW. Well, it eventually showed up in the anchorage and after circling around a bit, it decided to anchor between us and the other boat! There is room for fifteen or more boats in this anchorage and here we have three in a row. We may not be able to shower naked in the cockpit tonight!



Our anchorage neighbors - Mile Hammock Bay, NC

Tomorrow we should make it to Wrightsville Beach where we can walk to a grocery store and a West Marine. We don't need anything in particular at West Marine but Captain Ron just likes to see what's available.



The sun sets on Mile Hammock Bay

Captain's Log, day sixty six (July 21, 2016)

Mile Hammock Bay is normally a nice anchorage and is very popular with cruisers. It's just about half way between Wrightsville Beach and Morehead City/ Beaufort, NC. Not last night! Once the divers and their boats and the tubing family left, the airplanes and helicopters started up. They continued after dark and in addition, they were

apparently blowing things up on land. It was hot, the breeze died down and the no-see-ums came out. We didn't have a great night's sleep.

The Marines fired their equipment again up a little after daybreak. One thing for sure, they're not going to sneak up on the enemy!

So, we got up, did our boat checks and got underway just after the sailboat. Of course, this meant we had to pass him again (for the third time). It was about a two hour trip to the bridge that only opens on the hour. We tried to time it but we had the current with us so we got there early and had to circle in front of the bridge until it was time for it to open. The sailboat caught up with us again but stayed behind us.

As we neared Wrightsville Beach, we noticed the increased boat and jet ski traffic that we noticed two years ago.. One guy towing kids on a tube passed us throwing a big wake that rocked HIGH COTTON. He turned around and did the same thing going the other way. He then turned around and did it a third time. Captain Ron was waiting with his air horn to have a talk with him about boating courtesy and safety if he did it again but they turned and went off a different way.

Our "marina" (really nothing more than a bar with a dock) is right on the ICW. By "right on the ICW", we mean boats are passing just a few feet from us. We got to the dock, found an empty spot and pulled in and tied ourselves up. Captain Ron plugged in the shorepower cord and nothing happened. He went inside to find the person in charge (a bartender). She asked what appeared to be a busboy to help. He said he would ask the manager.

He came to the boat and said the manager said "they should be working." Captain Ron told him that they were not (Captain Ron had tried both the 30 amp and the 50 amp receptacles. The busboy

went in and came back with the manager who said they didn't work and we would have to move to one that did. About this time, a boat pulled out and by moving another boat back, we were able to move HIGH COTTON to where we could plug into a working power pedestal. We should mention that this was not our first choice, but the marina we had intended to stay at didn't have room for us.



Dockside Marina - Wrightsville Beach, NC

While this was going on, Patti took the ship's puppy for a walk. She was very happy to be on land for a change.

We left Kiki and the boat to cool and went inside to pay for dockage and buy lunch. As so often happens, we ordered more than we could eat so we brought the leftovers back to the boat and put them away.

Next, it was time to walk to West Marine and the grocery store. Captain Ron couldn't find anything he needed at West Marine but we did pick up a few things at the grocery store including something to treat bug bites. Walking back to the boat, Patti spied a little shop, went in and came out with a new dress.

We rested a bit from our walk and then took Kiki out for a short walk. Back on the boat, we ate the rest of our lunch and then took showers on HIGH

COTTON (yep, this "marina" has toilets but no showers). At least we don't have to worry so much about conserving water; we can fill the tanks in the morning before we shove off.

Captain's Log, day sixty seven (July 22, 2016)

Last night was a big change from the night before. Cool, quiet and dark. Everybody slept well; the two legged ones and the four legged one. Of course, when the sun came up, everyone but the crew of HIGH COTTON wanted to go fishing so the boats started moving. Wrightsville Beach has a no-wake zone from one end to the other so it wasn't too bad but we did bump the dock a couple times. Then the warning siren on the drawbridge sounded for an opening so we decided to get up and be on our way south.

We stopped to watch a pod of dolphins between Wrightsville Beach and Carolina Beach. They didn't stick around so neither did we. We did notice that the boat traffic was beginning to pick up and even though it was a "work day" (Friday), a lot of people were out heading for the fishing grounds and setting up tents and equipment in the party areas east of the ICW.



Folks getting ready to party on the sand dunes

For once, the Cape Fear River was calm and we had smooth sailing even though we were bucking the current and not making good time. It didn't really matter though; we cruised past Southport and pulled into the St. James Plantation Marina before 1:00 PM and got ourselves settled in.

The people in the marina office said they couldn't find our reservation but they had space for us anyway. We figured out later that Captain Ron had called and made a reservation at St. Johns, not St. James. He called St. Johns and cancelled and everything was fine. The St. James Plantation Marina is part of a very large development with many homes and four golf courses. It's a nice marina with floating docks and protection from currents. It turns out there are two other boats here named HIGH COTTON.



St. James Plantation Marina

Patti put a load of clothes in the washing machine and we went to the restaurant for dinner. We noticed that we seemed to be the youngest people in the place except for those working there. The food was good and the prices were reasonable.

We will go to bed early, get up early and head for Myrtle Beach.

Captain's Log, day sixty eight (July 23, 2016)

We woke up this morning to the sound of distant thunder. It looked fine but the radar showed rain all around us. We walked the ship's puppy (and ourselves) and got a bag of ice from the store. Captain Ron did his boat checks and filled the water tanks. He removed the cover from the front windows in case we had to operate from the lower helm.

We had to dodge a couple of small boats heading out for some Saturday fishing but we got ourselves headed south on the ICW. After an hour or so it did begin to rain a bit so we went below to drive. It was a short rain and soon we were back on the flybridge where we prefer to be. We made it through the trouble spots without issue and soon we were at Little River Inlet and the North Carolina/South Carolina border. Little River is also the beginning of jet ski heaven (or hell depending on your point of view).

Jet skis and other boats were coming at us from all directions and all we could do was hang on to the Sea Dog and try to stay in the channel. A large power boat coming in from the ocean passed us closer than it should have and gave us a big wake. Captain Ron tried to raise the captain on the VHF radio to have a conversation about safety and courtesy but he didn't answer.

We called the Little River Swing Bridge and they opened for us right away. Then it was the "rock pile" (a part of the ICW known for having dangerous rocks just outside of the channel) and Barefoot Landing Marina in North Myrtle Beach. The only place they had for us was at the far end of the dock and by the time the dockmaster got there we were already tied up.

We decided to walk to where the stores and restaurants are and we stopped in one shop for ice

cream. Patti and Kiki shared a cup, Captain Ron had his own.



The ship's puppy gets her ice cream fix

When we finished, we started walking again but there is an exhibit of live tigers and when we got close to it Kiki stopped in her tracks and refused to go any closer. We had to carry her back to the boat.

The Sea Dog stayed to guard HIGH COTTON while the humans shopped and ate dinner. After dinner and a bit of TV watching, we took her out but she still refused to walk anywhere near the tiger exhibit. So, it was back to the boat again.



HIGH COTTON at Barefoot Landing Marina

The plan is to stop to visit friends who have a house and a dock right on the ICW. It's only a little over two hours from here so we can sleep in late.

Captain's Log, day sixty nine (July 24, 2016)

Since our friends wouldn't be getting home from church until about 12:30 PM on Sunday, we delayed our departure from Myrtle Beach. We walked the Sea Dog, and then we (the humans) walked to the McDonalds on route 17 for a "Big Breakfast". It occurred to us from observing the Sunday morning crowd in McDonalds that Myrtle Beach may truly be the "Redneck Riviera" that it is sometimes called.

Anyway, we returned to HIGH COTTON and cast off our lines about 10:30 AM. The two hour trip was uneventful except for the jet ski traffic. The problem we have with jet skis is not the fact that they are jet skis (technically "personal watercraft"), but the fact that in tourist areas they are rented to people with no boating knowledge or experience and no thoughts of boating safety.

We got to Curtiss and Bob's house at about 1:00 PM and docked behind their house as we have done before. We had a lunch of fresh tomatoes and cucumbers from one of the farmer's markets.

Bob and Curtiss are big time RVers and own a motor home so after lunch we went with them to Camping World to get something that they needed. Kiki went along as well. They didn't find what they needed but we bought a new and improved fly swatter and a new bathmat for HIGH COTTON.

Since they didn't find what they needed, we all piled into their car and went to a different Camping World. Kiki thought this was great fun as she got to go into the stores and snoop around.

Bob found what he was looking for so he bought it and we drove back to their house and sat on their deck watching the boats going up and down the ICW. Later, we (minus the Sea Dog) went to Bob Evans for dinner. Then it was showers and a stationary bed for the first time in two months.



HIGH COTTON safely tied up at Curtiss and Bob's dock

Captain's Log, day seventy (July 25, 2016)

We got up, ate breakfast and watched the local news on TV. Curtiss noticed a loose nail on the trim of their deck so she got a hammer to try to drive it back in. Instead, the trim board fell off and hit the ground. An inspection showed that all the trim boards were loose and about to fall. Captain Ron determined that screws would have been a better choice so he and Bob set out for Lowes on a supply run.

Back at the house with a box of 125 screws, he and Bob set out to make repairs. They used up all the screws and had to return to Lowes for another box. At least they had a cordless drill and bits for the screws. They also took a few breaks that they might not have been able to take if they were working for a living.



Captain Ron gets put to work

Camping World called and said that their motor home (which had been in for repairs) was ready so we all piled into the car and went to retrieve it. Then we went to a Japanese restaurant (minus Kiki) for dinner. (Kiki writes: *I don't know why the humans leave me home by myself sometimes. They are up to something and they shouldn't be leaving me out of it.*)



The "ladies" - Curtiss, Kiki and Patti

Captain's Log, day seventy one (July 26, 2016)

The Socastee Swing Bridge just south of Curtiss and Bob's house is being repaired and until further notice it's left open for boat traffic during the night but it closes at 7:00 AM and only opens on the

hour until 7:00 PM. One thought was to get up early and get through it before it closed at 7:00 AM. That would have been fine except we wanted to stop for diesel fuel at Osprey Marina because it's about seventy cents per gallon cheaper than the marinas in the Charleston area.

We called Osprey Marina and found that it doesn't open until 8:00 AM. It's just a couple miles south of the Socastee Bridge.

So, we left a little after 7:30 AM and waited for the Socastee Bridge to open at 8:00 AM. Then we traveled a few miles to Osprey Marina where we had to wait for another boat to fuel up. By the time we were fueled and back on the ICW we had been underway for nearly two hours and had gone only about three miles.



Waiting for the Socastee Swing Bridge

We did see a small alligator on the bank and lots of turtles sunning on logs. We had the current with us on the Waccamaw River but as we neared Winyah Bay it turned against us and was against us most of the rest of the day.

We stopped to watch dolphins a couple times. Kiki knows that if we are running and slow down, there's a good chance it's for the "big fishies". She loves to watch them swim and dive.



Heading south on the Waccamaw River



The Sea Dog faces into the wind keeping watch

Because of waiting for the bridge, waiting for fuel and the current running against us, it was a long, hot day and we pulled into our anchorage on Awendaw Creek after 5:00 PM. We had dolphins swimming around the boat as we anchored. It was hot but there was a good breeze blowing.

We warmed up dinner, took showers in the cockpit and went to bed.

Captain's Log, day seventy two (July 27, 2016)

The breeze died down last night so it was pretty hot for most of the night. There was a large trawler in the anchorage when we pulled in last

night and it was still there when we left. It did have an anchor light when it got dark and it was off the next morning but it could have been automatic. We weren't sure if there was anyone on board or not.

We wanted to get to home at RiversEdge Marina at slack current and that was about 3:45 PM so we took our time. We saw some dolphins again and stopped to let Kiki watch them. As often happens on this section of the ICW, we had the current with us for a few miles, then against us, then with us again as we passed the various ocean inlets. Once we got to the Charleston Harbor, the tide was coming in and we had a favorable current all the way up the Ashley River to RiversEdge Marina.



It's low tide on the ICW



The Cooper River Bridge – we are getting close to home

We entered the fairway and backed into our slip just about 3:30 PM, tied HIGH COTTON up and took the ship's puppy for a well-deserved walk on dry land. We went into the office to say hello and then it was time to unload the boat. By this time it was about 98 degrees in the sun and the air conditioner hadn't cooled the boat down yet. We had two dock carts full of "stuff" and by the time we got one loaded, Captain Ron and Kiki had to take it up the ramp to the office and cool down a bit. Remember the warning; take care of the pets and the elderly.

After a few minutes, he went back and got the second cart. Our friend Elena came and picked us up and took us home. Elena is Kiki's unofficial grandma.



Our neighbor brought in our mail for us

So now we are back on land for a while but we're planning a boat washing party for the weekend. Everyone is invited. BYOB (bring your own bucket).

Epilogue

Duration	72 days
Distance	1631 nautical miles
Time underway	233 hours
Fuel used (diesel)	411 gallons
Fuel consumption	1.76 GPH
Fuel mileage	3.96 NMPG
Fuel cost	\$820
Nights anchored	12
Nights on free docks	5
Nights in marinas	55
Marina cost	\$2694

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 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 at all.

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, fuel stops 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 Chesapeake Bay
The Great Book of Anchorages Norfolk to FL

Our neighbor kept our lawn mowed, brought in the mail and packages, and kept an eye on the house for us. A friend drove us to the marina and picked us up so we wouldn’t have to leave our vehicle parked in the marina lot for the entire duration.

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.