

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

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. Cruising at 2000 RPM, she makes 7 knots over slack water and burns about 1.8 GPH.

The following is an account of a cruise south on the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway from Charleston, SC to Florida and across the Okeechobee Waterway to the Gulf of Mexico beginning on April 20, 2017 and ending on June 27, 2017.

Captain's Log, day one (April 20, 2017)

There's little sense in owning a boat if you don't use it, right? And if it's a cruising style boat, you might as well cruise on it right? So we're heading south from our home base in Charleston, SC. The plan is to head to Florida and across the Okeechobee Waterway to Ft. Myers and the Gulf of Mexico.

That's the plan anyway but as we all know, plans are subject to change. In fact, our plans have already changed. Wednesday, April 19 was to have been the start of our cruise but Captain Ron had a toothache that needed to be dealt with before we left. He went to his family dentist who examined him and referred him to a specialist. The computerized X-ray machine at the specialist's office wouldn't work so after several tries he had to go to a different office.

At the second office (the third dentist of the day), it was determined that the tooth needed to be pulled. They don't pull teeth so he was referred to a fourth dentist in the same building.

There, they said they could take care of him but he would have to wait to be worked in between other patients.

Finally, about 4:00 PM, Captain Ron left for home with one less tooth and a bunch of prescriptions.

This morning Captain Ron awoke with no pain or numbness so we decided to head out. We asked our friend to pick us up and take us with everything that hadn't already been loaded to RiversEdge Marina so we wouldn't have to leave our vehicle in the parking lot for an extended time.

Getting HIGH COTTON ready to leave, Captain Ron noticed that even a little bit of exertion caused him to become nauseated. Hopefully, this is just a side effect of the antibiotics he has to take for the next week.

Anyhow, HIGH COTTON, with Captain Ron at the helm along with Patti and Kiki the Sea Dog, left RiversEdge Marina about 2:45 PM. We had an uneventful cruise down the Ashley River and turned into Wappoo Creek on the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway (AICW or ICW for short). We were heading south but the snowbirders are heading north this time of year and we saw several before we left the Charleston area. We also saw several dolphins, Kiki's favorite boat sight.

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Leaving Charleston (under the Limehouse Bridge)

We chose an anchorage on Church Creek which is about 3 ½ hours from Rivers Edge. We pulled in, set the hook and ate a light supper. We'll get up when we get up and continue south, probably stopping in Beaufort, SC.

Captain's Log, day two (April 21, 2017)

We had a great night's sleep last night with the waves gently slapping the hull, something that either helps you to sleep or keeps you awake. For us, it helps us to sleep. We were alone in the anchorage and only the sound of a tug and barge going north on the ICW woke us. It was far enough away that it wasn't an issue.

We got underway and were doing fine until we came upon two tugs towing dredging equipment just before Watts Cut. It's a narrow passage between two rivers and there was no safe place to pass. We were slowed to idle speed for about three miles. We did see a small alligator on the bank though.

Kiki writes: "I never know when we go to the boat if it's just for the weekend or for a long trip. I enjoy the long trips because I get to see big fishies and to visit new places. And I get to be with my mawmaw and pawpaw."



Tugs and Dredges in Watts Cut



Alligator in Watts Cut

Later on we came across several pods of dolphins (Kiki knows them as "big fishies"). A couple swam along with the boat for several minutes. The Sea Dog really enjoyed that.

We mentioned yesterday about plans changing. Well, our plan was to dock for a few hours in Beaufort (SC) at the free dock, walk the town, get dinner in a restaurant and then head down the river a mile or so to a good anchorage. The next day was to be spent at Thunderbolt Marina in Thunderbolt, GA where we would buy fuel, take a slip and eat at Tubby's Tank House, a well-known restaurant where we've eaten before.

We called Thunderbolt Marina and were told that they were full and couldn't take us. OK,

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we'll just leave that part out and anchor somewhere instead.

We got to Beaufort and found the free dock closed for repairs. We could still anchor of course, but we would have to dig out our "boat food" for dinner.

OK, time for "plan B" (or is it "plan C"?). Lady's Island Marina is just outside of Beaufort and next door is a nice seafood restaurant where we've eaten before. We called Lady's Island Marina and they had room for us so that's what we decided on.

We got ourselves docked and checked in, rested a bit and then took showers, put on our "good clothes" and went to the restaurant for dinner. As we were eating dinner, we looked out the window and the tugs and dredging equipment were passing by.

After dinner, we walked back to HIGH COTTON, got the Ship's Puppy and walked to the Dairy Queen for ice cream. Then, back to the boat for a good night's rest.

Captain's Log, day three (April 22, 2017)

We made it to Georgia! But first – Last evening as we were heading to the ice cream shop after dinner, there was a group of a half dozen or more boaters sitting around a circle on the marina deck drinking and talking. They had a pair of small dogs so Kiki decided to check them out. Once she approved of them, she went around the circle encouraging each one in turn to pet her. She knows how to work a crowd!

We got underway late this morning. There were a couple issues to resolve first. One, for some unknown reason, Garmin HomePort, our

navigation software wouldn't correctly read the marine charts. We have cards with routes for the chart plotter but we couldn't plan new routes. Without going into details, this was eventually resolved and navigation and planning are now on track.

The other issue was a sewage leak every time the toilet was flushed. Not a serious leak but not pleasant. It was determined that the holding tank vent line was clogged and flushing it with the dock hose cleared it with the side effect of a geyser of raw sewage from the open deck plate. Nothing the hose couldn't wash away though.

So it was nearly 10:00 AM by the time we pulled out of the marina and headed back south on the ICW. It was a bit windy and HIGH COTTON was rolling with the waves so eventually Patti and the Sea Dog headed below leaving Captain Ron to brave the wind and waves. Eventually, the seas settled down and Patti and Captain Ron swapped places for a while. Captain Ron is still suffering the effects of his antibiotics and tires easily (Patti writes: *He also seems a bit more grouchy than usual*).



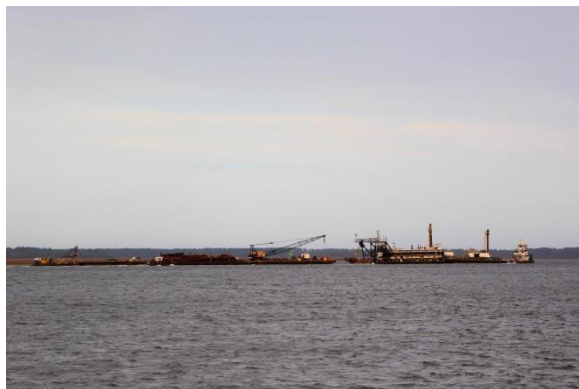
Patti and the Sea Dog

Other than the wind, it was a beautiful day today and it seems like everyone who owns a boat had it out on the water. And most were

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trying to see how fast their boat would go. Once everybody was back on the flybridge, we saw several different pods of dolphins. None would swim with us today though.

We had decided to fill our diesel tanks at Thunderbolt Marina in Thunderbolt, GA, but as we neared the town, we got stuck behind the same pair of barges we had to follow through Watts Cut yesterday.



The barges and dredges we've been following

We finally got to the marina and took on thirty one gallons of diesel fuel. A mile or two further down the ICW we pulled into the Herb River and anchored. It was full of jet skis and small fast boats when we got here but most of them are gone and we're sharing the anchorage with a sailboat and another trawler that went further up the river. It looks like it will be a decent anchorage.

Captain's Log, day four (April 23, 2017)

We don't want this to turn into a boat repair blog but if we're going to tell it like it is, we have to tell it like it is.

Our boat, being considerably smaller than Donald Trump's yacht, has what is called a "wet head". This means that the shower, toilet and sink are in the same compartment and the sink

faucet lifts out and becomes the shower head. This saves space but means that to take a shower you have to remove everything that's not in a cabinet, shower, wipe everything dry and move all the "stuff" back in. There's also a hot and cold shower in the cockpit (the open back of the boat) so showering there, the water goes down the drain and the sun and wind dry everything. Whenever we're out of sight of other people, this is where we shower.

When we woke up this morning, the current had turned HIGH COTTON to where the cockpit was facing the marsh, away from anyone so Captain Ron decided this would be a good time to take a shower. He got his soap and shampoo, washcloth and towel and went out to shower.

Problem – No hot water. Not that the water wasn't hot, no water came out when the 'hot' faucet was turned on. This can't be, he thought so after a short study of the situation, he removed all the extra food and supplies from under the galley sink to reveal a valve that had been accidentally turned off. He turned it on, gathered his supplies and got his refreshing shower. OK, maybe that's not a "repair" but something didn't work, something was done and that solved the problem.

Our anchorage last night was fine once the local boats went to wherever they go. We did have one party boat go by with the stereo on about 1:00 AM but that's not unusual. The downside of this anchorage is, being close to the city and with the docks having lights on them, it wasn't as dark as we would have liked. It is secure and protected though.

We got underway relatively early, considering the shower incident. South of Thunderbolt there are many high end waterfront

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neighborhoods and as we have grown to expect, endless unnecessary no-wake zones. After ten miles or so, we were out of the suburbs and out of civilization.

When many folks hear the term “Intracoastal Waterway”, they think the government dug a canal from Virginia to Florida, sort of an “I 95” for boats. That’s not the case. Mostly, the ICW is made up of natural creeks, rivers and bays or sounds heading generally south with short canals or “cuts” connecting them together. This is especially true in Georgia where the creeks and rivers wind back and forth in endless “S” curves. A boat heading south on the ICW could be heading south, east or west at any given time. North even, for short distances.

We were underway for nearly eight hours today, winding back and forth. We didn’t see as many small boats today but we saw a lot of the “snowbirders” heading back to their summer homes. They must have thought we were lost!



A snowbirder heading back north for the summer

Again, we came upon lots of dolphins or “big fishies” as the Ship’s Puppy knows them. One swam alongside us for a while and she was the first to notice. Patti saw a couple large turtles as well but they went back down before anyone else could see them. We also have entered the territory of the infamous Georgia green flies.

Patti broke out the fly swatter and she is not afraid to use it.

We caught up with our “friends” with the tugs and dredging equipment again. They travel at about two knots but they run continuously so each time we stop for the night they get ahead of us again. This time they were in a relatively wide spot so after failing to raise them on the marine radio, we used the standard horn signal and went on by. Two other boats behind us eventually did the same as well.

We forgot to mention that a couple days ago, our Master Card company called to say there had been a fraudulent attempt to use our card in North Carolina so they put a hold on the card until they can send us a replacement. Well, that’s fine except for the moment, we have no fixed address. We have a good Discover Card but not all places take Discover Cards. We’ll have to figure out when we will stay at a marina for a couple days and call and have it sent there.

About 4:00 PM we pulled off the ICW to an anchorage on the Crescent River. We’re just a couple hundred yards west of the ICW. A large motor yacht went on past us and anchored a quarter mile or so away.

Dinner tonight will be tomatoes, cucumbers and mozzarella cheese with balsamic dressing. Reservations have been made for the Jekyll Harbor Marina for tomorrow night. Restaurant, pool, showers, the works. Florida is a couple more days away.

Captain’s Log, day five (April 24, 2017)

One of the things that makes an anchorage a “good anchorage” is that your boat is in the

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same place when you wake up as it was when you went to sleep so with that in mind, last night's anchorage was a "good anchorage". Not so good is the fact that it's wide open, there is no protection from the wind, waves or current.

Anyway, we woke in the same place so after the customary engine checks and cup of coffee for Captain Ron, we hauled the anchor up and continued on our way south. It was a little chilly and cloudy this morning so we put on our long sleeved shirts. There was also more wind than we expected and we ended up running the boat from below for an hour or two.

Again, we met several larger boats headed north for the summer. North of Lanier Island, we overtook two sailboats headed south that we had been tailing for an hour or so. They were from Hilton Head and just doing a short trip. They ended up at the same marina as us but will be returning north.

Entering St. Simon Sound, we saw another Camano in the distance heading towards a marina on Lanier Island. It turned out to be "Neverland", a member of a Camano group Captain Ron belongs to. There had been talk of meeting at Jekyll Harbor Marina but their schedule wouldn't allow it.

By the time we got to Jekyll Creek it was nearly low tide and we had to be very careful not to hit the bottom. This is one of the shallowest parts of the ICW. Hopefully, it will be dredged soon.

We got ourselves docked and settled in at the marina, rested a bit and then took the complimentary golf cart to the Dairy Queen for ice cream. We drove around the island for a bit but the wind picked up to the point where it was uncomfortable so we returned to the marina.



"The crew" on the prowl on Jekyll Island



HIGH COTTON docked at Jekyll Harbor Marina

We took advantage of the nice showers to clean up and then had dinner in the restaurant. We took the Sea Dog for her evening walk and she met a lot of new people.

We are all looking forward to a nice night's sleep tonight.

Captain's Log, day six (April 25, 2017)

We got our nice night's sleep alright but the winds never died down and with a big open water crossing ahead of us, we quickly made the decision to stay put for another day. The next few days are supposed to be much better.

The tugs and dredges passed us again after waiting for a higher tide and stopped for the

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night just south of the marina. They headed out again about 8:00 AM so we would have had to deal with them again. By us staying put another day, hopefully they will get to wherever they are going before we see them again.

Since we're not moving today and have plenty of time, Patti decided to fix a home cooked breakfast. Eggs and scrapple for Captain Ron, eggs and bacon for her. The Ship's Puppy mooched from both as usual. As we were eating, a cat (feline, not a boat with two hulls) jumped from the dock onto HIGH COTTON and looked around. As one would expect, this did not meet with the Sea Dog' approval and she barked until it jumped back down. Kiki writes: *"This is my boat and I'm not sharing it with any other four legged creatures."*

Captain Ron decided that since we weren't going anywhere, this would be a good day for boat maintenance. Even though it wasn't quite time for the required oil change, he went ahead and changed the oil and filters. He also tightened the belts and battery connections.

The marina here takes oil and used filters so they were disposed of. After that, we got the golf cart again and explored the island and stopped at some of the gift shops.



Patti and Captain Ron explore Jekyll Island

We went back to the restaurant for another nice meal, hosed the salt off the boat (we should have done that when we came in two days ago), filled the water tanks and got ready to head out tomorrow morning. Destination Florida.

Captain's Log, day seven (April 26, 2017)

We took care of everything yesterday except showers and ice. We woke up around 7:30 AM. Patti took her shower and then walked the Pooch while Captain Ron showered. We bought 20 pounds of ice, rearranged the cooler and then got underway.

The notorious St. Andrews Sound was not as bad as expected and we cruised across and down the ICW. There were no submarines entering or leaving the King's Bay base so we had no delay. About noon, we crossed into Florida. We did run into the tugs and dredges again but they were separated and both traveling opposite our direction with new loads. There were the usual dolphins and one bald eagle to be seen.

Looking at the charts, we figured that we could make it to the free dock located just before the ICW crosses the St. Johns River and we did. Docking was difficult with the wind blowing us off the dock but with the help of a friendly boater who was already there, we got it done. A couple more boats came in after we did and we helped them dock.

Kiki made her run for land, accompanied as usual by Patti and Captain Ron. We came back to HIGH COTTON and made arrangements to stay at the St. Augustine Municipal Marina tomorrow and the next day and also made

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arrangements to have our replacement credit cards delivered there.

After that, and a short rest (this boat driving is tiring work), we took the K-9 for another walk, this time to the playground where she slid down the slide and to the boat ramp where she swam in the river. We now have a wet and tired dog.

Dinner was bratwurst, sauerkraut and baked beans. Bedtime will come early.



The Jacksonville, FL free dock off the ICW

Captain's Log, day eight (April 27, 2017)

We had a quiet night at the Jacksonville free dock. We did the usual equipment checks and took the Sea Dog for her customary walk. The boat in front of us left and the same boater who helped us dock helped them off. He offered to help us and we accepted.

In just a few minutes we crossed over the St. Johns River and continued south towards St. Augustine.

A few miles further south we came across a group of perhaps fifty dolphins swimming in circles and diving. We pulled over close to them

and stopped to watch. Kiki was fascinated as usual. One of the dolphins made a barking sound and Kiki responded with her own barking. Eventually, we began to drift towards shallow water and other boats were approaching so we had to break off the dolphin watching and get back in the channel and continue south.

We passed several boats, both power and sail headed north but only one headed south. Speaking of sailboats, the ones we see are almost always under power, not sailing. They are pretty much long, thin powerboats with a mast!

As we were getting near St. Augustine, the winds picked up and the seas got a little rough. There was a dredge working the channel and we had to work our way between it and one of the channel markers.



Approaching St. Augustine from the water

We got into our slip without difficulty, got set up and checked in. The Ship's Puppy got her customary trip to take care of business and acquaint herself with the new town. We (the humans) put on our walking shoes and took a short tour of the town. The K-9 stayed behind to guard the boat. Kiki writes: *"I don't know why they leave me to guard the boat. It has perfectly good locks and besides, I'm too small to do anything but bark!"*

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Apparently, today was the hottest day of the year so far so before too long, we ducked into the Greek/Polish restaurant we had enjoyed on our stay two years ago. Dinner was as good as we remembered it.

We've got two days here so we'll see what tomorrow brings.



HIGH COTTON at the St. Augustine Municipal Marina

Captain's Log, day nine (April 28, 2017)

We forgot to finish last night: Patti took the Sea Dog for a walk up to the marina's "ships store". Marina ship's stores usually sell boating supplies, parts, oil, etc. but this one sells souvenirs and tickets to the pirate ship cruise. Anyway, Patti unleashed the Sea Dog and she ran around and entertained the lady running the store. Our replacement credit cards arrived so once they came back to the boat, Patti called to activate the cards and in a mere eighteen minutes, it was taken care of. Captain Ron is beginning to consider a different credit card company when we get home.

Patti got up early and took the dirty clothes to the marina's laundry machines. Captain Ron got up later and went to the office for his free coffee.

We all met at the laundry room/captain's lounge where we met a father and son team who were in the process of delivering a fifty foot power boat from Louisiana to near Savannah, GA. It seems they were unaware of the eight to nine foot tidal range in this area and didn't take it into consideration when they anchored the boat last night. They woke this morning with the boat grounded, heeled over and in danger of capsizing. They were "rescued" and brought to the St. Augustine Municipal Marina with just the clothes on their backs. They made arrangements to be taken back to the boat at high tide when hopefully the boat will be floating upright and level. They left and we never found out the end of the story. Hopefully, everything was OK and they are on their way north. Kiki made the rounds of everyone in the captain's lounge getting petted and scratched.

There's a highly rated pizza place in the tourist strip so that's what we had for lunch. It was very good. The part of St. Augustine that's walkable from the marina is pretty much just tourist shops and restaurants. The tourist stuff is just the same old same old but one could eat in a different restaurant every night for a month with no problem. It's all good, too.

We came back to HIGH COTTON, rested for a while, walked the Sea Dog and then went to dinner at a Cajun restaurant. The marina here is filling up with weekend guests but we have reservations further down the ICW. It's only about twenty miles so we can take our time.

Captain's Log, day ten (April 29, 2017)

We woke up earlier than we needed to but that's OK. Captain Ron got two cups of coffee

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and the Ship's Puppy got her morning constitutional.

Kiki writes: *"I look forward to going for a walk each morning but I don't understand why I have to wear a harness and a leash. The humans don't have to wear one."*



Kiki and Patti at the Bridge of Lions

We mentioned downtown St. Augustine as being very "touristy". It's also very popular with the homeless crowd. They sleep on the benches near the waterfront and in the downtown park. They ask the tourists for money and we saw two drunken homeless men arguing and threatening each other. This was before noon.

Anyway, we got untied and underway at 8:30 AM or so and continued south on the ICW. The winds were pretty strong today and right in our face. The Bimini top was rattling and Captain Ron had to be careful not to lose his sun visor. We passed another Camano headed north.

As we approached Marineland Marina, we called them on the radio and they met us and guided us into our assigned slip. We got checked in, got the boat straightened out and, as usual, got a little rest.



HIGH COTTON in her slip at Marineland Marina

Marineland Marina is just across the road from a nice public beach on the Atlantic Ocean. We asked Kiki if she wanted to go to the beach and of course she did so off we went. She couldn't really swim with the waves but she played in the water and as usual, dug in the sand. She wore herself out and had to be carried back to the marina.



Kiki at the beach

It's quiet and peaceful here. No bars or restaurants and not a lot of boats. By staying for three nights we get free admission to the dolphin exhibit and use of the loaner car to go to the grocery store. There's a farmer's market on the premises tomorrow so we'll check that out before we go to the store.

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Dinner was the rest of the bratwurst, sauerkraut and beans from a couple nights ago. Bedtime will be pretty soon.

Captain's Log, day eleven (April 30, 2017)

We had a great night's sleep last night, quiet and dark. Fellow boaters told us of a rocket launch at the Kennedy Space Center at 7:00 AM so we got up early to watch. It didn't happen. It's supposed to happen tomorrow so we'll get up early again and see if it happens. We're not real close to the space center (seventy miles) but apparently close enough to see and hear it.

We walked across the highway to the Marineland dolphin exhibit and watched them swim around in their tanks. There are windows in the walls so you can see them under water.

We came back to the farmer's market and bought fresh vegetables and empanadas for lunch from one of the vendors. After that we took the loaner car to Publix and bought a cart full of groceries and some ice.

The Sea Dog was in need of some exercise so we walked her around the marina for a while. After that we rested a bit and then walked back to Marineland (the tickets are good for all day) and watched as the trainers had them do tricks like jumping out of the water and walking backwards on their tails. It's a shame Kiki couldn't go, she would have loved it.

Kiki writes: *"Yes it's a shame they wouldn't let me see the big fishies. I wouldn't hurt them. Just because I'm a doggie doesn't mean I should have to miss out on all the fun."*



Dolphin at Marineland

We did take her to the kayak launch in the marina basin where the water was a lot calmer than the ocean. She got to swim and had a great time. Of course she had to take a shower before she got back on HIGH COTTON.

Dinner was leftovers from the restaurant in St. Augustine. The microwave oven was a great invention!

Tomorrow we'll get up before 7:00 AM and look for the rocket launch again. We have another night here and that's good because it is supposed to be really windy tomorrow. That's a good day to stay in port.

Captain's Log, day twelve (May 1, 2017)

We got up early again today to watch the rocket launch from the Kennedy Space Center. As you might imagine, it was pretty underwhelming from seventy miles away. We heard nothing and if it wasn't for the vapor trail, we wouldn't have noticed the tiny silver speck heading skyward. It was over in thirty seconds.

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This is what we got up early for

Oh well, we were already up so Patti fixed breakfast. A scrapple sandwich for Captain Ron and eggs and bacon for Patti and the Sea Dog.

Speaking of the Sea Dog, even though she had one walk before the rocket launch, she soon decided she needed another so off she went followed by mawmaw and pawpaw. When we got near the marina office she spied some small lizards. Of course she had to chase them. She didn't catch any though. She saw the kayak launch area so she had to go for a swim. The walk, chasing lizards swim thing was repeated two more times today. Each time, she had to take a shower on the back of HIGH COTTON before she was allowed aboard.

Patti wanted to walk to the beach and collect seashells so after lunch we left the pooch to guard the boat and headed on over. We went to a less populated area but we had to climb a sand dune to get there. The wind was howling down the beach but Patti got a bag of shells. We had to crawl up the other side of the dune to get back to the road.

We were covered with sand by the time we got back so we took turns taking showers in the marina shower building.



Patti picking seashells by the seashore

We still had enough leftovers from St. Augustine for dinner for both of us. We've got to walk the Ship's Puppy (again), top off the water tanks and hit the hay. We plan to pull out tomorrow and head for Daytona Beach.

Captain's Log, day thirteen (May 2, 2017)

Marineland Marina is a nice enough place but our time is up and it's time to move on. We considered anchoring tonight but we needed fuel pretty soon and the computer seemed to be acting up so we decided to stop at Halifax Harbor Marina in Daytona Beach. We wanted to stop there either on the trip south or on the trip back north anyway.

Getting there was about a five hour cruise and that's about what we've been averaging. There was a spot where we had to slow down for a large boat that was tied to a dock and apparently leaking oil or diesel fuel. Of course there were also many slow speed manatee zones. One has to wonder why the manatees seem to congregate in front of rich people's homes. We did get a glimpse of one manatee though. He wasn't in a marked manatee zone. We also saw two other Camanos docked at a local marina.

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We pulled up to the fuel dock at Halifax Harbor Marina and took on just over sixty gallons of diesel fuel. We checked in, paid for our night's stay and Kiki got a dog biscuit. She played with it and threw it in the air, much to the amusement of the staff.

Halifax Harbor Marina is one of the largest marinas we've ever stayed at with over five hundred slips. Most are occupied. The dockhands use a small boat to get from one side to the other.



HIGH COTTON at Halifax Harbor Marina, Daytona Beach

Once we got settled into our slip, we (the humans) walked to the "strip", leaving the K-9 to guard the boat. So far, she has done well at this although her bark is more ferocious than her bite. We walked about a mile and a half by the time we got back to HIGH COTTON.



Daytona Beach, FL

What do you say to a waiter or waitress when you order food in a restaurant and they come by once you're eating it and ask "How is everything?" when it's not very good? Nothing is wrong with it except the flavor. Well, Captain Ron was not pleased with his Shepherd's Pie and he may be off Irish food for a while.

Anyway, after dinner we walked back to the marina and took turns taking showers. What seems odd about this marina (although our home marina is the same) is that even though there are card locks on the docks and the bathhouse, you have to go outside the marina into a public area to get to the bathhouse and back. This is fine in the daytime but we're not sure about after dark.

We will pull out of here tomorrow and probably anchor out tomorrow night. We'll save some of the towns for the trip back north.

Captain's Log, day fourteen (May 3, 2017)

Daytona Beach (what we saw of it) is nice enough and so is Halifax Harbor Marina but there must be a small airport nearby because as soon as the sun came up, small planes began flying over the marina. It wasn't too bad but it was noise we could have done without.

The Ship's Puppy got her morning walk and Captain Ron made his daily equipment checks. Before we untied our lines and shoved off, we got into a conversation with another couple which ended up with them on HIGH COTTON asking questions about destinations and anchoring. After a few minutes that ended and we were on our way.

Instead of a drop box for the gate keys, this marina asks you to drop them off at the fuel

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dock. You don't have to actually dock, the dockhand stands there with a net on a long pole and you drop them in on your way past.

We got out of the marina channel and onto the ICW headed south. Once we got out of the Daytona Beach area it was one manatee zone after another. Sometimes it was "Slow, minimum wake"; sometimes it was 35 MPH in the channel and minimum wake outside the channel. Try as we may, we can't come close to 35 MPH! We did see a lot of manatees but from a distance.



Manatee Zone

We passed a lot of fancy waterfront homes but we also passed several less affluent neighborhoods where the homes appeared to originally have been equipped with wheels.



"Affluent"



"Less affluent"

Our original plan was to anchor in Mosquito Lagoon, a wide shallow part of the ICW but Captain Ron found a spot off the Haulover Canal with a free dock. From mosquito Lagoon we could see the Vehicle Assembly Building at Kennedy Space center and we would have had a better view of the rocket launch we mentioned a couple days ago.

As we entered Haulover Canal, there were manatees feeding along the edges. When we turned into the basin where the dock is, there were a dozen or more manatees swimming around and people standing on the dock watching them. We got ourselves docked with a little unskilled help from some bystanders. After they left, we moved HIGH COTTON to the far end of the dock away from the boat ramp and tied it up properly.



HIGH COTTON tied up at Haulover Canal dock

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Kiki was fascinated by the “big fishies” as they swam and came up to the dock. She didn’t know what to make of them so she started barking. Then she found the boat ramp so she had to go in for a swim. Then it was more manatee watching and barking.



Kiki and the manatees

Eventually, it was time for her to get a shower and get back on the boat. An hour or so later, she went for a second round of manatee watching, swimming and shower. She will sleep good tonight! The humans enjoyed watching the manatees as well.



The Sea Dog goes for a swim

We all had a long day so we decided to just eat Patti’s homemade pasta salad for dinner. Not the pooch of course, she had her usual dog food.

We have a bout fifty TV channels to select from but leaving out the Spanish stations and the ones that want to save our soul, that’s down to thirty or so. We should find something suitable to lull us to sleep.

Captain’s Log, day fifteen (May 4, 2017)

It didn’t take much to get us to sleep last night. It was calm, cool and dark. A few people did launch or retrieve boats during the night but they were quiet and courteous. Not quiet and courteous were the “no-see-ums”, small biting insects that fit through the window screens. We bought insect repellent to apply to the screens but haven’t tried it yet.

Since the bugs woke the puppy and the puppy woke the humans, we decided to go ahead and get underway early. The manatees were either asleep or they spent the night somewhere else because we didn’t see any this morning.

Our cruise today was on the Indian River, a wide (one mile or more) and shallow river. We were heading south and the wind was blowing north which made for a pretty bumpy ride. We wanted to split the difference between Haulover Canal where we spent the night and Vero Beach City Marina where we plan to spend Friday and Saturday night. That’s a distance of about seventy nautical miles.

We were hoping to go fifty miles or so today and the rest tomorrow to get into the marina early but after about thirty five miles, Captain Ron couldn’t take the pounding anymore.

Because the Indian River is so wide, the bridges don’t span the entire river; they build earthen causeways on each side and just build a bridge between them. Supposedly, these causeways

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are good for blocking the wind and make good anchorages. At least that's what the cruising guides say. We picked such a spot and anchored.

Well, this might work for some people on some days but it wasn't working for us today. After a couple hours of bouncing around, we decided to try a cove off the river about three miles further south.

We pulled up the anchor and bounced down the river and towards the western shore. It was at this point that the depth sounder quit working. With Patti watching for crab pot floats and Captain Ron closely watching the chart plotter, we made it in and selected a spot. About this time, the depth sounder came to life again and told us we had good water so we set the anchor for the second time today.

The water is calm and the winds are not too bad but we're next to a highway and a railroad track. You can't have everything!

We ate the leftovers from the Irish Pub for dinner. Again, we have Spanish and religious TV stations but also the normal stations so we'll watch a couple shows and turn in.

According to the weather forecasts, it may rain tonight. At least that will wash our boat. The wind forecast is worse than today's so we may have to just stay at the lower helm. We shall see.

Captain's Log, day sixteen (May 5, 2017)

Being next to the highway made us feel like we were home at RiversEdge marina next to the bridge. The railroad was an added bonus. The highway traffic died down at night but the

trains kept coming. We might not have noticed but the tracks apparently cross two roads so they had to blow their horns each time they crossed. No big deal, we just went back to sleep.

The weather forecast called for rain and strong winds all day. There were small craft advisories in place for the entire day until Saturday morning. Captain Ron considered staying right where we were but from what we could see, the river looked pretty calm so we pulled the anchor and got underway.

As soon as Captain Ron went to the bow to bring up the anchor, it started raining. Raining hard and of course since it wasn't raining when he went to the bow, he didn't have his rain suit on. He got soaked. As soon as he stepped back into the cabin, the rain stopped!

We made our way back to the ICW channel and the water and wind were calm. The water and wind were calm the entire day. Nothing like yesterday and nothing like the wind forecast. We did have some light rain on and off so we were swapping helm positions all day.



The Indian River

A little over four hours of cruising and we found ourselves pulling into our destination for a few days, Vero Beach City Marina. Supposedly, this

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marina's nickname is "Velcro Beach Marina" because people stop here and tend to stick around. We'll be here for two days and more if we like it that much. Kiki found some lizards to chase so she's happy. Patti stripped the bed and washed the bedding, towels and dirty clothes. The marina has a large laundry facility. We also had our first showers in a couple of days.



HIGH COTTON (and Patti) at the Vero Beach City Marina

There's only one restaurant nearby so we walked to it and had dinner. It was pretty good but expensive.

We walked back. On the way back, we met people headed the other way carrying folding chairs. Apparently, there's a free outdoor concert in the park this evening but we decided to just walk the Sea Dog and hit the hay. There's a free city bus that we can take to town or the beach so we'll probably restock the galley and get anything else we need.

Captain's Log, day seventeen (May 6, 2017)

Sixty four degrees this morning! This is Florida? Isn't it supposed to be warm in Florida? It might have even been cooler overnight; we didn't get up until 8:00 AM.

We walked the Sea Dog and then Patti fixed a homemade breakfast. A scrapple sandwich on rye bread for the Captain and eggs and bacon for her and the pooch.

The City of Vero Beach operates a free bus that runs every hour and stops in front of the marina. One of the stops is directly in front of a West Marine Express (a "mini" West Marine) and a Publix grocery store. We decided to take it and restock the galley. Captain Ron had to check out the West Marine store but couldn't find anything he really needed. One of the goals while cruising is to not need boat parts so this was a good thing.

We checked a few more shops and then hit the Publix. They have a food bar in Publix so we picked up some Chinese food and ate it right there in the store's dining area.

The bus picked us up and ran the rest of its route before bringing us and several other marina patrons back to the marina.



Vero Beach free bus

We heard a knock on the window and answered the door to meet Wolfgang Dietrich. Well, Wolfgang owned the dealership in North Carolina that sold HIGH COTTON to its first owner in 1999. He and his wife are on one of the boats on the mooring balls owned by the

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marina. He was walking the docks and came over to see the Camano and recognized the name.

He came onto the boat, looked around and told us a lot about the boat. He said he had some information at home that he would send us. They sold about one hundred Camanos in their time.

After that, we walked the K-9 to the dog park near the restaurant where we ate last night. It's a large park, divided into sections for large and small dogs. We took Kiki off her leash but she really didn't know what to do. She let the other dogs sniff her but she wouldn't play with them and just sat next to us for most of the time.

We walked back to HIGH COTTON where Patti made her special chicken and salsa with black beans and rice. Then it was time to walk the Sea Dog again and take showers. We've decided to stay here at least one more day.



Patti takes care of business

Captain's Log, day eighteen (May 7, 2017)

Today was a day in port. We woke to the sound of bow thrusters as boats maneuvered to and from the fuel dock and left their slips. We got dressed and walked the Ship's Puppy. She

knows where the lizards hang out so that's where she goes first thing. After chasing lizards and doing her business, we returned to HIGH COTTON for a healthy breakfast of cupcakes and donuts.

We decided to walk over to the oceanfront and check out the beach and the shops. The beach and ocean looked nice but we hadn't brought our swimsuits and towels so all we could do was admire it. The water was bright blue, not like the ocean near Charleston.

The shops were unimpressive, nothing but overpriced "beach" outfits and jewelry. We stopped for lunch at a pizza shop and then walked back to the marina. Patti's fitness band showed we had walked four miles. Since Captain Ron's normal walk is from his Lazy Boy to the refrigerator and back, he had to take a nap!

Patti put the leftover pizza away, bought ice and rearranged the cooler. Captain Ron awoke from his nap so we took showers and had a light dinner. We will leave Vero Beach tomorrow and anchor near Stuart, FL on the way to Lake Okeechobee.



The Captain and crew at the Vero Beach City Marina

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Captain's Log, day nineteen (May 8, 2017)

We had a quiet night's sleep again last night and like yesterday, we woke to the sound of boats leaving or pulling into the fuel dock. We walked the Ship's Puppy, topped off the water tanks, payed for our extra day and headed back onto the ICW. Today felt like Florida for the first time on our trip, warm and sunny.

Florida is sometimes known for inconsiderate boaters and we ran into (not literally) a few today. People with large boats who pass at full speed, creating a wake that's impossible to avoid and that nearly throws people out of their seats. Wakes that rock the boat being passed enough to knock things off the counter or table and onto the floor.

Speaking of other boats, one would have thought today was a major holiday, not an ordinary Monday judging from the number of boats on the water. All kinds of boats going all different directions.

We came to an area where they were dredging and the dredge was in the middle of the channel. Boats (including HIGH COTTON) had to pass outside the channel. We were in three and a half feet of water. A boat going the other way got stuck in the mud for a while.

We got to the turn off for the St. Lucie River, the beginning of the Okeechobee Waterway so we left the ICW and headed west. We went a few miles up the river and anchored for the evening even though it was really "afternoon". We probably should have continued on a bit but we were tired.

We should go through the St. Lucie Lock early tomorrow and raise the boat about fourteen feet. We plan to top off our fuel tanks and spend the night at the Indiantown Marina.

Captain's Log, day twenty (May 9, 2017)

The winds and waves calmed down after dark as we expected but a couple hours after we got to sleep, a dog started barking across the river from our anchorage. It was probably a mile away but sound carries over the water. Kiki heard it and had to bark back. This went on for quite a while. Also, there is a railroad track running along the river and the trains ran all night. As with what happened a few nights ago, they blew their horns for every road crossing.

Eventually of course, the sun came up so after fighting the light for several minutes, we decided to get up and get underway.

As we were getting ourselves ready to leave, a large motor yacht backed out from one of the private docks near our anchorage. They headed upriver, the same way we were heading.

Stuart has a bridge situation much like some of the South Carolina bridges. They built a new high rise bridge but left the old drawbridge in place. This means that most moderate sized boats have to have the bridge opened.

We heard the boat in front of us ask for an opening (on the radio) so we asked if they would hold it for us to pass through. The bridge tender told us that the adjacent railroad bridge was closing to allow a train to pass so we would all have to wait.

Nothing happened for about ten minutes, then the railroad bridge went down. About ten minutes later we heard the train horn and the freight train crossed the bridge. Patti counted one hundred and forty eight cars. The railroad bridge went back up, the highway bridge went up and the boats heading the other way went through. Then it was our turn. In the first hour today we travelled about a mile and a half.

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Florida loves its trains

It was an hour or so run to the St. Lucie Lock. We were the first boat in, followed by a much smaller boat. We both got tied up and the lock doors started to close. Then another boat showed up so the lock tender opened the doors to let it in. The captain of that boat said there were a couple more boats behind him but the lock tender said they could wait and the doors closed and up we went.

The lock raised us about fourteen feet and took about twenty minutes. At that point, we released the lines and headed west on the St. Lucie Canal. Two manatees went through the lock with us.



Approaching the St. Lucie Lock



Going up in the St. Lucie Lock



Exiting the lock, eight feet higher

Sometimes we talk about the wildlife we see on these canals. We did see a couple small alligators but mostly we saw horses and cows. Not wild ones, they were fenced in but in a way that they could get to the canal for water.

Stopping at a marina tonight seemed like a good idea and Indiantown Marina is cheap and convenient. It's not a high end marina by any means but it's a dollar per foot plus electricity. We got ourselves docked (no dockhands at a dollar a foot), paid for our night's stay and walked the pooch. We have to be careful where we take her, this is alligator country. We saw a good sized one in front of our boat after we docked.

We left the Sea Dog to guard the boat and walked to town. Indiantown is pretty much two

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blocks along a highway. We wondered why it's called Indiantown when most of the population seems to be Mexican.



HIGH COTTON at Indiantown Marina

We had a delicious and modestly priced dinner at the Guatemalan/Mexican Restaurant, one of several in town. Then we walked back to the marina and HIGH COTTON. Walking is supposed to be good for your health, right? If so, we're going to be some pretty healthy people when we get home.



This is not Taco Bell

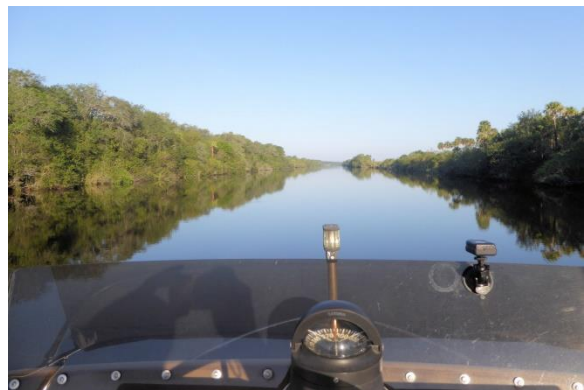
So we got the Sea Dog off the boat and carried her away from the water and to the office area where she chased one lizard after another. We carried her back to the boat and took turns taking showers at the marina. There are no water outlets on the dock, but we wouldn't

want to put this water in our tanks anyway. It smells like sulphur.

Tomorrow we'll get out of here early so we can get through the next lock and across the lake before the winds kick up.

Captain's Log, day twenty one (May 10, 2017)

We did get out relatively early, about 7:45 AM. Fifteen minutes earlier would have been better because as we approached the Port Mayaca Lock, we heard a boat coming in off the lake ask for a lock through. That means it got to go through before we could lock through to the lake so that was fifteen minutes or so going around in slow circles waiting for our turn.



The Okeechobee Waterway

Anyway, we got our turn and were lowered about two feet to the lake level. As we started our trip westbound across the lake, we passed three boats headed east. After that, we didn't see another boat until we were nearly at the other shore. The actual crossing was about four hours. We could just barely see the shore on the east side and nothing on the west side.

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White pelicans watching the boats go by

We went through the open hurricane gate and Clewiston Lock to the Roland Martin Marina. It's not a fancy marina like some we've been at, just one long dock on one side of a creek. They do sell diesel fuel at a decent price so we took on nearly sixty gallons. There is a nice clean ship's store, friendly and helpful people, clean showers and a very popular tropical themed restaurant. This is the same Roland Martin who has his own fishing shows on TV. We haven't seen him though.



HIGH COTTON at Roland Martin's Marina

It was about 2:30 PM by the time we got our fuel, got tied up and allowed the Ship's Puppy to explore the grounds. The restaurant had an "all you can eat" salad bar including sodas and tea for six dollars and fifty cents so that's what we had for lunch/dinner. It wasn't a cut rate salad bar either, there were lots of choices.

Kiki decided to explore again so we hooked her up and followed her around the marina grounds. This is when she discovered something new to chase – Iguanas. Yes we saw several of them. The biggest was two feet long or more. We decided that she shouldn't be chasing them so we held her back. We also saw a small alligator swimming alongside our boat and a mother cat and some kittens under the ramp to the dock. Kiki thought they would be fun to chase but the mother cat didn't and neither did we.



Iguana at Roland Martin's Marina



Alligator swimming in the marina

We got on the Internet and paid some bills so our credit cards will still work and the power won't get shut off at home. Between bill paying, keeping in touch with people and finding places to stay, the Internet plays a big

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part in our cruising style. Things would be much more difficult without it.

Other than a small boat, we were the first cruising sized boat to pull in today. Several others followed and the dock is nearly full. We've decided to stay another day and walk to town tomorrow.

Captain's Log, day twenty two (May 11, 2017)

Regular start for the day; get up, get dressed, walk the pooch, etc. The marina restaurant has a breakfast bar for seven dollars and ninety five cents including drinks so we had a real breakfast for a change. The cupcakes and bagged mini doughnuts remained untouched today.

Our plan was to walk to Walmart today so we decided to get an early start. We walked several blocks to the main road, turned right and continued for a few more blocks. We didn't see a Walmart so we looked it up on the phone. It was nearly two miles further so we changed our minds and started back. Patti was in search of some diet Dr. Peppers and there was a Mexican grocery store so we crossed the highway and went in. They had a lot of interesting stuff but no diet Dr. Peppers so we hoofed it back to the marina.

We decided to take some cold sodas and socialize with three couples from the boat docked behind us. They all arrived on their boat the same day we did but some are staying at the adjacent motel because the boat isn't big enough for them all to spend the night on.

We talked about boat stuff, the boats we have the boats we have had, where we've been and where we are headed. It turns out that one of

the couples has a winter home in the next town and has a vehicle so eventually, the women took off in the vehicle to shop while the men stayed behind to relax. Patti got a case of Dr. Pepper and some other stuff.

We considered eating dinner at the restaurant but leftovers have been piling up on the boat so we decided to dine on HIGH COTTON. There's karaoke in the tiki hut tonight and that may have played a part in our decision.

A sailboat pulled into the marina and docked between us and another boat. It will be a little tight getting out in the morning but we'll make it and head west for another thirty five miles or so.



Patti playing ring toss

Captain's Log, day twenty three (May 12, 2017)

There was lots of activity on the dock this morning. The sailboat in front of us left before daybreak, but then a couple of bass boats pulled into the space and began talking.

The marina opens at 7:00 AM so we went and got ice and a souvenir hat for Captain Ron and a shirt for Patti.

Kiki writes: *"As usual, they got me nothing!"*

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As we mentioned before, the marina is just a long dock on a creek. We pulled in so the choice was to back out around the other boats or turn around and head out forward. The creek is too narrow to turn around in the normal fashion but Captain Ron impressed everybody by using HIGH COTTON's bow thruster to turn around right at the dock.

What followed next was several miles of a canal with earthen dikes on the land side and low uninhabited islands on the lake side. This offers protection of course, but it's not very scenic.



Another alligator on the Okeechobee Waterway



More "wildlife" on the Okeechobee Waterway

Eventually we got to where the Okeechobee Waterway turns away from the lake and heads for the Gulf Coast. We entered the Moore Haven Lock. The actual lake is the highest part of the route so from now on we will be going

down in each lock. As we were being lowered, we noticed a manatee in the lock with us.

As we exited the lock, we went under a high rise bridge and heard a train coming. We saw the train and saw that the train bridge was open (to us, not the train). Captain Ron immediately turned on his video camera, thinking that a video of a train going off the end of the track into the river would be something interesting.

Surprisingly, the train stopped and as we passed through the open bridge, someone got off the train and operated a switch to close the bridge. We could see the bridge closing behind us.

Up to this point, none of the boats from Roland Martin's Marina had passed us which was pretty surprising. Eventually, one of them did catch up to us and called on the radio saying he would like to pass. Captain Ron answered that we would slow down and he could give us a "slow pass". Well he understood the passing part but apparently not the "slow" part. He flew by us at full speed and with four three hundred horsepower outboard motors on his boat, that full speed was pretty fast. His wake was enough to nearly throw us out of our seats and rearrange everything below. Captain Ron considered calling him back on the radio and explaining the concept of a "slow pass" but figured it would fall on deaf ears.

Another boat from the marina last night caught up with us just before our planned overnight stop in LaBelle, FL. He passed us just before the drawbridge and then had to stop to ask for an opening. He and the bridge tender got into a discussion of whether he was supposed to take his outriggers (fishing poles) down to go through the bridge without an opening or not. Because he was in front of the bridge, we had to wait for this to be resolved and then follow

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him through the open bridge even though we didn't need to have it opened.

LaBelle has a free dock with free electrical power, something that's tough to beat so that was our stop for the night. Even though the docks are nearly new and in great shape, they are not well designed for docking so we had to dock at an angle and had a difficult time getting on and off the boat. Still, the price was right.



HIGH COTTON at the free docks in LaBelle, FL

The Sea Dog is beginning to be a little more patient about getting off the boat once it is docked so once we got tied up and plugged in we got her off to leave a deposit. We walked her a bit and then put her back on board to guard HIGH COTTON while we explored the town.



The Sea Dog checks out Captain Ron's docking skills

We found a nice looking restaurant and made a note to return for dinner, walked a bit more and walked back to the boat. If we had walked a couple blocks further, we would have discovered the business district with an IGA grocery store and a Dollar Store.

After resting a bit, we went back to the restaurant and had a very nice meal. Not expensive and we have enough for another meal or two.

The drawbridge next to the town docks doesn't open from 10:00 PM until 6:00 AM so that noise didn't bother us, but the sound of traffic going over the metal draw part was disturbing until we got to sleep. Still, the price was right.

Captain's Log, day twenty four(May 13, 2017)

Captain Ron was hoping to sleep in this morning but as the sun came up, the people on the sailboat next to us decided to get up and since they don't have an air-conditioned cabin, they came out on deck to talk to each other.

We got up, got dressed, walked the Sea Dog, unhooked the electric cord and dock lines and headed west on the Caloosahatchee Canal. We had to get the Denaud Bridge opened for us but that was not a problem. A couple hours later, we passed through the final lock of the trip, the Franklin Lock to be let down the final foot and a half.

Somewhere along the line, the Caloosahatchee Canal turned into the Caloosahatchee River (try saying that three times in a row). As we exited the Franklin Lock, it did seem more like a river with twists and turns and channel markers. Also, the wind and waves picked up. By the

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time we could see the high rise buildings of Ft. Myers in the distance it was quite rough.



More "wildlife" on the Okeechobee Waterway

We called the marina and they gave us instructions to dock on the inside of the face dock. It's much easier than a slip but not quite as protected from wind and waves.



HIGH COTTON at the Fort Myers Yacht Basin

We got settled and the K-9 went for a walk and did her "business". She went to the office for her customary dog biscuit. Then we went back and got HIGH COTTON covered and everything put away.

We (the humans) decided to scout out the town. When we got to town, we found the streets closed and people setting up for "bike night" (Harley, not Schwinn).

We went back to the marina and rested a bit, took showers and headed back to town. The streets were closed off for cars but not for motorcycles. There were hundreds of motorcycles parked along the curb and moving up and down the streets among the people. Most apparently had no mufflers.



Bike Night in Ft. Myers, FL

We saw four different bands on four spread out stages, each louder than the last. One was playing country music (trying to). We could picture in our minds George Jones turning over in his grave. The next we saw was playing rock and roll from the nineteen sixties. They weren't half bad for the few minutes we stayed.

The next was playing loud and fast, nothing we recognized. The last couldn't be heard when the third band was playing but eventually we heard them playing an old Beatles song when the other band was on a break.

We finally stumbled upon a Chinese restaurant that wasn't full so we decided to have dinner there. It was excellent, better than anything we have found in Charleston. Of course by then it was 8:00 PM, much later than our dinner time.

Back at the boat, Kiki reported no attempted break-ins so we decided to turn in and see if we could sleep after a spicy Chinese meal.

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Captain's Log, day twenty five (May 14, 2017)

Well, we slept just fine last night in spite of the late meal. Sitting in a seat and steering a boat all day is more tiring than it might seem. We did hear some of the motorcycles as they headed home after the festival. And it rained a bit last night.

As usual, the K-9 had to walk and do her business first thing in the morning. Captain Ron went to the Captain's lounge for coffee and Patti took a load of dirty clothes to the laundry. Then she and the Sea Dog joined Captain Ron in the lounge. The Sea Dog got unhooked from her leash and entertained the staff by running around all the aisles where the boating supplies are kept.

Patti left Kiki with Captain Ron to go check on the laundry but she figured out that she could see lizards through the window so Captain Ron had to take her back outside and finally back to the boat.

We had noticed the steering on HIGH COTTON wasn't feeling quite right and Captain Ron had been meaning to check the fluid level. Well, he finally remembered and when he checked, it was quite low. He was able to fill the helm back to the proper level but the question is, where did the fluid go? There are no signs of a leak. It's something we had serviced since our last trip so we'll have to keep a close eye on it.

We walked to town and ate lunch. Since we had leftovers, we had to walk back to the boat. Then we walked back to town and checked out the shops.

Back on HIGH COTTON, we ate leftovers from a couple nights ago and took showers. We haven't figured out where we're going next so

we might just have to stay here another night. It's a nice town and a nice marina so why not?



Makes one wonder sometimes

Captain's Log, day twenty six (May 15, 2017)

Ft. Myers is a nice enough town but there's not a lot to do within walking distance of the marina except eat and drink so we decided to look for somewhere to go. A little Internet research turned up Sanibel Marina on Sanibel Island. It looked to be about a three hour trip and as it turned out, it was. We called and made reservations, unplugged our shore power cord, unhooked our lines and headed out.

We had thought of Ft. Myers as being the end of the Caloosahatchee River but in fact, the river continues on fifteen miles or so to the barrier islands in the Gulf of Mexico, passing Cape Coral along the way. Perhaps we will stop there on the return trip.

There was a surprising amount of boat traffic on our route for what would normally be thought of as a "work day". Big boats, little boats and a sailboat or two. As we mentioned the other day, not all were minding their manners. We got waked pretty badly a few times. There is a long manatee zone with a speed limit so of course we were safe there.

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Boat traffic on the Caloosahatchee River

We got to Sanibel marina, called them on the radio, and a dockhand was there to guide us to our slip and tie us up. The Sea Dog and her mawmaw explored while Captain Ron checked us in.

Active Captain, one of our on-line resources reported that Sanibel Marina has a pool. Well, it does not so that's something that Captain Ron will report. There is a public beach within walking distance though. Within some folks walking distance that is. The Ship's Puppy was happy to walk to the beach but needed to be carried most of the way back. Captain Ron thought he needed to be carried back as well but he made it on his own.



Captain Ron in the Gulf of Mexico

The Sea Dog, of course, loved the beach and played in the water and the sand. She needed a

thorough hosing down before getting on HIGH COTTON. She decided to take a nap while the humans took turns in the marina showers.



A day at the beach for the Sea Dog

We had a delicious, but somewhat expensive dinner in the restaurant just a few steps from our slip. Luckily, it's a restaurant, not a bar and it closes at 8:00 PM so it's not going to keep us awake.

Sitting on HIGH COTTON, typing this, we looked out the rear window to see a manatee in the marina. For some reason, this manatee didn't just stick its nose out of the water to breath; it was coming out a foot or two and looking around.

Anyway, it's time for bed. More adventures tomorrow although we will stay here at least another night.

BTW: The Gulf of Mexico water is a beautiful clear green. Not like in the Chesapeake Bay or near Charleston.

Captain's Log, day twenty seven (May 16, 2017)

Today we woke to a bag of blueberry muffins on the back of our boat. I would say "free" but

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we are paying to stay here and it's part of the deal. Looking out behind the boat, we saw a pair of what we believe to be "cownose rays" circling just below the surface of the water. Apparently, they are pretty common here and sometimes form large groups or schools.

The Sea Dog has figured out that this place is a primary lizard habitat so as soon as she gets off the boat, she is on the hunt. She hasn't caught one yet but it's just a matter of time.

After yesterday's walk to the beach and back, Captain Ron was not in a mood for a lot of walking. Actually, he wasn't feeling well so today's activities consisted of short walks escorting the Ship's Puppy on her lizard patrols.



The crew relaxes on the bench at Sanibel Marina

We were sitting on the marina covered porch when a couple of sailboats docked a few slips down from us and they had their own dog on board. We got to talking with them and they live on the Florida west coast several miles from here so they gave us some suggestions on where to go. They have a car here so they offered to take us to the store but we are pretty well provisioned for now so we didn't go.

Captain Ron spent some time on the computer planning our next stop and other stops. We

have reservations for the next two nights at 'tween Waters Marina.

It has been pretty hot this week, in the nineties, but it started to rain in the evening. Florida has been in a drought with high fire danger so the locals are probably happy for the rain. As for us, our boat is getting rinsed off so that's good news. Just so it stops by morning.

If the rain stops we will take showers. If not, we'll probably take them in the morning.

Captain's Log, day twenty eight (May 17, 2017)

More blueberry muffins on the boat today. Patti doesn't like blueberry muffins so Captain Ron was forced to eat them both. Actually, he ate one and saved the other for tomorrow. Patti and the Sea Dog had bacon and eggs.

It rained pretty hard last night so HIGH COTTON is as clean as it's going to get unless somebody takes a brush and soap to it. The chances of that happening before we get home are pretty slim.

Today's destination seems a little more formal than most of the marinas we have stayed at. They have a "check in" time and a "check out" time and we're not supposed to get there until 2:00 PM. The guy said we could call about noon and see if our slip is open yet and if it is, we can dock sooner.

We mentioned a few days ago about the missing steering fluid. Captain Ron checked this morning and it was low again. He checked all the possible locations for a leak including one that required emptying a cabinet and removing it. No leak was found. He topped it off again and it took just a bit of fluid so it's possible it

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was just air in the system working its way to the top. We shall see. Just to be sure, Captain Ron bought a spare quart at the marina's Ship's Store. It's not something you find everywhere and it's good insurance to have it.

We did our usual preparations and got underway. It was to be about a two hour trip, perhaps a bit more. About noon, we heard other boats calling the marina and being directed to their slips so we just went ahead and headed for the marina without calling first. We called on the radio when we got there and they gave us directions to our slip. Captain Ron backed HIGH COTTON in, we got tied up and connected to shore power and checked in at the marina. There's a small beach at the marina and Kiki spotted it and headed straight for it. She ran into the water and swam a few laps before we headed back to the boat to put things away.



HIGH COTTON at 'Tween Waters Inn

We have been on the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway in the Gulf of Mexico but behind the barrier islands for the past few days. It's mostly shallow water, sometimes only a foot deep or so. It's important to stay in the marked channel where it's usually eight feet deep or more. Sometimes that means you can see where you want to go but you can't just head towards it,

you have to stay in the channel even if it takes you way out of your way.

There's also a lot of wildlife in the area. We saw dolphins, manatees, rays and of course birds of all kinds. And of course, boats. Boats of all kinds.

We walked over to the other side of the small lagoon where the marina is and saw several manatees up close to the beach. Kiki saw them and ran into the water to swim with them (she was on her leash and wasn't getting too close). One started barking and the Sea Dog barked back. The manatees were putting on a show and drew a crowd. Kiki writes *"I got to swim with the big fishies today. And it was fun."*

This marina is part of a pretty nice resort. We left the Ship's Puppy to guard HIGH COTTON and headed for the swimming pool. This is not some dinky little pool, it's a big one with a bar (snacks and liquor). They furnish towels so we didn't even have to use our own.

After relaxing and cooling off in the pool, we took turns showering. The showers and heads are luxurious, some of the nicest we have seen in marinas we have stayed at.



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

With clean bodies and a fresh change of clothes, we headed for one of the two on-site

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restaurants, then across the street to the beach to watch the sunset.



Looking west towards Texas

Then it was back to the boat, walk the lizard hunter and hit the hay.

Captain's Log, day twenty nine (May 18, 2017)

Today is a day in port. And a day in a resort. No worries about the wind and waves, no routes to plan and follow and no warnings from the depth sounder.

The head chef and galley maid (Patti) made everyone a delicious breakfast. Poached eggs over corned beef hash for Captain Ron and fried eggs and sausage for her and the lizard hunter.

We all walked over to the beach for a while. Patti hunted seashells, Kiki played in the surf and dug in the sand and Captain Ron sat and watched.

We returned to the boat and left the Sea Dog as a watchdog while we (the humans) changed into our swimsuits and headed for the pool.

The resort serves food and drinks poolside so we had lunch and enjoyed the pool and hot tub for a while.

Back at the boat, we (the humans) rested a bit and then returned to the beach, Patti for some serious seashell hunting and Captain Ron for a soak in the Gulf waters.



Patti sees sea shells down by the seashore

Dinner was leftovers from the night before, then we all walked back to the beach to watch the sunset.

Captain's Log, day thirty (May 19, 2017)

It happens every year! Even though HIGH COTTON was locked up tight, the Birthday Bunny somehow got in and left birthday cards for Captain Ron.

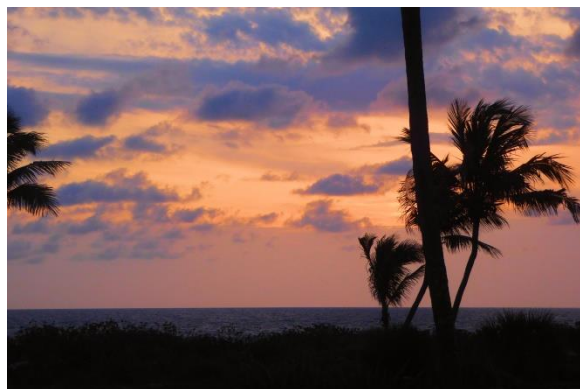
We are enjoying this place. Get up and go to the beach, come back, go to the pool, come back, etc. The Sea Dog doesn't get to go to the pool but she does get to hunt lizards and swim at the beach and also in the marina itself. She heads for the marina office every morning for a treat.

Patti extended our stay here so we aren't sure when we are leaving. They are booked full for Memorial Day weekend so we have to leave by then. Captain Ron has been researching other places to go and somewhere to stay Memorial

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Day weekend so we don't end up on the water with the crowds.

We had a nice dinner in one of the restaurants and have enough left for another meal.



Sunset on the Gulf of Mexico

Captain's Log, day thirty one (May 20, 2017)

Captain Ron may be forced to walk the plank if he keeps falling behind in his Captain's Logs!

Today was another grueling day of alternating between the beach and the pool. The Gulf of Mexico certainly is some pretty water, especially compared to back home.

We ate lunch poolside again. The food is OK. They have a shuttle service, a car and driver to take you to the "center of town", a bit more than a mile away. We took it to the small grocery store and got some fresh fruit and vegetables and a few other things. There are a few other shops and restaurants there so we should have checked them out first and gone to the grocery store last. No big loss though.

We have seen signs about a "show" at the restaurant on Friday and Saturday night and the shuttle driver suggested that we go see the "band" so we showered and put on fresh

clothes and headed for the restaurant about 8:30 PM with the intention of ordering drinks and an appetizer.

Well, this "show/band" consisted of a guy holding (but not playing) a guitar and a woman singing to pre-recorded music. Loud, loud music. As we have written before, Captain Ron was a professional musician for most of his life and he was not impressed. It was like karaoke but the two of them did all the singing. Neither looked like they were dressed to perform in public.

Not to be rude, we waited for their break and headed back to the peace and quiet of HIGH COTTON. Unlike some places, the restaurant is far enough from the slips that the noise can't be heard.

Captain's Log, day thirty two (May 21, 2017)

Patti has been collecting seashells on the beach and met a lady who gave her some advice and some shells she wasn't going to keep. This morning we found a "gift pack" from her and her husband on the back of HIGH COTTON. More shells and some other things they didn't want to take with them on their flight to Utah. They came around later to say goodbye.

Kiki has made more new friends than Captain Ron and Patti combined. Every time we walk her, people stop to pet her or ask about her. She loves it. If one person stops petting her she moves on to the next.

Speaking of the Sea Dog, we asked her if she wanted to go to the beach today. Of course the answer was "yes" so the humans got their swimsuits on and we all walked across the street to the beach. Once she saw the water,

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she ran full speed to the water and ran in and swam. The surf was a little rough for her to swim but she played in the surf. Then she dug holes in the beach.



Kiki swims in the Gulf of Mexico

Captain Ron had some Gulf water time while Patti looked for shells and sat on the beach while the Ship's Puppy dug holes. Each time the surf filled in her hole, she growled and started digging again.

Finally it was time to go back to the mother ship and clean up. We stopped at the outside showers for the swimming pool and rinsed most of the sand off but Kiki needed much more than that so when we got back, she had a real shower with dog shampoo on the back of the boat.

The Sea Dog needed a rest by then so she and Captain Ron took naps in the V berth while Patti cleaned and vacuumed the inside of the boat. She also took advantage of the marina's laundry facilities to wash and dry our dirty clothes and bedding. We've been tracking in sand for several days.

We've used up all the water we had on board so we filled the water tanks. This coming week will be an exercise in water conservation because

we won't be at a marina with fresh water until Friday.

We walked to the front of the marina to see the sunset but we were a little late. Kiki did chase lizards as she does on all her walks. She remembers where to look for them. We picked up the last load of clothes from the dryer, took turns taking showers and it's off to sleep.

Captain's Log, day thirty three (May 22, 2017)

They say all good things must come to an end. Maybe that's true, maybe it isn't but it was time to leave the resort life and get back to cruising. We planned to stay for two nights but ended up staying for five. We had a great time in a great place.

We didn't have to be out until noon so we took our time. We turned in our complimentary beach towels and paid our bill. The folks in the office said their goodbyes to the Sea Dog and we prepared HIGH COTTON for departure. Many of the other boats were leaving this morning also and since most were larger than ours, we helped them get off the dock and then got underway ourselves.



HIGH COTTON on the move again

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We had made reservations for Cabbage Key Marina and Restaurant (cheeseburger in paradise) for Tuesday night so that left us with anchoring tonight. Since it was only a two hour trip, we were anchored and settled before 2:00 PM. Check-in time at Cabbage Key is 3:00 PM so we'll be sitting at anchor until just before that time tomorrow. We can see the marina from our anchorage. This "check-in time" thing is new to us. We've never run into anything like this before. We try not to arrive before noon or so but some folks will arrive as early as 10:00 AM. It's not like they need time to vacuum the floor and change the sheets, a new boat can pull in as soon as the previous boat pulls out.

We must have picked a good anchorage because in just a couple hours we were joined by three sailboats and a large motor yacht. It's not scenic, just a wide place to pull out of the channel. It will do just fine.

Captain Ron did some figuring and made a change of plans so he had to call a marina and make reservations for Memorial Day weekend and then call the original marina and cancel our reservations there. We are planning on stopping at a State Park after Cabbage Key but it depends on the weather. Forecasts were calling for high wind and thunderstorms but we'll wait and see what actually happens.

Dinner tonight was packaged microwave meals. Chicken and dumplings (or as they say on the package, "dumplings and chicken") for Captain Ron and pasta and tomato sauce for the galley maid. We both had green beans and beets on the side. The Ship's Puppy had her usual dog food but did get to lick the human's plates.

There's a nice breeze blowing and the other boats are as far away as they should be so if the

breeze doesn't turn to wind and nobody drags anchor, we are set for the night.

Captain's Log, day thirty four (May 23, 2017)

The "breeze" yesterday turned into a "wind" last night and the boat was rocking and waves were slapping against the hull. We've been through much worse so it was an "OK" night.

We were anchored across the channel from our destination but not supposed to check in until 3:00 PM. We watched as the boats came and went from lunch and the tour boats dropped off and picked up people from the restaurant. After the last tour boat left about 1:45 PM, Patti called the marina and asked if we could come in. They said yes.

We got ready and headed across the sound and into the entrance channel. We called the dockmaster for docking instructions and were directed to a vacant slip. Actually, most of them were vacant.



HIGH COTTON at Cabbage Key

There are signs all over the place prohibiting pets but Captain Ron had emailed the manager about this and was assured that Kiki was welcome as long as she was kept on a leash and we picked up after her. That's what we always

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do so it wasn't a problem. Actually, the staff welcomed her, petted her and even shared their lunch with her.

Speaking of the Sea Dog, she has gotten used to relieving herself on land at marinas and doesn't use her puppy pad as much as she should. She finally peed on the pad but saved her #2 until we got to the marina. That was over twenty four hours.

Patti asked Captain Ron about a beeping noise after we docked. Captain Ron hadn't heard it but he looked at the inverter control panel and it was showing an error code. He turned it off and back on a few times but the error came back. That inverter is pretty crucial to our cruising when not at marinas. Fortunately, he left it alone for a couple of hours and it went back to normal so we should be able to cook our microwave meals and brew coffee. The story of the batteries is not so encouraging. They appear to be on their last legs and will have to be replaced soon. That's about twelve hundred dollars for the set.

The lady at the marina office asked us again what time we wanted to eat. Apparently they need to know even though they didn't ask us what we will be ordering. She suggested six o'clock and we agreed.

Captain Ron and the Ship's Puppy rested while Patti helped the local economy by buying souvenir T-shirts and hats. She went back and took a shower. Then Captain Ron took a shower. Last week we had some of the most luxurious showers of any of the marinas we have stayed at. The showers and heads here could best be described as "rustic". We've seen worse of course. They wouldn't be so bad if they were air conditioned.

We got ourselves presentable and headed for the restaurant. This is supposedly where Jimmy Buffett got the idea for his "Cheeseburger in Paradise" song and it's traditional to tape a dollar to the ceiling with the thought that if you come back again broke, you will at least have that dollar to buy yourself a beer. This must be a very old tradition because you certainly couldn't buy a beer here for a dollar today!



Captain Ron tapes his dollar to the ceiling

We had our "cheeseburger in paradise". Well, Captain Ron had one; Patti had a "hamburger in paradise". We've never seen hamburgers and cheeseburgers served with sides of mashed potatoes and glazed carrots but what the heck. We ate the burgers and took the mashed potatoes and carrots back to the boat for another meal. We'll add meat or fish. Anyhow, the meal was good. A little pricy but good.



Captain Ron and Patti eating cheeseburgers in paradise

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After dinner we went back to HIGH COTTON and picked up the K-9 for her evening stroll. She quickly spotted a gopher tortoise on the lawn and went to investigate. She barked and it turned and walked away. The K-9 had to be restrained.

The Verizon signal here seems unreliable which is strange because it was fine this morning on the other side of the sound, a place we can see from here.

We should sleep better tonight.

Captain's Log, day thirty five (May 24, 2017)

We did have a quiet night's sleep last night. We got up and completed our usual morning routine. The Sea Dog went back to where she had seen the tortoise yesterday but they weren't around. She did chase a few lizards.

Bad weather was forecast for the area with thunderstorms and high winds so we decided it might be best to stay where we are. We decided to tie the boat up differently because it was difficult getting on and off. There's a two foot plus tidal range here and fixed docks so the lines have to be slack enough to account for the tidal change but tight enough that we can step on and off the boat. The dockmaster suggested extra lines because of the forecast storm and winds so we did what we could. There are now seven lines holding HIGH COTTON to the dock and pilings.

Patti decided to go to the restaurant for breakfast. Captain Ron wasn't hungry so she went by herself. She did bring back some pancakes for Captain Ron and by this time he was hungry so he ate them.

The Sea Dog went looking for the tortoise again and she found one. She was determined to get close to it and the humans were determined that she wouldn't. The humans won but it wasn't an easy battle.



Kiki investigates a strange new animal

There is a water tower to climb and a nature trail to walk on the island so we started out with the tower. It seemed like the wind would blow us off the tower but it didn't. The view wasn't worth the climb. We walked the nature trail. It was interesting.

Because of the impending storm, the employees who don't live on the island left. There's no bridge or roads so they left by boat. We decided to put the bimini top down and cover our flag in case the winds got strong.

As it turned out, there was a lot of rain and some pretty strong wind. We could see whitecaps in the sound and the wind in the trees on the island but because the marina is in a cove it wasn't really anything we haven't been through before.

Eventually, the wind and rain stopped and the sun came out. We decided to dine on HIGH COTTON so we ate microwave meals augmented by our leftover mashed potatoes

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and glazed carrots. We walked the Ship's Puppy and it's time for some TV and bed.

Captain's Log, day thirty six (May 25, 2017)

Well, we survived the night. No storm, no hail, nothing. Complete peace and quiet. About daylight it rained for a while but just normal rain. Florida is in a drought so the rain will be good for them.

We have run out of things to do here so it's good we will be moving on tomorrow. Of course we walked the Sea Dog several times and she chased lizards and tried to chase the ducks. The tortoises seem to sleep in late and only come out in the afternoon and evening so she didn't see any to chase.



There's a lizard on top of that post! I saw it go up there

Captain Ron did his pre-departure boat checks today so we would be ready to cast off in the morning. Patti cleaned the boat again. Like 'tween Waters, the paths here are sand and that means a lot of sand gets tracked in to the boat.

We decided to eat in the restaurant tonight. A few minutes before 6:00 PM, a large trawler pulled in and docked. As we passed by it on the way to the restaurant, we noticed that it was

from Pasadena, MD, not far from where we used to live. When we got to the restaurant, we started talking to the people and they invited us to join them for dinner. It was an older couple and the man's brother.

We got to talking about places we have been and places we should go. We had a very pleasant dinner with them and exchanged boat cards.

Surprisingly, after dinner, they got on their boat, headed out of the marina and anchored on the other side of the sound where we had been anchored a few days ago.

We took the Ship's Puppy for a short walk, took some photos of the sunset and it's time for bed. Tomorrow's cruise should be about five hours back to Ft. Myers but a different marina.



Sunset from Cabbage Key

Captain's Log, day thirty seven (May 26, 2017)

It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood! Well it must be, considering the boat traffic today. But we're getting ahead of ourselves. More to follow.

We wanted to get underway early today to beat the heat. The Sea Dog made her rounds of all

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the lizard hangouts and did her business. We mentioned that we had put the bimini top down so we put it back up so we would have shade as we cruised. We unhooked our shore power cable and the seven dock lines and pulled out of our slip about 8:00 AM. Our friends from the night before who anchored near the other shore were already gone so we set our course for Ft Myers and motored on.

After a couple hours, the boat traffic picked up. Some were going our way but most were going the opposite way. There were all sorts of boats, sailboats, trawlers, pontoon boats, bow riders and speedboats. As often happens, most did not slow down as they approached us or give us a wide berth. That meant wakes and rocking for us. As we entered the Caloosahatchee River, the traffic slowed down quite a bit.



A few boats headed our way

We noticed a helicopter in the air in front of us. It seemed to stop and hover for a while, move a bit and hover again. Eventually, it hovered over HIGH COTTON. That's when we saw the writing on the side "Boatpix.com". For those not familiar with this company, they fly around where boats gather, take photographs of boats, look up the owners and offer professional grade photographs of people's boats.

The photos are supposed to be very nice but they are expensive. Very expensive. This will be the second time they have photographed HIGH COTTON. We didn't buy any photos the first time and probably won't buy any this time either.

It took about four and a half hours to reach our destination in Ft. Myers, the Legacy Harbour Marina. We called the dockmaster on the radio and he guided us to our assigned slip near the office, restrooms and pool. Captain Ron backed HIGH COTTON into the slip just like he knew what he was doing. He attributes this to luck.



HIGH COTTON at Legacy Harbor Marina

As always, the Ship's Puppy was glad to be on dry land. She sniffed around, marked her new territory and then went to the office to see if they had treats. They did.

We paid for three nights, got maps of the area and checked out the restrooms, showers and pool. This is a first class facility.

We had a light lunch, rested a bit and then walked the three blocks to the Publix grocery store with our cart. It's been a while since we've been to a real grocery store so we filled the cart to the top. We'll probably make another trip before we leave here. There are also several restaurants within walking distance

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of the marina including Joe's Crab Shack right on the marina grounds.

We bought some prepared pork roast from the deli at Publix and had that for dinner along with black beans and rice.



Captain Ron returns from Publix with the goodies

We took showers, walked the K-9, talked with some other boaters on the dock and it's time for bed.

Captain's Log, day thirty eight (May 27, 2017)

We had a quiet night last night but the lights at the marina kept the boat a little brighter than we would have liked. It turns out we hadn't pulled the curtains all the way closed but just to make it a little darker and to take some load off the air conditioner, we installed the external cover that covers the front windows. With a daytime temperature in the mid-nineties and the boat in the sun, every little bit helps.

There's a breakfast/donut shop just a block or so from the marina so we went for donuts. The place was packed so we brought them back to HIGH COTTON. Captain Ron discovered free coffee at the marina office so he was happy.

We changed to our swim suits and headed for the pool. It's a nice pool and we were alone when we got there. After an hour or so, there was a party for a bunch of pre-teen girls so we decided it was time to go.



As we said before, someone has to do it

We walked a couple blocks to a local restaurant that was supposed to be really good. It wasn't or at least that is our opinion. We had what was billed as empanadas but amounted to meatballs in a pastry crust. No flavor and they were greasy. They had some good looking stuff on the menu but considering our lunch experience we won't be going back.

We walked around a bit checking out the stores and Patti decided she had to check out three shops in what apparently had been someone's home at some point in the past. Captain Ron waited on a bench outside in the shade while Patti enhanced the local economy.

Back at the boat, Patti decided that we would have more room if she put away our cold weather clothes so she gathered them up and stored them out of the way under the mattress. Captain Ron agreed that would be a good idea.

When we checked into the marina yesterday, the lady told us about a dog walk Friday evening and a car show Saturday evening. We missed

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the dog walk but decided to walk the several blocks to the car show. This is the same area where they had the bike night a couple weeks ago when we were at the other marina.

It wasn't much of an organized event; it looked like anyone who had an old car just drove down and parked it. There were a few cars from the twenties and several from the fifties, sixties and seventies. Nothing spectacular and there were no prizes.

There was also a band playing, "Smack Daddy". With a name like that we weren't expecting classic country music and we didn't get it. We're not sure what sort of music they were playing, we only recognized one song. They started about forty minutes late.

We went on and looked at the rest of the old cars and walked back to the boat. The Sea Dog was waiting for her evening stroll so Patti took her for one.

Two of the locks on the Okeechobee Waterway will be closed a day each this week for maintenance so now we have to schedule our return to the east coast around that.

It's time for showers and the bed. More fun tomorrow.

Captain's Log, day thirty nine (May 28, 2017)

Today was another day in port so we didn't have to get up at any particular time. We eventually got up and walked the Sea Dog. Captain Ron was looking for his free coffee and found it inside the office. Yesterday it had been on the deck outside the office. We got back on HIGH COTTON where Captain Ron had a bagel

with cream cheese and Patti had the extra donut she bought yesterday.

We walked a couple blocks to the nail salon to have our manicures and pedicures. Then we walked to Subway for lunch.

Back at the boat, we decided to go to the pool. We changed into our swimsuits, walked over and jumped in. It was in the nineties but the pool was just right. A woman and her grown daughter were in the pool and as usual, we started talking boats. The woman and her husband live on a boat in the marina and the daughter lives nearby. We talked about different boating destinations. Later, her husband arrived and the boat talk continued.

After the pool, we decided that since we were already wet, we might as well take our showers so we did. Patti did some more laundry and then we ate the leftover steak from Cabbage Key.

We took the Ship's Puppy for a lizard hunt and ran into some more boaters and there was more boat talk.

It's time to hit the sack; more adventures tomorrow and then we'll head out Tuesday morning.

Captain's Log, day forty (May 29, 2017)

Yep, Captain Ron is falling behind in his reporting. He may be due thirty lashes with a wet noodle. In his defense, his back has been hurting him and all this walking isn't helping. If he was at home he would have his chiropractor available for treatment.

Since it is a day in port, there was no rush to do anything. We walked the pooch, Captain Ron

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got his free coffee and we ate donuts for breakfast. We needed more supplies from Publix so we towed the cart empty and brought it back full. Hopefully, we have enough food and drinks for the next few days.

The map we got at the marina shows all the local attractions and a map of the downtown area. Surprisingly, one street is named “Widman Way”. “Widman” is not a really common name so we walked over to check it out and take some photos.

Unfortunately, a little research shows that this street was renamed to honor a Ft. Myers police officer, Andrew Widman (no relation), who was shot and killed by an illegal alien about ten years ago while responding to a domestic dispute.



Widman Way, Ft. Myers, FL

Since today was a legal holiday and this part of Ft. Myers is a center for government buildings, there was nothing going on and even the restaurants were closed.

We walked back to the downtown and found the restaurants and bars open and doing a brisk business. We stopped in one for lunch even though it was nearly 3:00 PM by then.

After lunch, we walked back to the boat, took the K-9 lizard hunting and then went to the pool for a while.

We took showers and Patti washed and dried another load of clothes. We topped off the water tanks so we could get an early start tomorrow and went to bed.



Ft. Myers in the distance

Captain's Log, day forty one (May 30, 2017)

The Okeechobee Waterway isn't just a canal across Florida; the lake itself is about fifteen feet above sea level. There are five locks to raise your boat from sea level up to the level of the lake and back down on the other side.

Like all things mechanical, these locks require periodic maintenance and maintenance requires that they be closed at times. The

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second lock on our return trip is scheduled to be closed for most of the day Wednesday so we decided to get through it Tuesday and not worry about it. We decided to get underway early to avoid the heat so we got up, got things squared away and got underway about 7:30 AM.

In contrast to our last day on the water, we saw very few boats. We got through both locks as planned and have travelled vertically as well as horizontally.

Our original plan had been to anchor just past the second lock and continue on in the morning. Plans have a way of changing so when we got through the second lock we decided to continue on to Moore Haven and stay at a \$1.00 per foot "marina" where we could have electricity and air conditioning. We called them on the phone and got a recording saying that they were out of the office but would call back. When we got no return call we tried again with the same results.

As we approached the marina, we tried again on the phone and on the marine radio. We got no answer so we pulled up to the dock, tied the boat up and plugged the power cord in. We had power so we closed the windows and turned on the AC.



HIGH COTTON at River House Marina

We went looking for the office but couldn't find one. A sign told us to put the dockage fee in an envelope and put it in the metal drop box which we did. The sign gave directions to the heads and showers but the door was locked. We have a head and we'll just shower on the back of the boat so we're set.



The Sea Dog on a mission

A couple hours after we docked it began to rain. Next it was a thunderstorm but in an hour or so it all passed and the sun came back out.

After dinner we decided to walk the Sea Dog so we walked around three blocks or so. The road gutters were full of water and of course that's where the Sea Dog decided to walk. Then she decided to run in the water. So now we have a wet dog on our hands.

While we were walking, a lady came out of the pool and told us she would unlock the head and that we could use the pool. Apparently, she is not the owner but she watches the marina for the owner. She lives in the apartments across the road from the marina.

Captain Ron decided to take a shower. When he got back to the boat he described it to Patti and she decided to skip her shower today. When you're paying \$1.00 per foot you don't

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get the luxury more expensive marinas usually provide.

So it's time to hit the sack. Our next stop is only a couple hours away so hopefully we can sleep in tomorrow.

Captain's Log, day forty two (May 31, 2017)

We forgot to mention that yesterday as Patti was setting out the fenders for the lock she noticed a stowaway on HIGH COTTON, a lizard. We couldn't very well bring a lizard back to Charleston with us; we had no lizard chow on board. Also, with the great black and tan lizard hunter on board, it would be a problem. Our plan at the time was to anchor for the night so we wouldn't be able to put him back on land for a couple days. So, Patti caught the lizard in a paper cup and we made a "touch and go" at a private dock and released him there. Hopefully, he will do well in his new environment.

We awoke this morning to a large alligator swimming in the canal in front of us. Patti went to see about getting ice but there were no bags of ice and there was a machine with loose ice but no bags. This \$1.00 per foot marina is beginning to look more like a fifty cent per foot marina.



Florida is alligator country; Moore Haven is no exception

We posted several days ago about how we got through the railroad bridge just before the train came. We were not so lucky today. Just as we were approaching the bridge, the horn sounded and the bridge started to close. It's a swing bridge, it doesn't go up and down, it rotates. This one rotates very slowly. After the bridge closed (so the train could pass), a man walked across the bridge to the swing part and checked something. At this point we heard the train coming and switched on our video camera because we've never seen a grown man jump off a bridge to escape an oncoming train.

Instead, the train stopped and waited for the man to walk back off the bridge. The train started back up and crossed the bridge. There were about ten cars.

After the train crossed the bridge, the man walked back out, did something and walked back to land and opened the bridge so we could pass through. We should have either gotten up five minutes earlier or slept in for another half an hour.



The Moore Haven Railroad Bridge

The lock at Moore Haven was open so it was just a matter of passing through. No tying up and waiting to go up or down.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

The trip to the Roland Martin marina where we topped our fuel tanks off was just about two hours. There's nothing to see on land but we saw dozens of alligators, some large but mostly small. We also saw a few dead ones with vultures feasting on them. We saw four river otters playing in the water and on shore. We turned around and stopped to watch them until they ran into the bushes and disappeared.



The canal along the lake

We got to the marina and took on a little over fifty gallons of diesel fuel. Our plan is to stay here overnight and get an early start across the lake before the winds pick up. With the help of the dockmaster we pulled HIGH COTTON to the first spot on the dock where we can just turn around and leave without worrying about any of the other boats.

Kiki made several lizard hunting expeditions and spent some time in the marina store lying on the cool tiled floor. The staff remembered her from our last visit but they still don't keep doggie treats on hand.

We hadn't heard about this the last time we were here, but there's a swimming pool in the adjacent condominium complex that marina transients are allowed to use so after two helpings of the salad bar in the restaurant we

changed to our swimsuits and spent an hour or two in the pool.

We are expecting to run for about seven hours tomorrow so we will turn in early and rest up. We are heading for a Federal park with only eight boat slips so we may or may not get one. If not, we can anchor nearby.

Captain's Log, day forty three (June 1, 2017)

We woke this morning to the sound of a bird screeching near our boat, possibly perched on our boat. We wanted to get an early start so we got up, got dressed, walked the Sea Dog, topped off the water tanks and headed out onto Lake Okeechobee.

The first few miles were a channel through a swampy area and we saw several alligators. Once we got into deeper water, we saw nothing but water. About three and a half hours' worth of water. We saw a few small fishing boats but only one boat as large as HIGH COTTON. It had been at the marina last night. It was a large speedboat and it sped on by and cleared the lock ahead of us. As with the Moore Haven Lock yesterday, it was open with no water level change so all we had to do was slow down.

Even though we had seen very few boats and only one as large as HIGH COTTON so far, a large sport fish boat arrived at the lock going the other direction at nearly the same time as us. The lock tender sent us through first and we were on our way again with twenty four miles to the next (and last) lock on the waterway.

There is a small RV park and boat slips just west of the lock run by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and that was our destination for the day. It's thirty dollars a night but only fifteen

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dollars a night with a “Geezer Pass” which Captain Ron has.



Yep, another train in our path

Docking was a trick with short finger piers and shallow water near the shore. It could have been easier but a guy in a sailboat decided to take up two slips by tying his boat between two finger piers. That left us with a more difficult choice but we got it done. Just about the time we began docking, the clouds let loose and the rain came down along with thunder and lightning. We got drenched but we got tied up.



HIGH COTTON docked at the park dock

Because we couldn't back all the way to shore due to the shallow water, getting on and off the boat is pretty difficult but we're doing it.

They have the usual lizards here but also some larger ones and multicolored ones. The lizard

hunter doesn't care; she has made several hunting trips. She came close to catching one.



A different kind of lizard

Tomorrow we'll go through the last lock and head down the St. Lucie River. We haven't picked a destination yet.



The K-9 checks out the park

Captain's Log, day forty four (June 2, 2017)

Since the lock was closed, there was no boat traffic so we sat as still as if we were on land. And of course, with electrical power we had air conditioning.

Our telephones told us to expect rain for the next few days. Remember the days when you had to dial a number on your phone to listen to the weather?

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Of course we could stay where we are for fifteen dollars per day but there's nothing to do here and it's a long walk to the non-air conditioned heads. We had considered a marina with a pool but since it is forecast to rain, that didn't make much sense.

We did some more research and came up with the Ft. Pierce City Marina. No pool, but good facilities and near the downtown area. We called and made reservations and quickly got underway. We entered the St. Lucie Lock and were lowered eight feet or so to the tidal St. Lucie River.



The St. Lucie lock again, this time going down

Even though it was cloudy and supposedly a work day (Friday), boats were everywhere. It is often said that Florida boaters are the most rude in the country. Most are not but many are. We were severely waked a couple times and some people made some stupid moves that could have caused a serious accident if other boaters hadn't taken evasive action.

We left the St. Lucie River and made the sharp turn heading north on the Indian River and the ICW. We could see lightning in the distance. After an hour or so, it started raining. Light rain at first, then heavy enough for us to hurry below and drive from inside. A couple times

the rain stopped and we went up to the flybridge only to have the rain start up again.

It was raining, of course, when we approached the marina so Captain Ron and Patti got wet. The Sea Dog wisely stayed inside. The dockhand got wet as well but he was better dressed for it than we were.



HIGH COTTON docked at the Ft. Pierce City Marina

This is a large city run marina, well built and in good shape. We were given a slip close to the heads and restaurant.

We walked the Sea Dog so she could mark the lizard hangouts for later. We bought ice for the cooler, returned the ice and K-9 to HIGH COTTON and went to the restaurant for dinner. The marina gave us a coupon for twenty percent off our bill.

Being Friday, there's a band playing in the restaurant but it's not too bad and not too loud. We took showers and Patti took some things to the laundry machines.

It's still raining and we've decided to stay here at least two nights. If nothing else, we can put on our rain gear and walk to town and see what's there.

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Captain's Log, day forty five (June 3, 2017)

It rained for much of the night but the sound of rain is soothing at night and it helped to drown out the sound of the band and other outside noises.

We woke this morning to find people setting up tents in the park next to the marina. It turns out they have a farmers market on Saturdays so we gathered up the K-9 and headed for the tents to see what they had. There was also a band (not the one from the restaurant last night) setting up to play.

We got some fresh donuts for breakfast and samples of Jamaican beef patties (a strange combination, for sure). We took the Sea Dog back to HIGH COTTON and went back to shore. Patti took more clothes to the laundry facility and then she shopped while Captain Ron sat and listened to the band. They were pretty good in Captain Ron's opinion.



The band

There were people dancing to the band's music including this older couple really hamming it up. It made Captain Ron tired just watching them.

Kiki writes: *"And as usual, they left me on the boat while they were out having fun."*



Dancing to the music

Patti went to the vendor stands and bought some produce and Jamaican beef patties. We went back to the boat and ate one patty each. We have two more for another meal.

After all the laundry was done and put away. Patti cleaned and vacuumed the boat. Then we walked to town to check out the shops. There was an ACE Hardware and lumber yard. Captain Ron had to browse but didn't find anything he needed at the moment.



Ft. Pierce, FL

We checked the restaurants for later. Patti found a necklace she liked in a jewelry store and some clothing in a clothing store. There was an ice cream shop so we each got a cup of ice cream, then walked back to the marina.

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Patti went to the gift shop while Captain Ron joined Kiki for a nap on HIGH COTTON.

Patti returned and all three of us went for a walk around the marina. We saw a pigeon that had fallen into the water and couldn't get back out. Captain Ron got the trusty crab net, fished it out and put it on land in the bushes to dry out. He wasn't expecting a medal but he did get thanks from some onlookers.

It's been raining off and on for most of the day. Eventually, we decided to brave the rain and head for a restaurant. We took our umbrella but it stopped raining by the time we got to the end of the dock.

We ate, came back to the boat, walked the pooch and took our showers. We're not sure where we'll stop tomorrow but it will be north unless the weather keeps us here.

Captain's Log, day forty six (June 4, 2017)

We got ourselves up and ready to go early today but had to wait until 8:00 AM for the marina to open so we could buy ice. We unhooked the shorepower cord and dock lines, backed out of our slip and headed north with no idea of our destination for the day.

We wanted to stop in different towns, ones we hadn't already been to. Captain Ron called a couple marinas but they had no space available. He decided to make reservations for Tuesday and Wednesday night in Cocoa, Fl. That was successful so we had only tonight to worry about. We ended up in the same anchorage south of Melbourne that we spent the night in a month ago, the one with the highway and railroad tracks.

About the time we finished anchoring, it began to rain. At least we do not have to run the boat in the rain.

Captain Ron had the rest of his lobster mac and cheese from Ft. Pierce for dinner while Patti had a fresh salad. Tomorrows run is only about three hours so we can sleep in late and still get to the marina early.



Party Time on the Indian River

Captain's Log, day forty seven (June 5, 2017)

The anchorage was as noisy as we remembered it. Cars and trucks driving up and down the highway and trains blowing their horns for road crossings. It wasn't too bad in the middle of the night but at daybreak, the traffic started up as people went off to work.

While we were raising the anchor to get underway, we were visited by two manatees. They came near the boat but not up to it. We turned around and headed back for the ICW and our next stop. Other than crabbers checking their traps, we saw very few boats on the water other than anchored ones and most of them looked like they were more or less permanently anchored.

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It was only a little over three hours to Cocoa Village Marina in Cocoa, FL. We called on the radio and a dockhand guided us to our slip and helped us get tied up and plugged in. The Sea Dog went to the office with us and got some dog treats. We were shown around and it seems to be a really nice place. As usual, HIGH COTTON is the smallest boat in the marina.



HIGH COTTON at Cocoa Village Marina

Captain Ron got busy and changed the oil and filter. They don't have a place for used oil here so we will carry it with us until we find a place that takes used oil. After this, he needed a shower so off he went. He came back to rest and Patti went to take one.

We braved the light drizzle to walk to one of the local restaurants for dinner. It was OK. The guy singing and accompanying himself on electric guitar was not. Fortunately, he was at the other end of the restaurant from us. Then it was back to the boat, walk the Sea Dog, take our pills and hit the sack. We'll check out the town tomorrow.

Captain's Log, day forty eight (June 6, 2017)

Captain Ron took a muscle relaxer for his back last night before going to bed. By the time he got up, Patti and the puppy had already gone

for their morning walk, gotten their dog biscuit from the marina office and were coming back to the boat. He got up, got dressed and the entire crew went back to the marina office, Captain Ron for coffee, Kiki for another dog biscuit and Patti just to tag along. Kiki has the elevator figured out. She waits for the door to open, walks in and waits for the door to open again, then walks out.



Kiki waits for the elevator

We all socialized in the marina office/captain's lounge for a while and then walked back to HIGH COTTON. By then it was too late for breakfast so the Sea Dog got another dog treat and the humans walked to town for shopping and lunch.

Strangely, this town sells lots of things of interest to women; skirts, blouses, dresses, jewelry, women's shoes, purses, etc. but nothing of interest to those of the male persuasion. Well, there is one giant "old time" hardware store selling almost anything that could be considered "hardware". Everything from pressure cooker repair parts to wood fueled cooking stoves. Nails and such are sold by the pound in a paper sack, the way they were when Captain Ron was young, not in plastic boxes the way Home Depot and Lowes sell them.

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Need some nails?



Need a replacement wheel for your stagecoach?

Captain Ron and Patti walked through two stories of three buildings but there was nothing that Captain Ron needed at the moment. Oddly, Patti asked for a bottle brush and they were sold out of bottle brushes.

We walked by a Thai restaurant and decided to have lunch there. It was pretty good. Then it was Patti's turn to shop. Needless to say, that took a couple hours but she came back to the boat with two pairs of shoes and a bunch of other stuff.

We thought we would return to the boat, rest a bit and then take the Sea Dog to the ice cream parlor but soon after we boarded the boat, it began to rain. Captain Ron checked the oil in the engine and transmission just to be sure he got it right yesterday and topped off the

hydraulic fluid in the steering system. He has been unable to find a leak so the theory is that the guys who installed the rebuilt steering helms didn't bleed the system properly and left air in it. Hopefully, the air is almost gone and we can stop topping it off every few days.

Since it was raining, we decided to have tomatoes, cucumbers, spring onions and mozzarella cheese for dinner. A salad of sorts but no lettuce. We did have salad dressing though.

It stopped raining after we finished dinner so we harnessed the Sea Dog and walked to the ice cream parlor. Mawmaw and pawpaw shared their ice cream with the puppy.



Kiki gets her ice cream fix

Back aboard the boat, it was nearly 8:00 PM and chilly so we decided to postpone our showers until tomorrow. We will decide tomorrow if we stay here another day or head north.

Captain's Log, day forty nine (June 7, 2017)

We were up and dressed by 8:00 AM and walked to the office for coffee and dog treats. It was dark and dreary outside so we pulled up the weather forecast on the computer in the

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Captain's lounge. According to one forecast, it was supposed to begin raining in "119 minutes". We figured it might be best to stay another day but when we walked back to the boat, the sun was shining. We made the decision to head out for Titusville, about three hours away if they had a slip available. We called and they did so we disconnected the power and dock lines and headed out.

The sun went behind the clouds as soon as we cleared the marina but we were committed so up the Indian River we headed. The sky alternated between cloudy and partly cloudy the whole trip and a few raindrops fell as we approached the Titusville Municipal Marina about noon.

Again, we passed Cape Canaveral in the distance. We also passed a "mystery boat" docked along the shore.



"The mystery boat"

A dockhand met us at our assigned slip at the marina and we backed in and got tied up without incident. We went inside and checked in. As usual, Kiki got some dog treats. We walked back to HIGH COTTON and as Patti began defrosting the refrigerator, it started raining. Captain Ron had his leftover Thai food for lunch while Patti ate salad. As usual, the K-9 Kiki had dog food.

It rained until about 4:00 PM. When the rain stopped, we walked the Ship's Puppy down the dock to the sea wall near the marina office. There were several manatees near the sea wall drinking the fresh water runoff from the marina downspouts. Kiki watched and barked at them. They didn't care, they kept drinking.



A manatee drinking from the sidewalk drain

We walked along the sea wall towards the dog park and saw more manatees. When we got to the dog park we turned the K-9 loose among the other dogs. Everyone sniffed and went about their business. Kiki ignored the other dogs and ran through the puddles. Of course that meant that when we returned to the boat she had to have a shower before she was allowed inside.

We decided it would be better to walk to the grocery store tomorrow because we have some prescriptions to fill at CVS near the grocery store so we pulled out a couple microwave meals for dinner. After dinner we walked the pooch and met some of the other boaters. Tomorrow, we'll restock the pantry and check out the town.

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Captain's Log, day fifty (June 8, 2017)

It was raining this morning so we slept in. When the rain stopped, we got up to find manatees behind the boat drinking the fresh water runoff from our flybridge drains.

We walked the Sea Dog and she watched manatees drinking from the drains and met some other dogs. It seems everyone at this marina has a dog. We talked with some folks who recently bought their first boat and are making their first cruise. They are going the way we came so we talked about destinations and such.

There's a CVS drug store not far from the marina as well as a grocery store so we got out our folding grocery cart and headed for town. We got our prescriptions refilled and bought a back brace for Captain Ron. We walked around looking for a place to eat lunch. Burger King and KFC were not doing anything to excite us so we found a local pizza shop. Patti had a pizza; Captain Ron had a Reuben sandwich. They were both good.

Rather than heading for the grocery store, Patti suggested checking out the shops along the main street. That's when our troubles began. We went in a women's apparel shop. She picked out several items, tried them on and then tried to pay for them using the same credit card we had trouble with earlier in our trip. No dice, declined. We had used it twice earlier in the day at the CVS and just minutes earlier in the restaurant and the credit limit is thousands of dollars.

Patti called the company, spoke to a machine for a few minutes and was then given the opportunity to speak with a human. The human listened to her story and transferred her to

another human so she had to repeat her story. At that point she got disconnected and had to call back and start all over. This time they transferred her to the wrong department so she had to call back a third time.

By this time it was pouring down rain outside and we had not brought our raincoats or even an umbrella.

Patti finally got things straightened out with the credit card company and her transaction went through. The lady in the store wrapped her purchases in a plastic bag similar to a dry cleaning bag and then gave us each another bag to wear as raincoats. We enlarged the holes in the top for our heads, ripped two arm holes and put them on. We still had to go to our original destination, the grocery store.



The Widmans in our stylish "rainwear"

Out the door and down the street we went pushing our folding cart and looking like two escapees from a dry cleaning store. We got our groceries and walked back to the marina.

By the time we got back to the marina it had stopped raining so we put everything away and took the Sea Dog out for a walk. The manatees were back at the seawall drinking the fresh rain water from the drains. One was floating on its back under the drain drinking. There were five

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altogether. This apparently did not meet with Kiki's approval so she barked at them. They didn't bark back, they just kept drinking. Kiki found a large puddle so she romped back and forth in it.

We took our leftover chicken from the other night, took the meat off the bones and mixed it with cream of chicken soup and served it over rice with peas on the side. Actually, Patti did that. Captain Ron just helped eat it. Then we took showers. We've decided to stay here another night. There's some sort of turtle festival tomorrow. Then we will move on further north.

Captain's Log, day fifty one (June 9, 2017)

We woke up this morning to sunshine and a partly cloudy sky. We had a little wind last night (and this morning) so we were rocked to sleep.

We had a regular breakfast this morning; Scrambled eggs and bacon for the ladies and a poached egg over corned beef hash for the Captain.

We walked the Sea Dog to one of the parks and back and found manatees floating beside HIGH COTTON and drinking the discharge from our air conditioner. There are manatees all over this marina including babies. Kiki looks for them every time she gets off the boat. So does Patti.

We tried to reserve a slip in the next town north but the only marina is full for the weekend. They have vacancies on Monday so we'll just stay here a couple more days. We now get a discount for an extended stay. We're going to have to start making plans further in advance it seems.



Manatee drinking from HIGH COTTON'S AC discharge

There is a turtle festival this weekend in town so we walked to town with a couple and their dog from a boat a couple slips down from us. Kiki did not get to go. She can be a handful in crowds or around lots of other dogs. Besides, we needed someone to guard the boat. They had a live band playing and hula dancers. We each had a hot dog and a soda. We left the other couple and walked back to the marina to take our showers and hit the sack.

Captain's Log, day fifty two (June 10, 2017)

Captain Ron has been taking a muscle relaxer before bed the last few days. It seems to help with his back pain but it's been causing him to sleep later in the morning than usual. This isn't really a problem as long as we aren't supposed to travel that day. So, bright and early, about 9:00 AM he finally got out of bed, got dressed and stumbled to the marina office for coffee.

We decided to walk back to town for the rest of the turtle festival. It wasn't much different than last night except for a couple more food trucks including one with a giant inflatable chicken head on the roof. We decided to pass on the food trucks and order lunch at the same restaurant we ate at yesterday. We ended up

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ordering dinner and brought home enough for another meal each.

We stopped at CVS on the way back to the marina to pick up some things we had forgotten yesterday.

Once we got back to HIGH COTTON, we took the Ship's Puppy out to hunt for lizards and watch manatees. She still hasn't actually caught a lizard so that's a good thing.

When we got to Florida a few weeks ago, everyone was complaining about a drought and hoping for the rainy season to start.

Apparently, it has started. The weather forecast is calling for more than fifty percent chance of rain every day. Today was one of those days. It rained hard for two or three hours and then cleared up. We were inside and didn't get wet.

We ate so much at lunch we weren't hungry at dinnertime so we walked the K-9 again, watched TV and will turn in soon.

Captain's Log, day fifty three (June 11, 2017)

Today was a day of doing pretty much nothing. We didn't even leave the marina grounds. We walked the dog, we watched the manatees, and we talked to other boaters. Patti and Kiki saw a dolphin in the marina chasing fish. Captain Ron missed this. He was planning the next few days of our journey.

We checked the oil in the engine and topped off the fresh water tanks so we can get underway early tomorrow. It's not that we have a long day tomorrow, just that it will lessen the chance of us getting rained on.

Patti cooked up a homemade dinner of pork chops, fried potatoes and onions and peas. It was good. We have enough for another meal.

We took showers and Patti gathered up all the dirty laundry for one last load. We're off to New Smyrna Beach tomorrow for a couple days.

Captain's Log, day fifty four (June 12, 2017)

Well, we did it! We got ourselves underway at 8:00 AM! And that included an early morning lizard hunt by the four legged one.

As we exited the marina we could see another trawler headed our way. It was a half mile or so behind us and kept that position until we entered the "Slow – Minimum Wake" zone at Haulover Canal. That's where we spent the night a few weeks ago and saw all the manatees. His interpretation of "Slow – Minimum Wake" was a little different than ours so he almost caught up to us. We did see several manatees in the canal and of course, that's the point of slowing down – you can see and avoid hitting them.



The K-9 keeping watch for "big fishies"

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Haulover Canal

The trawler stayed behind us for a couple hours as we headed north on Mosquito Lagoon until we came to another manatee zone. We slowed as the signs require and saw several manatees in and outside the channel. Again, the trawler's interpretation of the manatee zone was different than ours and he came on by us. Captain Ron warned him that there were several manatees in the area but got no response.

This manatee zone was several miles long so by the time we got to where we could resume our normal seven knot speed; the other trawler was a speck in the distance. We did see lots of manatees and the Sea Dog was on manatee watch as well.



Some sights just can't be explained

Captain Ron had estimated a four hour run from Titusville to New Smyrna Beach but with the manatee zones it took about four and a half hours. We called the New Smyrna Beach City Marina (Try saying that three times in a row on the radio) and a dockhand met us at our slip and tied us up. It was pretty straightforward once we figured out which marina we were going into.

Once we got tied up and connected to electric power, we walked to the office where the Ship's Puppy got her customary treat and we paid for two night's accommodations.



The New Smyrna Beach City Marina building



HIGH COTTON AT THE New Smyrna Beach City Marina

We went back to the boat for a lunch of sliced tomatoes, cucumbers and grated mozzarella cheese. Captain Ron realized that the marina

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offers cable TV so he hooked the cable up and did his station scan.

About that time it started raining and continued to rain until about 6:00 PM. We ate leftover spaghetti from the restaurant in Titusville and walked the Sea Dog. We will explore the town tomorrow. For now, it's showers and time for bed.

Captain's Log, day fifty five (June 13, 2017)

We got up and walked the Sea Dog. Captain Ron got his free cup of coffee at the marina office. The marina manager was out on the docks washing off the bird poop. She came back and played with the pooch while Captain Ron had a second cup.

We took the Sea Dog back to the boat and walked to town for breakfast at a place the marina staff had recommended. We were too late for the "special" so we ordered off the menu. It was all the marina staff had promised.

After breakfast, we walked around the town checking all the shops. Patti bought some things, Captain Ron did not. There's an old time drugstore with a soda fountain so we each had a bowl of ice cream served in glass ice cream dishes.

We walked back to the boat and took the K-9 for a walk. After a few minutes it started to rain so we went back to the boat. It rained until after dinner and our showers but finally stopped about 7:00.

We called a marina to make reservations but they were closed. We'll leave tomorrow anyway and if we can't stay at that marina we'll stay at another one or anchor. It's hard to

imagine cruising without cell phones and the Internet but folks used to do it back in the day.

Captain's Log, day fifty six (June 14, 2017)

It was to be a relatively long day on the water today so we got up early. Patti took the Sea Dog on lizard patrol while Captain Ron got his free coffee. Patti got a bag of ice for the cooler and we shoved off about 8:00 AM.

The route today was one manatee zone after another. This means slowing to either a "slow speed, minimum wake" or an "Idle speed, no wake" speed, depending on the signs. About an hour into today's run we saw what initially looked like a yellow crab pot marker. It turned out to be a sea turtle's head and it dove down out of our way when we got close. They don't seem to stay on the surface where they can be easily seen. We saw dolphins and a few manatees on our trip today.

Today was a rare day for us. As we exited the marina, there was another trawler on the river ahead of us. After a couple hours, we actually passed it. It's rare that we overtake anything except sailboats. We passed in a wide spot so there was no need to slow down.



Now that's a "salty" looking boat

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We passed luxurious homes and we passed trailer parks. The Florida sunshine shines on everyone, rich or poor.

We got to our destination, Palm Coast Marina about 2:00 PM. It was time to fill our diesel tanks so we tied up and took on sixty six gallons of fuel. Transients are usually put on the fuel dock at this marina so we just stayed put and connected the shorepower cable.



HIGH COTTON set for the night at Palm Coast Marina

Captain Ron did a scan on the TV and found zero channels to watch. It's going to be an early night tonight.

We walked to the European Village (the only place within walking distance). It's a place with shops and restaurants. We walked around and looked at the menus. There is a Mexican/Cuban/Latin restaurant that looked good on the Internet but when we got there it was closed for no apparent reason. It was supposed to be open but it was dark. There was an Indian restaurant but we had no idea what the menu items were so we ended up at the "New Europa" Restaurant. We had a delicious meal and were entertained by a talented piano player. It was a nice end to the day and we have leftovers.



Dinner at the New Europa restaurant

We'll take our showers, walk the Ship's Puppy and hit the sack.

Captain's Log, day fifty seven (June 15, 2017)

We have reservations at Camache Cove Marina just north of downtown St. Augustine. We have stayed at the St. Augustine Municipal Marina twice and have seen the tourist sights already so we decided to stay at a marina with a pool and loaner car. It's about a three hour trip.

We got up, took the great lizard hunter on her mission, then went to the marina office where Captain Ron got a cup of coffee and watched the end of a movie on the office TV concerning a "tree monster" that was killing the inhabitants of a Pacific island. He wouldn't have noticed it except other people were watching and making comments. It was one of those movies that are so bad you can't stop watching.

Captain Ron got a second cup of coffee and we got on the boat while the dockhand untied us and pushed us off. Normally we would have done that ourselves but he was standing right there and offered to help so why not?

The trip to St. Augustine was routine except for one thing; about halfway there, a boat larger

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than ours came up from behind us and gave the correct horn signal (two blasts) to pass us on our starboard side. That may be the first time that has ever happened. Captain Ron acknowledged the signal, we slowed down and the boat gave us a proper slow pass.



St. Augustine's Bridge of Lions

Camache Cove Marina was pretty busy when we arrived. We were the third of four boats entering one after the other but they had the staff and knowledge to handle everyone. This is a big marina with about three hundred slips, most of them occupied by boats bigger than HIGH COTTON.



HIGH COTTON in her slip at Camache Cove Marina

There are floating docks, a swimming pool and two loaner cars for shopping, trips to restaurants, etc.

We got ourselves tied up, connected to power and walked with the Sea Dog to the office where doggie treats were waiting. We got checked in and checked out the facilities. Then we went back to the boat for a short rest.

The loaner cars are available for two hours or if you take the car at 5:00 PM you don't have to bring it back until the next morning so that's what we did, got it at 5:00 PM.

Captain Ron's boat shoes needed either replacing or retreading, holes were beginning to show in the heels. He got directions on his phone to the nearest shopping mall. Well, this mall has seen better days. In fact, it's essentially shut down. Belk and JC Penny are still there but you have to enter from the outside, the "mall" part is closed off.

Someone in one of the stores told Patti about an outlet mall and a Sperry (brand of boat shoes) outlet store so following directions on the phone, we took a circuitous route to the outlet mall. Captain Ron found what he needed and that was that. Of course by this time it was 7:00 PM and we hadn't eaten or done our grocery shopping.

There was a Cracker Barrel on the way back to the marina (the direct route) so we went in and had dinner. We passed a Publix (grocery store) so we went in and got our groceries.

By this time it was dark and raining and we were driving an unfamiliar vehicle in an unfamiliar town with a telephone giving directions.

We eventually made it back to the marina and carried our purchases down a wet, slippery ramp to the dock and onto HIGH COTTON.

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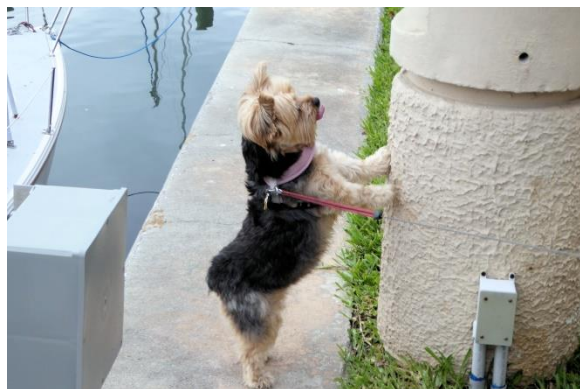
Kiki was waiting for her evening walk so Patti grabbed a flashlight and the two of them headed for the grass.

Back on the boat, it's past our bedtimes (except for the Ship's Puppy, she has been napping since 5:00 PM). We've got to take our pills and convince the puppy that it's nighty-night time.

Captain's Log, day fifty eight (June 16, 2017)

Patti got up early to drop off the keys to the loaner car at 7:00 AM. Captain Ron and the Sea Dog did not. Captain Ron wonders why they don't have a key drop box.

Captain Ron and the Sea Dog did get up when Patti returned. They got dressed (well, Captain Ron got dressed, the sea dog just got her collar and leash put on) and the entire crew walked to the restroom/laundry building where Captain Ron got his morning coffee and caught up on the day's news. The Ship's Puppy chased lizards along the way. On the way back to the slip we saw manatees in the marina between a couple of boats.



I know there's a lizard up there, I saw him climbing up

We left a very tired K-9 to guard the boat and walked to the swimming pool. It's a fairly nice pool and we had it to ourselves. We relaxed in

the pool, dried out on the chaise lounges and then repeated the procedure.

The clouds started to roll in and it was getting dark on the horizon so we changed out of our swimsuits into our street clothes and walked to one of the restaurants in the marina complex for lunch.

On the way back from lunch we saw a sea turtle about a foot in diameter eating grass off one of the walls. One of the dockhands was carrying a fishing net and when Patti asked her if she was going fishing she said that there was another sea turtle with fishing line caught on it and she was trying to catch it and get the line off it.

We got back to the boat and Patti and Kiki set out on another lizard hunt. As soon as they returned, it began to rain. We've got cable TV at this marina so we took advantage of it.

We ate so much for lunch that neither of us felt like eating dinner so we took our showers and Patti took the K-9 for another walk. It's time for bed so we'll turn in soon.

Kiki writes: "This lizard hunting is tiring work!"



The Ship's Puppy stops for a rest

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Captain's Log, day fifty nine (June 17, 2017)

Yes, Captain Ron missed the deadline again. Shame, Shame, Shame!

Actually, we didn't do much worth talking about. We got up, walked the dog, ate breakfast, etc. We went to the pool and swam a bit and worked on our tans (not that they need much work after nearly two months on a boat). We talked with some of the local people about boats, boat trips and the local area.

This is a big, busy place. Our slip is in the residential section so it's quiet here. The other side has boats coming and going for fuel, boat rentals and a Freedom Boat Club.

We sat near the office for a while and watched the action. Being a Saturday, there were boats coming and going as fast as the marina could handle them. A large sportfish boat came in for fuel. It seemed like it was fueling forever. When the captain walked by on his way to the office to pay, Patti asked him how much fuel he took on. His answer: "Thirteen hundred gallons." With the volume discount, that would be \$3400! A full tank for HIGH COTTON without a volume discount would be \$260. That would take us over 300 nautical miles.

We met some more people and got into a conversation about the Chesapeake Bay. Eventually, it got dark and we walked back to the boat, skipping showers for the day.

Captain's Log, day sixty (June 18, 2017)

Sixty days on a boat! We're all still speaking (and barking) to each other.

More getting up, walking the pooch, getting coffee, eating breakfast, etc. Just another day

in port. We saw a group of manatees in the marina today. One came over to the wall to drink the fresh water runoff from the drain pipes. We also saw a sea turtle again and lots of fish.



Kiki checks out the "big fishie"

Being father's day and a bright sunny day as well, many of the boat owners took their boats out today for a Sunday sail (most are sailboats). We are close enough to the ocean that they can easily sail for a few hours and come back in.

We took advantage of the pool again today. We talked to a couple with a small child who keeps a sailboat here.

We had signed up for the loaner car again so we took our showers, got dressed and took the car to Walmart, then found a nice German restaurant for dinner and finished up at Publix to restock the boat for the next few days. We're not certain where we'll be but most likely we'll spend tomorrow night at the free dock on the ICW just north of the St. Johns River.

Captain's Log, day sixty one (June 19, 2017)

There was no need to get up early this morning so we didn't. We finally got up, walked the Ship's Puppy and Captain Ron got his free

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coffee. Q-Tip (our dinghy) has been rolled up uninflated on the bow and has collected a lot of dirt on the underside so we decided to rinse the dirt off while we had the water hose out to fill the water tanks. As Captain Ron stood on the bow rinsing the dirt, a sea turtle a foot or so in diameter came swimming by. It swam to the boat next to ours and sampled some of the growth on the hull. Then it turned around and swam back the way it came. Captain Ron didn't have his camera with him so you'll just have to take our word for it.

We put everything away, unhooked the power and cable TV lines, undid the dock lines and away we went. Exiting the marina, we had to stop for a manatee in the entrance channel.

Out on the river, we were well behind another trawler and a sailboat. Eventually, the trawler pulled out of sight but we were slowly gaining on the sailboat. "Slowly" would be the word here as it took us about three hours to catch up and pass it. On the stern was written "Hawaii".

Apparently, that's actually where it was from because the lady on the sailboat called us on the radio and asked about HIGH COTTON. She said they had been through the Panama Canal but might need a boat like ours if they decide to stay "on this side of the world".

Eventually, another trawler passed the sailboat and then HIGH COTTON. Other than a few small boats, that was all the traffic we saw today.

At the junction of the ICW and the St. Johns River there is a large boatyard and a few military ships were there being worked on. There was a red "security" boat running back and forth in front of them to ward off

"terrorists". Captain Ron couldn't resist the temptation to snap a few pictures just for kicks.



Boat yard at the St. Johns River and the ICW

It was only another half mile or so to our stopping point, the Jacksonville Free Dock. This is the same place we spent the night on day seven of our trip. This time there were no other boats or boaters so there was nobody to help us dock. The wind was blowing as hard as it was the last time we were here and we had a hard time getting HIGH COTTON close enough to the dock to get on and off easily. We eventually got it done but not before Captain Ron tweaked his back again.

The Sea Dog waited patiently through all this but once we were tied firmly to the dock, she was ready to explore. She walked to the playground, went down the slide, sniffed around and did her business. We walked back to the boat to tidy things up and for Captain Ron to rest his back. After an hour or so, the Ship's Puppy was ready to explore again so we walked past the playground to the boat ramp. She decided a run in the water would be fun so in she went. After that, we walked to a little "beach" opposite where the boat was docked and she decided to run in the water again.

By the time we walked back to the boat, the K-9 needed a good shower so she took one in the

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cockpit, got dried off and came inside. Her mawmaw and pawpaw will take their showers in the same spot later this evening when nobody is around to see them.

We had two sets of leftovers from restaurants so we chose the oldest and heated them up in the microwave.

The marina at Fernandina Beach, FL suffered a lot of damage from Hurricane Matthew last fall and only has a few useable slips but we managed to reserve one for the next two nights. Fernandina Beach is a cute town and we like to visit when we have the chance.

It's been raining for a while and that cooled the air down. The rain has stopped and if it doesn't start again, we will be able to keep the windows and overhead hatch open and have a good night's sleep.

Captain's Log, day sixty two (June 20, 2017)

We did have a good night's sleep last night. It wasn't as dark as we would have expected, probably because we were near the city but it was cool and calm.

We got up and took the Sea Dog to do her business. After that, we came back and had breakfast on HIGH COTTON. Captain Ron had a scrapple sandwich on rye bread and the ladies had scrambled eggs and bacon.

Getting off the dock wasn't as complicated as getting on it was yesterday. There was no wind and little current. It was just a matter of untying the lines, stepping aboard and putting the boat in gear.

At first, we were fighting the current but eventually, the current added two knots to our

speed. About an hour from our destination, we noticed big black clouds behind us. As time went on, they got closer and it began to rain. Not hard, but enough for us to put non-essentials away and get ready to move below.

As we neared the marina it began raining a little harder and the wind kicked up but all of a sudden both the rain and wind stopped and we glided into our assigned space on a T-Head at Fernandina Harbor Marina. For those who don't know, a T-Head is the space at the end of a dock and perpendicular to the dock. If you can't dock a boat on a T-Head, you probably shouldn't be driving a boat.

As we mentioned, this marina suffered a lot of damage from Hurricane Matthew so many of the docks are unusable. On top of this, the ones near shore have filled with silt and are nothing but mud at low tide. The marina office was destroyed so the office is in what was the Captain's Lounge. Our slip is a good ways from the heads but we're here and the town is fine.

We got settled in and paid for our dockage. The marina didn't have any dog treats but the dockhand had a small bag of animal crackers in his lunch. He gave Kiki one and she played with it and finally ate it. Apparently it didn't matter to her that it was intended for a human.

By the time we had the Ship's Puppy back on the boat it was about 2:00 PM and we were ready for lunch. We walked to the Cuban restaurant where we had eaten a couple years ago but for some reason it was closed. Not out of business, just not open today.

We saw a sign saying something about the best BBQ in St. Augustine so we went there and forgetting that we've had pork and leftover pork every night for the last week, we ordered

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pulled pork platters. Now we have leftover pulled pork as well as leftover German pork.

Captain Ron left Patti in town to shop and took the leftovers back to the boat. An hour or two later when Patti hadn't returned, he hooked up the hound and they both walked to town. They explored a bit and sat on a bench to wait. Eventually, Patti came into view carrying a large shopping bag.

We figured we might as well get our customary ice cream fix so we walked to the ice cream parlor. All three of us sat out front and had ice cream.

Back at the boat, Patti went to take a shower in the marina facility. Captain Ron is next. Tomorrow will be a day in port but Captain Ron will have to figure out where we go next.

Captain's Log, day sixty three (June 21, 2017)

It was coffee and donuts for breakfast today. Actually, only Captain Ron had coffee. Patti had donuts and Kiki had dog food. Patti and Captain Ron had 10:00 AM appointments for manicures in town ("first thing in the morning" comes late in the south) so we set out walking to town. Patti couldn't remember if we had locked the boat so Captain Ron walked back to check. By the time he walked back to the boat and to the salon, Patti had already set him up for a back massage as well.

We finished being pampered but it was too early for lunch. There were several busses of tourists in town and we couldn't help noticing that most of them were elderly and wearing bright lime green T-shirts. It just so happened that Captain Ron had put on a bright lime green T-shirt this morning so he fit right in.

Patti couldn't find her clip-on sunglasses so we walked to several stores where she had been yesterday until we found the one where she had left them. We walked back to the boat and took the pooch to hunt for lizards.

We came back to the boat for a bit and then set out to find lunch. We settled on a "seafood shack" where Patti got a salad and Captain Ron got a bowl of seafood chowder. The thought was to eat a light lunch and then go back to town for dinner. On the way back to the marina, Captain Ron found a shirt he liked and Patti found a sundress. If nothing else, this boating is helping the local economies along the way.



Downtown Fernandina Beach, FL

Speaking of helping the local economy, we returned to town later to eat at "The Marina Restaurant" which is neither owned by or on the property of the marina. It doesn't have a nautical theme either. It's just a restaurant in one of the oldest buildings in town.

We took our showers, walked the Ship's Puppy and it's time for bed. The plan is to anchor tomorrow night and then spend a couple of nights in a marina on St. Simons Island. *Kiki writes: I do enjoy my walks in different towns. I get the chance to meet new people and dogs and I leave my mark so they remember me.*

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Captain's Log, day sixty four (June 22, 2017)

Don't call the Coast Guard, we're not lost at sea, Captain Ron was lax in his duties again. Perhaps it had something to do with the back massage.

We got ourselves up, walked the K-9, etc. checked the oil and topped off the fresh water tanks. Captain Ron had been concerned with the condition of the fuel filter but didn't want to change it away from home unless he had to so he moved the lever that allows the engine to draw fuel through both filters at the same time. The other filter had been used before but wasn't plugged so using two lowers any resistance to fuel flow. That's his story and he's sticking to it.

We walked to the office to turn in our cards (keys) to the heads and showers and talked to the marina manager for a bit. He pointed out a one hundred, seventy four foot boat anchored off the marina. He said he couldn't let them tie up at the marina because of the damaged docks but really would have liked the two dollar a foot dockage fee and the five hundred gallon fuel sale. Hopefully, they will get the hurricane damage repaired before too long.

We got ourselves underway and were making good time in calm weather so we decided not to anchor but continue to the Morningstar Marina. We called and they had space so we made reservations.

Surprisingly, today we saw very little wildlife except for birds. No manatees, no turtles and no dolphins until we were almost at our destination. Kiki slept most of the way and Captain Ron and Patti took turns at the wheel. There was nothing going on at the submarine base either, not even patrol boats.

We got to the marina a little after 2:00 PM. They put us at the end of the outside face dock which is also the fuel dock so we were able to just dock once and top off our tanks. From here to the next fuel stop on the ICW is about ninety miles so it's a good idea to have plenty of fuel for this stretch.



HIGH COTTON at Morningstar Marina - Golden Isles

Patti took the Sea Dog to the dog walk area while Captain Ron checked us in and paid the tab.

The marina is supposed to have cable TV available so Captain Ron hooked it up but got nothing. It turns out they discontinued it just a few days ago. According to the marina manager, everyone (but apparently us) is "streaming" these days and no longer using cable. Apparently we need to get with the times.

We ate the rest of our leftovers from various restaurants and then went to the pool for an evening swim. It's a long walk from our dock to the facilities so we took our shower supplies with us and showered after our swim. By that time, it was time for a quick dog walk and to hit the sack.

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Captain's Log, day sixty five (June 23, 2017)

We are on a face dock parallel to the river and it's a long, straight shot down the river so the wind kicks up some good waves. The boat was rocking front to back in the evening but the rocking helps us get to sleep. By morning it was calm.

We awoke to a bag of muffins and a newspaper on the back of our boat, a nice touch. Coffee is free but they don't deliver, you have to walk to the dockhouse to get it. Nobody was in the dockhouse and the door was locked so we walked to the marina office on shore. Captain Ron got his coffee and Kiki got some dog treats.

They have a loaner car here but it's limited to one hour so we got it and drove over the bridge to the grocery store for some supplies. They also have bicycles for loan but since neither of us has ridden a bicycle in many years, we decided to pass on the offer. If we're going to fall off a bicycle it would be more convenient to do it close to home.

We walked the Ship's Puppy again and then put on our swimsuits and walked to the pool for a cool refreshing dip. We met some people who are staying at the marina long term and talked about boats and places we've been.



Miss Patti taking a cool dip in the marina pool

After the pool, we showered, changed into our best "boat clothes" and had dinner in the on-site restaurant. It was good.

By the time we went back for the Sea Dog, the wind had kicked up to the point where it was a bit difficult to walk on the dock. Once we got up by the buildings it wasn't windy and the Sea Dog wanted to just sniff around. Finally she had to be carried back to the boat.

Tomorrow morning we'll cast off our lines and head north. We'll just go until we get tired and find an anchorage for the night.

Captain's Log, day sixty six (June 24, 2017)

We mentioned the wind and waves rocking the boat on our first night here. Well, last night was more of the same only worse and for a longer time. It was really difficult to sleep. It was calm by morning but of course we couldn't sleep in, we had to get underway.

There were more free muffins and coffee and a newspaper. And of course there was the dog walking and getting a bag of ice.

We managed to get underway at 8:45 AM which is nothing to brag about. Getting a late start means spending less time in the cool morning and more in the hot afternoon.

Morningstar Marina-Golden Isles is a ways off the ICW so the first half hour was spent going south to get back on the ICW. We looked behind us and there was a large motoryacht behind us. We looked again and it was slowly catching up with us and eventually passed us. Altogether today, about a half dozen larger boats passed us. As usual, we passed nobody.

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Today's run was mostly through the Georgia marshes. Miles and miles of miles and miles, zigzagging back and forth in the creeks and rivers. Occasionally we had to cross a sound which is basically where two or more rivers join to meet the ocean. So we head downstream on one river and upstream on another. We did have a few alligator and dolphin sightings to break up the monotony.

We had good intentions of anchoring out and eating leftovers but as the temperature and heat index increased, we began to think having air conditioning tonight would be nice.

We looked at our charts and realized that Kilkenny Marina in Richmond Hill, GA was a good stopping point and not expensive so we called and made a reservation.

As we were nearing St. Catherines Sound, we saw the first boat that had passed us this morning anchored and grounded alongside of the channel. Because of the new moon, high tides were higher and low tides were lower than usual. We called out to him and he said he was going to wait for the tide to come back in. We continued on and while we found some really shallow water, we didn't hit the bottom or get stuck.

We finally got to Kilkenny Creek, turned in and went the mile or two to the marina. Apparently they don't monitor the marine radio so we called them on the phone and a guy came out to catch our lines and tie us up. Once we got settled in we went to pay and walk the anxious Sea Dog. It was low tide by this point and the ramp up to dry land was very steep. Somehow the Ship's Puppy managed to climb it so we had to follow.

This place is a sight we've never seen before. The floats for the floating dock are used plastic barrels. The heads are behind the office and a mess. The whole place looks like it was built in the nineteen sixties and never updated. And at \$1.50 per foot plus electricity and a 3% surcharge for using a credit card it's not cheap either, at least for what you get. But, the people seemed nice.



Snug as a bug at Kilkenny Marina



No ramp here, this is how they launch boats

There's a well-known restaurant next door so we decided to save the leftovers for later and eat there. We just had hamburgers but they were good. And the place was packed. We suspect the entire population of Richmond Hill was either working there or eating there.

We'll be cool tonight and hopefully get an early start tomorrow.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain's Log, day sixty seven (June 25, 2017)

We had a quiet and cool night's sleep last night. We planned to leave early but as usual, we didn't. Captain Ron made himself a cup of coffee and we set out to walk the K-9. Captain Ron ended up getting a history lesson on the area from the owner. The actual town is about twelve miles west of the marina near Interstate 95. Many of the residents commute to Savannah to work.

If we had been ambitious we would have made another eight hour run today but we weren't so we didn't. We called and got a slip at Thunderbolt Marina in (of all places) Thunderbolt, GA. Thunderbolt is a suburb of Savannah as well. It was about a four and a half hour run for us.

As we passed the Isle of Hope Marina south of Thunderbolt we saw the boat that we had passed yesterday that was aground on the face dock of the marina. We don't know when it got free or if he made it to Isle of Hope yesterday. If he did it would have been a long run for him.

After Isle of Hope, we began seeing lots of dolphins. One swam alongside HIGH COTTON for a while. Kiki watched and barked at it. Eventually, it stopped swimming next to us and went on to do dolphin things and we continued on.

There are just a few boats at Thunderbolt Marina so we had no trouble docking. Kiki went to the office for her usual and customary treat but the dockmaster was all out. Patti bought a sausage snack and broke off a piece and gave it to the dockmaster to give to Kiki. Apparently she didn't notice this sleight of hand and accepted the treat, played with it and ate it.



HIGH COTTON at Thunderbolt Marina

We went back to the boat to tidy up and rest a bit. We had tomatoes and cucumbers for lunch.

After lunch and a short rest we took the hound for another walk. She checked all the usual places for lizards but had no luck. We went back into the office and talked to the dockmaster for a while. We noticed dark clouds on the horizon. Soon we noticed that they were getting closer. We should have headed for the boat but we were having a good conversation and Kiki was enjoying the cool floor of the air conditioned office. Then the rain came so we ran (as much as folks our age can run) for the boat. We got soaked.

The rain eventually stopped so we took turns showering (we skipped showers yesterday because of the condition of the shower facilities). The showers at Thunderbolt Marina are great. Air conditioned and plenty of water pressure and volume.

We got dressed and walked to Tubby's Tank House, a nearby restaurant that's well known among cruisers. We had a lite dinner and walked back to HIGH COTTON. It was raining when we left the restaurant and began raining harder as we neared the boat. Kiki was expecting to go for a walk but it won't happen unless the rain stops soon.

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All the cruisers stop at Tubby's Tank House



Captain Ron claims this will be his next boat

Tomorrow we'll head out and cruise until we get tired or find a good stopping point. We will be home on Tuesday or Wednesday depending on the weather and our resolve.

Captain's Log, day sixty eight (June 26, 2017)

We had rain last night. Rain on the deck is soothing if we're at a marina with electricity and air conditioning (which we were). Rain is not so good if we're anchored and can't leave the windows and hatch open for ventilation.

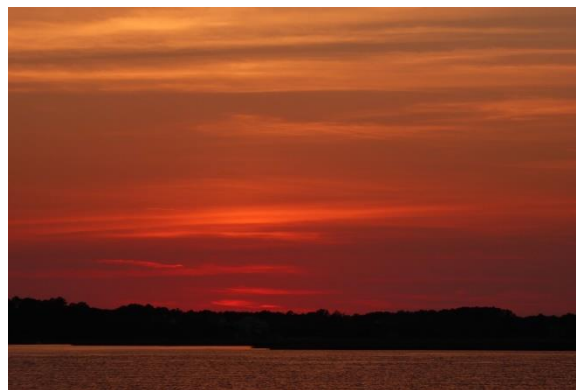
Anyway, we woke to a box of donuts in the cockpit so we got dressed, got Captain Ron a free cup of coffee in the office and walked the pooch. It was cloudy and cool, probably in the low seventies. Great boat cruising weather.

We topped off the water tanks, unplugged and stored the power cable and slipped away from the dock. Thunderbolt Marina is in a no-wake zone so we slowly motored north until we passed the bridge and the end of the no-wake zone.

As we neared the point where the ICW crosses the Savannah River we could see two container ships in the river passing each other. It was good that we hadn't left any earlier; we would have had to wait for them to clear.

We continued north on the ICW under cool cloudy skies. According to our calculations, it would take us about fifteen hours to get from Thunderbolt, GA to our home port at RiversEdge Marina in South Carolina. Since we want to get to RiversEdge at slack current (calculated to be at 12:17 PM) on Tuesday, we had to figure where to anchor so we could leave at a reasonable hour to make it home at that time. It turned out, the best place to anchor was in Church Creek, the same place we anchored on the first night of our cruise. That meant a twelve hour run today.

The sun was setting as we set the anchor, cut off the engine and got things covered up. We want to make a fuel stop on the way home so we will be getting underway about 8:00 AM.



Sunset on Church Creek

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We'll call the marina tomorrow morning to make sure there are no squatters in our slip.

Captain's Log, day sixty nine (June 27, 2017)

We had a quiet night last night at anchor, quieter than we've had at some marinas. Unfortunately, it was a little warmer than we would have liked and there was very little breeze. Still, we slept pretty well. Since Dataw Island Marina was damaged by hurricane Matthew and closed, there are no marinas between Beaufort and Charleston so anchoring is pretty much necessary.

We did as planned, got settled and underway by 8:00 AM. We had the current with us at first, but then it turned against us. Once we turned up the Ashley River, we were traveling with the current once again. We stopped at the Ashley Marina and took on fifty and one half gallons of diesel fuel. That's how much we burned from St. Simons Island, GA to Charleston, SC.

Since it was nearly high tide we laid the bimini top down to go under the Ashley River Bridges. We might have cleared them but a mistake would be costly so better safe than sorry.

We had some extra time and it was nearly high tide so we pulled over to the floating dock at Charleston's Brittlebank Park to let the Sea Dog walk on solid ground. She appreciated this and the people fishing and crabbing at the park got to pet her.

We got back underway and pulled into our slip at RiversEdge Marina at about 12:20 PM as we had planned. We got the power hooked up so the air conditioning would work and unloaded the extra food and laundry to take home. The

Sea Dog was glad to be back and visited with the office staff and got her doggie treats.

We called our ride, loaded up her vehicle and came home. We're glad to be back but at the same time, we're sorry it's over. It's time to start planning our next trip.



Our mail while we were gone.

Kiki writes: *"I'm glad to be home with my toys but I hope I get to go cruising in the boat again soon. I really enjoy it."*

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Epilogue

Duration	69 days
Distance	1362 NM
Time underway	194.6 hours
Fuel used (diesel)	357.1 gallons
Fuel consumption	1.84 GPH
Fuel mileage	3.81 NM/PG
Fuel cost	\$ 885.10
Nights anchored	11
Nights on free docks	4
Nights in marinas	53
Marina cost	\$ 3149.97

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

Other resources were:

Dozier's Waterway Guide Atlantic ICW
Dozier's Waterway Guide Southern

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, manatees, turtles and many birds of all kinds, 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.

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.