

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 north on the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway from Charleston, SC to the Florida Keys and back.

Captain's Log, day one (May 1, 2019)

Where are the Widmans? Well, it's the first of May and it's time for the annual boat cruise. We got HIGH COTTON packed and ready to go, parked the truck under the bridge at the marina and spent last night on the boat so we could get an early start, head for Florida and hopefully, the Florida Keys.

In the middle of the night we were awakened by the beeping sound of the bilge pump alarm. For you non-boaters, the "bilge" is the inside of the hull and the bilge pump is designed to eliminate any water that finds its way into the bilge. Since the alarm stopped, we went back to sleep with the thought of dealing with it in the morning.

At the crack of dawn, we got up and dressed. Patti walked Kiki the Sea Dog while Captain Ron got the boat ready to go. He checked the engine oil and coolant and then checked the bilge. One of the important things in boating is, the water is supposed to be on the outside, not the inside. There was an inch or so of water in the bilge where it's normally dry. Captain Ron couldn't see a leak or evidence of a leak so he pumped it out and figured we would just check on it from time to time.

We unhooked the shorepower cable and the dock lines and slid quietly out of the marina and

headed up the Stono River to the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW).



Bye bye St. Johns Yacht Harbor, see you in a few months

It wasn't long before we met up with a pair of dolphins and Kiki saw her first "big fishies".

Captain Ron handed the helm over to Patti and went below to check on the bilge. This time he saw water dripping down into the bilge from the shaft seal. Inboard boats like HIGH COTTON have the engine on the inside and of course the propeller has to be on the outside in the water. They are connected together with a propeller shaft which passes through the shaft seal to allow it to turn but doesn't allow the water in.

HIGH COTTON, like most modern boats is equipped with a "dripless" shaft seal. Well HIGH COTTON's shaft seal was no longer dripless and was the cause of the water in the bilge.

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We were approaching a well-known boat repair facility; Ross Marine so we called them and they had us bring the boat to the docks for inspection.

It was determined that the entire seal assembly was worn out and needed to be replaced. This requires hauling the boat out of the water and the part has to be ordered and installed.

So, we called for an Uber ride, went back to St. Johns Yacht Harbor, retrieved the truck and drove back home. Hopefully, HIGH COTTON will be repaired and back in the water tomorrow afternoon. We shall see.

So “Where are the Widmans”? Back in their home in North Charleston, SC. Total miles travelled today by boat? Four.

Captain’s Log, day two (May 2, 2019)

Well, we’re on day two and still in North Charleston. HIGH COTTON was supposed to be finished today but when we called the boat yard, the lady said it was on the schedule to go back in the water tomorrow morning. We asked to talk to the guy who is in charge and were told he would call us back. He didn’t. We called again just before closing time and the lady said she would find him but we still didn’t get to talk to him. Hopefully, we’ll get the boat back in the water and underway tomorrow morning. We shall see.

Captain’s Log, day three (May 3, 2019)

We got up this morning and called the boat yard. They told us that it would be ready about 10:00 AM so we waited a bit and then grabbed everything we had taken home that we didn’t eat and headed out. We stopped along the way to pick up coffee and donuts and another cooler of

ice. The bill for repairs was approximately what Captain Ron spent on his first brand new car but that was in 1965 and it didn’t have all the luxuries of today’s new cars.

We got a dock cart and took our stuff to the dock. We had to wait while they finished launching another boat but we finally got HIGH COTTON loaded. Patti and Kiki stayed on the boat while Captain Ron drove the truck to St. Johns Yacht Harbor, parked it and took an Uber back to Ross Marine.

It was about 11:45 AM when we finally got underway. We no sooner got free of the marina area when around the bend came a large cruise liner, the Independence. Captain Ron decided to hug the side of the channel until it passed by.



We give the Big Boys plenty of space

It started getting hot so we put the bimini top up to block the sun. We passed several trawlers and sailboats heading north and two powerboats passed us heading south.

We got our lunch out and began eating (on the flybridge) when the sky darkened and it began to rain. We have a “rain drill” where Patti takes the wheel, Captain Ron grabs Kiki and whatever else he can carry and climbs down the ladder and into the cabin where he takes over the controls. Patti

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covers everything and brings whatever is left down.

It only rained for a half hour or so and we went back to the flybridge. Captain Ron and Patti took turns driving. Eventually we came upon a small pod of dolphins so we stopped to let Kiki watch. They swam away so we continued south.

We pulled into Rock Creek, a small creek off the ICW just before it enters the Coosaw River and dropped the anchor. This is a good spot to spend the night. We'll get up tomorrow morning and head for Beaufort, about three hours away.

It looks like it will be a beautiful sunset tonight.

Captain's Log, day four (May 4, 2019)

We had a quiet night at anchor and awoke a little after dawn. With nothing better to do, we got ourselves dressed, prepared the boat and headed south. Our route today was a short man-made cut, then about an hour and a half on the Coosaw River and then down the Beaufort River to Beaufort. We saw a couple dolphins swimming and stopped so Kiki could watch them. After they disappeared, we resumed speed and the dolphins decided to swim alongside the boat. Kiki loved this and began barking at them. Eventually, of course, they went back to doing whatever dolphins do and we continued on to Beaufort.

The City of Beaufort has installed a nice new free floating dock for visiting boats (day use, no staying overnight) and we were the first ones there today. There happened to be some sort of festival today with food trailers and live music.

Kiki was happy to get off the boat and headed straight for the grass. We walked her around the park and she spied the boat ramp so she had to go

for a swim. Captain Ron threw sticks in the water and she swam out and retrieved them.

After a while we took Kiki back to HIGH COTTON and we all rested a bit. Then the humans went back to the park for lunch, leaving the K-9 to guard the boat. As we were finishing lunch, it began to rain so we hurried back to the boat to cover the dash and seats. Several more times we went to the park only to have it start raining again. One of the times, we got drenched. Kiki enjoyed the festival and meeting new humans and dogs. We enjoyed it also.

Patti decided to leave Captain Ron and the Sea Dog on the boat and walk around the festival and the local shops to see if they had anything she needed. Apparently they did because she returned with a shopping bag full of goodies.

We went to one of the local restaurants for dinner. As we were walking back down the ramp, we noticed a bunch of people posing for pictures in front of HIGH COTTON. This is not the first time this has happened. Apparently HIGH COTTON makes a good photo background. We walked the pooch and then untied the boat and moved to our usual anchorage further down the river. Tomorrow we should cross into Georgia.



HIGH COTTON at the Beaufort, SC day dock

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Captain's Log, day five (May 5, 2019)

Well, we didn't cross into Georgia; in fact we can still see Beaufort and last night's anchorage. As we were anchoring last night, Captain Ron noticed that the voltage on the house batteries (the batteries that work the lights, inverter, coffee pot, TV, etc.) was much lower than it should be.

Running the engine is supposed to recharge these as well as the battery that starts the engine. He knew something wasn't working correctly.

In the morning, we decided to just get a slip at the nearby Port Royal Landing Marina which has a loaner car and a nearby West Marine store. We called and they had room for us. We had barely enough juice to get the anchor up, but we did and pulled into the marina about 8:30 AM. We called West Marine and they had the part Captain Ron suspected of being defective so he reserved it so no one else would buy it before we got there.

Port Royal Landing Marina is a nice enough marina with a friendly and helpful staff, but it's a very long walk from the dock to the office and dry land. When you walk the dog, you really walk the dog! Kiki managed to make it though, without an accident.

Someone else had the loaner vehicle so we had to wait. The dockmaster called us when it was back and off we went to West Marine to pick up our part. The West Marine store was in the Piggly Wiggly shopping center so Patti went in and got a fresh supply of green beans for the Sea Dog. Green beans are one of her favorite treats but they don't keep well.

For some reason, Captain Ron's jean shorts hadn't been put on the boat (we found out later that they actually were on the boat, but not where they were supposed to be) so we decided to stop

at Walmart and get two pairs. Then we got a sandwich and came back to the boat.

After lunch, Captain Ron began the process of swapping out the automatic charging relay. This required moving a bunch of stuff and then working in an extremely awkward position. It was hot because the engine had been running for testing and he had to come out several times to wipe the sweat off his face and rest. (Captain Ron writes: "I'm getting way too old for this crap!")

Once everything was installed and wired, but before the tools were put away and the mess cleaned up, Captain Ron went for his second shower of the day and then took a nap.

The entire crew went to the office to say goodbye (and for dog treats) and then walked around the grounds looking for squirrels or lizards. This is a nicely landscaped marina set in a nice neighborhood.



HIGH COTTON docked at Port Royal Landing Marina

We decided to finish the rest of our subs that we had for lunch. Jersey Mike's makes some pretty big subs.

After dinner, Captain Ron set about putting the covers back on the devices, cleaning up his mess and putting tools and other stuff away. We said it

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before, but tomorrow we should cross into Georgia.

Captain's Log, day six (May 6, 2019)

We woke about daybreak and decided to head out. Patti walked the dog while Captain Ron did the pre-departure checks. Being on the face dock and heading into the current, it was just a matter of looping the stern line back to the boat, untying all the other lines and just drifting out into the river. We pulled in the stern line and were on our way.

We passed several boats headed north and stopped a couple times so the Sea Dog could watch the "big fishies". As we were passing through the back side of Hilton Head on Scull Creek, a tug boat called us by name (thanks to our AIS) and warned us that he was blocking part of the bridge opening while working on it. By the time we got to the bridge the tug was clear of the bridge opening but we still passed at no-wake speed.



A shrimp boat on the ICW

We finally crossed the Savannah River into Georgia about noon. A new bridge is under construction a few miles south of the Savannah River so we had to slow for that as well.

As we approached the Thunderbolt Marina, we tried to call them on the radio but got no answer so since we had reservations, we just pulled in and tied ourselves up. A lady on one of the docked boats came out and grabbed our lines. Apparently, the one employee had gone out for lunch.

The dockhand returned and we checked in and paid. We need fuel so we'll just get that in the morning before we leave.

It was time to change the oil and filters in the engine and transmission so Captain Ron got started. This marina has a place for used motor oil so when he finished, all he had to do was put it in the empty jugs and take it back to the office. No need to carry it around looking for a place that will take it.

We showered and walked to the marine store to get materials for a wiring harness that Captain Ron wanted to make but they didn't sell wire by the foot. That put an end to his project for now. Next door was the famous "Tubby's Tank House" so we went in and had our dinner. It was happy hour so Patti had two beers. Captain Ron had a single glass of water.



Dinner at Tubby's Tank House in Thunderbolt, GA

Once we waked back to the marina, Patti gathered up a load of clothes and took them to the laundry

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area. There was another couple in the screened in area with a small dog and Captain Ron and Kiki joined them and we all talked about boats and places we have been.

Eventually, it was time for the old folks to go to bed so Captain Ron took the pooch back to HIGH COTTON and Patti soon followed with the cleaned and folded laundry.

We'll head south tomorrow, destination unknown. We'll probably travel until we're tired and anchor for the night.

Captain's Log, day seven (May 7, 2019)

Tired from yesterday's activities, we slept in a bit today. We did get up about 7:30 AM to find a box of Krispy Kreme donuts in the cockpit of HIGH COTTON. This is one of the perks staying at the Thunderbolt Marina. Patti walked the pooch while Captain Ron went to the office to get some free coffee to go with his free donuts. After this "breakfast", we topped off the water tanks.

We needed diesel fuel as well, but to get to the pumps, we had to cast off, head up the river a bit and then turn around and come back to the dock on the other side of the boat that was in front of us. So, with all this activity, it was 9:30 AM by the time we headed out of Thunderbolt.

The Georgia ICW south of Thunderbolt is a series of winding rivers, creeks and open sounds (places where rivers join and meet the ocean). There's virtually no civilization, just miles and miles of marshland backed by trees on the western side.

We stopped several times so the K-9 could watch the dolphins ("big fishies") playing. She has now learned the meaning of the word "dolphin" so now we have to spell it out if we don't want her to

get excited. She has also learned to pee and poop in the cockpit on the back of the boat. We have a shower there so it's a simple matter to just rinse it overboard. This is much better than the puppy pads. *(Kiki writes: "Yes, I'm much smarter than the average puppy.")*



The Sea Dog on the watch for big fishies

We decided to make a stop at Brunswick, GA so we pressed on a little longer than we normally would so tomorrow we'll get there about noon or so. Of course we haven't called the marina yet to see if they have room for us.

There were two sailboats anchored where we originally planned to anchor before we decided to press on. We are now anchored in a quiet creek with one sailboat. We've been passing northbound boats all day, a dozen or more. We passed a group of boats and got a call on the radio from one of them. It turned out we had been at several marinas with him last spring on our trip north. He continued on the Great Loop while we turned around and came home. When he gets to Charleston, he will have completed the great loop. It's a small world sometimes!

The temperature has dropped and it's not overly humid so we should have a comfortable and quiet night's sleep. More tomorrow.

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Captain's Log, day eight (May 8, 2019)

We had a great night's sleep last night. It was a beautiful, quiet anchorage with enough breeze to be refreshing but not so much as to generate waves and rock the boat. Patti decided to fix breakfast so Captain Ron had a toasted bagel and she and the K-9 had scrambled eggs.

We did our pre-departure checks, uncovered the seats and helm, pulled the anchor and headed out into the ICW. It wasn't long before we could see the top of the Sidney Lanier Bridge in Brunswick, GA (our destination) but it would be another five hours before we actually got there.

We forgot to mention the stingrays yesterday. We've seen this before in Georgia where stingrays jump out of the water and do a backflip and splash when they land on the water. Patti saw a few of these yesterday while Captain Ron was below. Today Captain Ron saw one. We also saw our first alligator of the trip. Of course, there were the usual dolphins for the Sea Dog to watch.

As we entered St. Simons Sound, a large cargo ship was leaving Brunswick, bound for Philadelphia. Another cargo ship entered the sound and we followed it (at a distance) through the sound and up the Brunswick River until we turned off towards the marina.



Sharing the water with the Big Boys

We got docked at Brunswick Landing Marina with a little help but before we could check in, Kiki made a beeline for dry land and took care of business.

After checking in and another dog walk, we covered everything on the flybridge and walked to town for lunch. Captain Ron wanted curried goat at the Jamaican restaurant. Patti wanted pizza at the pizza restaurant we had been to a few years ago. We had pizza.

After lunch we stopped in the ice cream shop for ice cream. There's a "free beer" event at the marina and it was suggested that we bring a light snack to share so we asked the lady at the ice cream shop if there was a grocery store within walking distance. She thought for a moment and then said "Yes. Walk down the street to the mailbox, turn right and it's about three blocks."

It was supposed to be a "meat market" but it was surprisingly well stocked, especially with Mexican items including hog maws and oxtails. We looked at all the exotic foods but settled on ordinary cubed ham and cheese which Patti cut into matching cubes. Actually, this "meat market" would have been a decent place to restock the boat. They had a lot of stuff.

We took our showers and walked to the "free beer" event at the other end of the marina. They had free beer and free wine but nothing non-alcoholic for Captain Ron. He was able to fill a cup with ice and get water from the sink.

Captain Ron was feeling tired and he was the only one drinking water so after a bit, he walked back to HIGH COTTON. Patti followed a little later. We will probably stay another day so we can explore the town and Captain Ron can get his curried goat.

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Captain's Log, day nine (May 9, 2019)

We slept in this morning. Actually, Patti got up first while Captain Ron and the pooch stayed in bed. Eventually they got up. Captain Ron made himself a cup of coffee, not realizing that the marina had free coffee. Kiki had her morning walk and breakfast. Captain Ron and Patti walked to town to the restaurant they had visited for breakfast four years ago. Patti had pancakes the size of the plate while Captain Ron had eggs, sausage, home fries and raisin toast with apple butter, just as he had four years ago. Raisin toast with apple butter is not something you find at most restaurants.

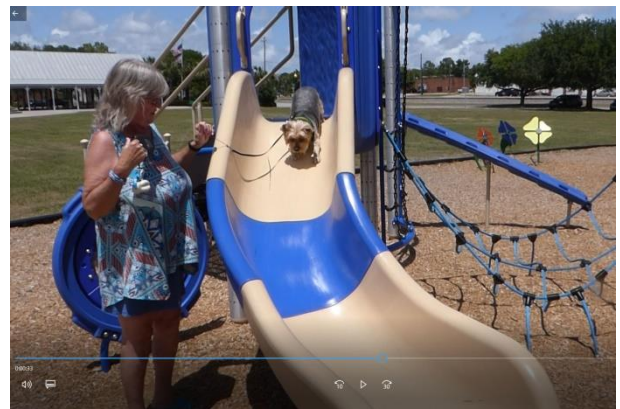


Patti and her pancakes

We walked around the town a bit, observing the historic homes and commercial buildings. We walked back through the park to the marina. Patti

had planned on taking advantage of the free laundry to wash the bedding but the laundry area was closed for repairs. We watched as several boats came to the marina and docked. Captain Ron watched a TV documentary on the life of Evel Knievel that dragged on and on.

It was now time to walk the pooch again so we walked her to the park. She went down the sliding board, much to the delight of a woman and her small children. On the way back, she found a deep puddle in the grass and jumped in and rolled over. The grass had just been cut so of course she was wet and covered in grass clippings. She got a bath at the fish cleaning station and ran around until she was mostly dry.



Kiki on the sliding board



Kiki cools off in her puddle

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Patti walked back to the little grocery store while Captain Ron and the Sea Dog stood watch on HIGH COTTON.

After she returned, the humans walked to town to the Island Jerk Restaurant. Captain Ron got his curried goat and Patti had jerk pork. There were three sizes offered so our plan was to get the small size dinners and then buy two more for tomorrow. Well, we only managed to eat half of each of our dinners so we'll have dinner tomorrow without buying more. And it was good too.

We came back to the marina and took showers. Kiki had another walk in the park and it's time for bed. *(Kiki writes: "This is a nice marina with lots of things to see and smell.")*

Captain's Log, day ten (May 10, 2019)

We were in no big rush to get underway this morning; the marina office didn't open until 8:00 AM. Captain Ron wanted his free coffee and we had to turn in the restroom key cards. We topped off the water tanks and checked the engine oil and coolant levels.

We decided it would be a good idea to top off the fuel tanks as well so we pulled out of our slip and around to the fuel dock and took on thirty three gallons of diesel fuel. We followed a sailboat named "Hamburgers" down the river and through most of St. Simons Sound. Finally, it turned north and we turned south.

We passed a dredge boat before entering Jekyll Creek (a notorious shallow area that is finally being dredged). Even though it was just a bit past low tide, the water was mostly deep with one stretch between five and six feet deep (HIGH COTTON needs at least three and a half feet of water to float).



Deck hand Patti coiling the lines



The Sidney Lanier Bridge near Brunswick, GA



Dredge Boat at work

Just south of Jekyll Creek is the notorious St. Andrews Sound where the ICW track goes nearly to the Atlantic Ocean before doubling back into the Cumberland River. This crossing takes about an hour and can be pretty uncomfortable under certain conditions. There is an alternate,

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protected route but it's longer and involves some shallow water.

We passed a northbound trawler in Jekyll Creek so Captain Ron called them on the radio and asked about the conditions in the sound. There was apparently some misunderstanding because their answer was pretty vague and didn't help a bit.

We decided to go ahead and cross the sound. It wasn't bad until we were near the ocean when the waves made it a bit uncomfortable. After the turn coming back, things quieted down.

Once we got on the Cumberland River behind Cumberland Island, we saw several pods of dolphins. Of course, we stopped and Kiki watched them. We also ran it to swarms of green headed flies. Kiki doesn't like flies and she hid behind the storage boxes under the dash. Patti doesn't like them either so she got out the fly swatter and went on the offensive.

As we passed the Kings Bay submarine base, Kiki started acting strangely and hiding behind the boxes. Patti thought it might be some sort of sound from the base that humans could not hear. Captain Ron figured it was the flies. Anyhow, we took her below in the cabin and in a few minutes she was fine.

We turned off the ICW to Cumberland Sound behind the Cumberland Island National Seashore, a place we've anchored before. We picked a spot and anchored. Then we realized that it was high tide and by low tide there wouldn't be enough water to float HIGH COTTON. We pulled the anchor and motored to a deeper spot. As Captain Ron was lowering the anchor, the rode (rope) got stuck. There was a tangle in the anchor locker where the rode goes and the tangle had come up through the hole in the deck and got stuck. It wouldn't go up and it wouldn't go down.

Captain Ron went below, swung the TV out of the way and looked in the anchor locker to untangle the rode. Well, it wasn't that easy.

To make a long story short and save repeating the choice words Captain Ron had to say, two screwdrivers, the special windlass wrench and a hammer and thirty minutes later, the rode was freed and we were anchored again. Whew!

We are anchored in a nice quiet cove with a few other boats. Dinner was left over Jamaican food from the restaurant in Brunswick. We'll be on our way again tomorrow.

Captain's Log, day eleven (May 11, 2019)

We had a quiet and comfortable sleep last night. We got up, did the pre-trip checks, pulled up the anchor and headed back towards the ICW. That's when we got the message on the chart plotter "Sonar Service Lost". Not only was there no depth information, there was no boat location or speed reading! Not good.

All the navigation information on HIGH COTTON connects to the chart plotter at the lower helm and is then shared with the chart plotter on the upper helm. This works even when the chart plotter at the lower helm is not switched on but of course, some of the electronics are active when feeding information to the other chart plotter.

Captain Ron went below to see what the problem was. He checked for power and there was power but the lower chart plotter would not come on. He disconnected the power and reconnected it (similar to rebooting a computer). This time it started to come on but just flashed the "Garmin" startup screen. He disconnected the power again, this time for a couple minutes and when he reconnected the power and pushed the button,

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the chart plotter came on normally and all the navigation information was available at the upper helm.

So, with the distinct advantage of knowing where we were going, how fast we were going and how deep the water was (more on this later), we re-entered the ICW. It wasn't long before we crossed the state line into Florida.

The first couple hours were uneventful but as the day wore on, more and more boats appeared, mostly moving fast and creating bothersome wakes. One boat came past and when we looked at the name on the side it was "High Cotton". This was about a 24 foot center console boat. Later in the day, a trawler passed headed north and we recognized it as a boat we had spent the night tied up to about three years ago at the visitor center on the Dismal Swamp Canal in North Carolina. The boat is named "Fryedaze". Patti called them on the radio and said "Hi".

The boat traffic really began to increase as we neared the St. Johns River at about 11:00 AM (keep in mind that this was a beautiful warm Saturday in Florida). We noticed that often, after bouncing over a wake, the depth sounder would lose track of the depth and just flash the previous reading for up to a couple minutes or more. Captain Ron will have to look into this before we get much further.

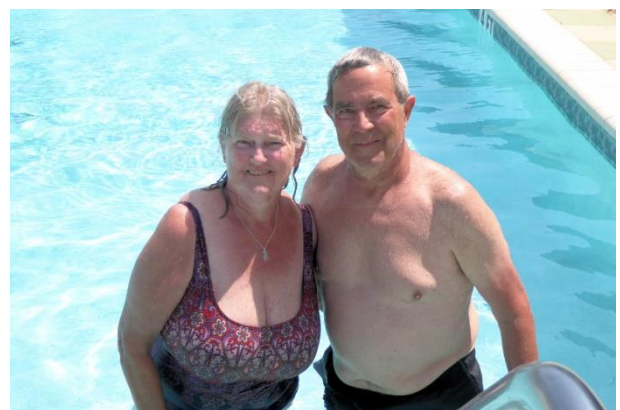
There's a free dock just before the ICW crosses the St. Johns River and we often spend the night there but it wasn't even noon yet so we decided to continue on. St. Augustine was a bit too far for today so we looked for marinas on Active Captain between where we were and St. Augustine and found the Palm Cove Marina. It looked good on paper (actually on the computer screen) so we called and made a reservation.

We pulled in, got tied up and checked in and looked around. This is a really nice place. It has a swimming pool, nice bathrooms and showers and docking was a piece of cake. It's within walking distance of a Publix supermarket, a Walgreens drug store and a few restaurants.

After walking the pooch (actually, that was the first thing we did), we changed into our swimsuits and hit the pool for a refreshing hour or so. We walked the Sea Dog again and then walked to the Shrimp Shack for dinner and Publix for a few things we were short on.



The pool at Palm Cove Marina



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

Coming back into the marina, we stopped and talked to some of the local liveaboards. Then we took our stuff to the boat and brought Kiki back to

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the lounge area to meet the group. Everyone took turns petting her and she loved every minute of it.

We mentioned how nice the showers looked but since we swam in the pool and it's getting late, we decided to skip showers for the night. We'll have decent showers in St. Augustine tomorrow.



Liveaboards are allowed at Palm Cove Marina

Captain's Log, day twelve (May 12, 2019)

Somehow, the alarm on Patti's phone went off about 6:30 AM. She got up and turned it off, but we couldn't go back to sleep so we crawled out of bed about 7:00 and prepared to get underway.

After the customary dog walk and engine checks, Captain Ron decided to check the liquid level in the transducer mount to see if that is what is causing the erratic depth sounder operation. He got it apart and it appeared that the liquid was barely touching the transducer so he added water (it's supposed to be antifreeze but water should do in a warm climate) and closed everything back up. He powered up the chart plotter and that seemed fine.

We disconnected the shorepower cord and the dock lines and headed back onto the ICW. Everything appeared to be working fine as we motored south but eventually (being Sunday and

Mother's Day to boot), the boat traffic and wakes picked up and the same problem appeared, loss of depth readings after being rocked by wakes. Captain Ron has a couple more things to try.

We mentioned that a center console boat, "High Cotton" passed us yesterday. Well, today it passed us again going the other way. We probably encountered a hundred or so boats today.

Eventually, we could see the high rise Vilano Beach Bridge in the distance but it was still about two and a half hours away. The boat traffic picked up, the wind and waves picked up and it was like boating in a washing machine.

We had been hearing warnings all day about the St. Augustine Bridge of Lions Bridge being stuck in the down position but HIGH COTTON is able to pass through it without an opening so we cruised through and called the St. Augustine Municipal Marina on the radio for docking instructions.



St. Augustine Bridge of Lions

Once we got tied up in our slip, Patti took the K-9 for a walk while Captain Ron connected the power and closed the windows so the air conditioning could cool the boat. Once he did that, he went up the ramp looking for his wife and dog. He searched the waterfront to no avail so he went to the dockhouse and checked in and paid.

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For no particular reason, Captain Ron had put on a New Bern, NC souvenir tee shirt this morning. As he was walking down the dock, he was stopped by a couple who asked if he was from New Bern. It turns out, they used to live there. This led to a conversation about where we had been and where we were going. They said they were on their way to Charleston.

Meanwhile, Patti and Kiki appeared. It turns out, after doing her business, the Sea Dog had made a bee line to the souvenir shop where she got a treat. Did she remember from two years ago? Who knows?

Back at the boat, Captain Ron fell asleep watching TV. When he woke, he and Patti walked to town for a late lunch/early dinner. We returned and got the Sea Dog and walked to town. We walked to the park where she met some other dogs and humans. On the way, she chased a rat. In the park, she chased a squirrel.

While walking back to the boat, the Sea Dog spied a large puddle. Since it was pretty hot out, she stepped to the middle of the puddle and lay down. People walking by thought this was hilarious.

Eventually, we convinced her to leave the comfort of her cool puddle and continue back to HIGH COTTON where she was treated to a full body cool rinse in the cockpit with the transom shower.

Patti and Captain Ron each walked to the marina building for long refreshing showers. Back at the boat we have a tired dog and it's time for bed.

Captain's Log, day thirteen (May 13, 2019)

Today was a day in port so there's no boating to report. Patti got up early because she couldn't find her sleep mask. Captain Ron and the Sea Dog did their best to ignore her and the daylight but

eventually got out of bed at 8:00 AM or so. Patti and Kiki went to shore for a walk while Captain Ron went to the marina office at the fuel dock for his free (it's not really free, it's included in the price) coffee.

Patti decided to do a load of laundry and on her way back she saw manatees swimming in the marina. We both went back and saw them but couldn't get good photos of them. Patti went back to move the laundry from the washer to the dryer and Captain Ron soon followed with the pooch in tow. There were other boaters in the lounge off the laundry area so we talked about boating. One boater was cleaning her boat of excess stuff and brought some cruising guides. We already had most of them but did pick up another guide for Florida.

After the clothes were done and put away on the boat, we walked to town for lunch. Then, we did the "tourist" thing, going in all the shops. Patti found a dress she couldn't live without so she bought it. We walked out of the shop and the next shop on the street was another branch of the first shop. Dresses in there were "buy two and get one free" so she bought two more and got a free one. She shouldn't run out of dresses on this trip! Since there had been some drizzle earlier, we had the foresight to take our umbrellas with us. It was a good thing because in the middle of our shopping spree it began to rain.

We had planned to stop for ice cream at a shop near the marina but when we got there, it was closed so we walked back to another ice cream shop and each got a cup. Kiki doesn't know about our ice cream stop. (*Kiki writes: "Yea, they think they are fooling me but I can smell ice cream on their breath!"*)

We came back to the boat and took the K-9 for a walk. We rested a bit and it was time for dinner. Our plan for tomorrow is to spend the night at Marineland Marina and there are no restaurants nearby so we ordered our dinner tonight with the thought of having leftovers for tomorrow.

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Kiki checks out the Bridge of Lions



Kiki makes friends in St. Augustine



The crew resting in St. Augustine, FL



Kiki finds a refreshing puddle



Patti takes out the trash



OK, No dogs and no cats, but how do they control the birds?

Kiki will get another walk and then we'll hit the hay (V-berth) for the night.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain's Log, day fourteen (May 14, 2019)

Again, Patti got up before the rest of the crew. Kiki tried to keep Captain Ron in bed but eventually Patti came and got her, leashed her up and took her for a walk. Captain Ron did the engine checks and then went to the office for his free coffee and to turn in the bathroom keys.

We backed out of our slip and headed south. Our destination for the day was Marineland Marina, just about a three hour cruise. Daytona Beach would have been about nine hours and we're not in that big of a hurry. We did stop for "big fishies" a few times along the way.



This boat could stand a wash and wax job

As we were approaching the marina, a large power boat approached us at a pretty high speed and with a large wake. The captain called on the radio and asked if we would like him to slow down. We answered in the affirmative and he did. That was nice of him and something we don't encounter often on the ICW.

The slip we were assigned to had us heading straight for an expensive looking boat and making a sharp turn at the last minute. Captain Ron did fine but getting out tomorrow morning will take some good boat handling. Hopefully, there won't be much wind or current.



HIGH COTTON safely docked at Marineland Marina

We've stayed at this marina before and there's a small kayak launching area where Kiki can walk into the water and swim. We asked her if she wanted to go swimming and she did, so off we went. She saw the water and ran right in and swam back and forth a bit. Captain Ron found some sticks to throw in the water and she swam out and retrieved them just like the big dogs do.



Kiki cools off in the ICW

The marina is next to a University of Florida research facility and students were sitting at picnic tables eating lunch. Kiki thought she was going to get some free food but got petted instead.

The beach on the Atlantic Ocean is across the street from the marina and we had thought about walking over but our ambition dwindled and we never made it. Maybe next time.

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We ate our leftovers from last night. Patti finished hers; Captain Ron still has enough for another meal. After dinner, we walked the K-9 again and talked to one of the other boaters. Kiki got petted again.

We have reservations in Daytona Beach for tomorrow and it's about a five hour cruise. For now, we'll take our showers and then go to bed.

Captain's Log, day fifteen (May 15, 2019)

One of the nice things about Marineland Marina is it's in an isolated location. There is a small University of Florida facility next door and the dolphin center across the street and that's it. This makes for a very quiet stay. We had a great night's sleep.

We got up, got dressed, walked the puppy, got the boat ready and headed out. Getting out without getting close to the expensive boat turned out to be a piece of cake with a little planning.

As we were exiting the marina, a large trawler was heading north on the ICW. The choice was to try to wait in the entrance channel or hurry and cross in front of it. Captain Ron chose the latter and made it with plenty of time to spare.

As the trawler's wake hit us, we realized that we still had the problem with the depth sounder. Captain Ron has a "plan A" and a "plan B" to address the issue.

Florida has a lot of manatees and has many different ways of trying to protect them. They have "no wake" zones, "minimum wake" zones, "25 MPH" zones (we can't go that fast) and "25 MPH in the channel, minimum wake outside the channel" zones. And some of these restrictions are year round and others are between May 1 and

September 7. Nobody wants to hit a manatee of course, but one has to wonder why most of the manatee protection zones are in front of the rich people's homes and few are in front of the poor people's homes. Except for a few in the marina in St. Augustine, we haven't seen any manatees on the ICW yet.



Speed limit / pelican perch on the ICW

We did see dolphins and the Sea Dog watched them and barked at them when they swam close to the boat. Boat traffic was sparse, not like on the weekend.



The first of several bridges we had to have opened in Florida

Captain Ron went below to see if we should fuel up in Daytona Beach. He noticed that the fuel was mostly being used from the tank on the port side, not both evenly. That's something else for him to work on.

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We pulled into Halifax Harbor Marina, topped off our tanks at the fuel dock and walked to the office to check in and pay. Kiki was given a dog treat and she played with it before eating it. The office lady was entertained.

Halifax Harbor Marina is so big, the dockhands use boats to get from one side to the other. We were met at our slip and got tied up and connected to electrical power.



HIGH COTTON safely docked at Halifax Harbor Marina

The puppy had a short walk when we were getting fuel but she needed a longer walk so we went up the ramp, through the gate and onto the park-like grounds. She checked out the new sights and smells and we walked back to HIGH COTTON. *(Kiki writes: "I like this marina. They have lots of grass and bushes to smell.)*



Patti and the pup at Halifax Harbor Marina

Everybody was tired and there were naps for the entire crew. Then Patti and Captain Ron walked to town for dinner, leaving the pooch to guard the boat. This is the town where Captain Ron had the worst Irish food he can remember so we already knew where not to go. The original plan was for Italian food but we ended up at a Mexican restaurant. On the way back we passed an ice cream shop so we had to go in and each get a cup.

Captain Ron decided that it would be best to actually work on the boat rather than writing about it so he sent the females for a walk and got down to business. "Plan A" for the depth sounder was to empty out the cup for the depth sounder (He had noticed debris floating in the fluid), clean it, and start over with fresh water. If this doesn't work, he will go with "plan B" at the next stop.

As for the uneven fuel draw, his thought had been that when the work was being done to the shaft seal at the boatyard, someone might have accidentally closed or partially closed the valve. Well, that wasn't it, the valve was fully open. All the fuel valves were in their correct positions and all the fuel lines looked fine.

There is a device that shows if the fuel filter is becoming blocked and it said it was time to switch to the spare fuel filter so Captain Ron did that. It's possible that this partial restriction could have caused the problem. If the problem continues, it's possible that the tank vent is partially blocked. That's the next thing to check.

The ladies came back from their walk, we took turns showering and now it's time for bed. There's supposed to be a rocket launch from Cape Canaveral tonight at about 10:00 PM. We are about fifty miles away so it may not be a great view and we may not stay up that late.

More boating tomorrow.

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Captain's Log, day sixteen (May 16, 2019)

We actually got up early today. With the dog walking, boat checks and topping off the fresh water tanks we were underway by 7:30 AM. Different marinas have different ways of dealing with security and locking the showers. Some have none, some have keypads with a number code and some have keys, either mechanical or electronic cards.

Halifax Harbor Marina uses mechanical locks with magnetic keys but unlike many marinas, there are no drop boxes for boaters to leave their keys in. Instead, as you're leaving the marina, you call them on the radio and someone comes out to the fuel dock with a net on a long pole and you drop the keys into the net on the way out.

So, we dropped the keys off and headed out of the marina channel and south on the ICW. The sun was behind a big cloud to the east and it was almost chilly for a while. Eventually, the cloud broke up and the sun came out.



The dockhand waiting to collect the keys

As was the case yesterday, there were a lot of slow speed manatee zones but we didn't see any manatees. Captain Ron did manage to drift out of the channel and touch bottom. The boat stopped but he was able to get free and we continued on our way.



Another anchored boat that could use a bit of attention



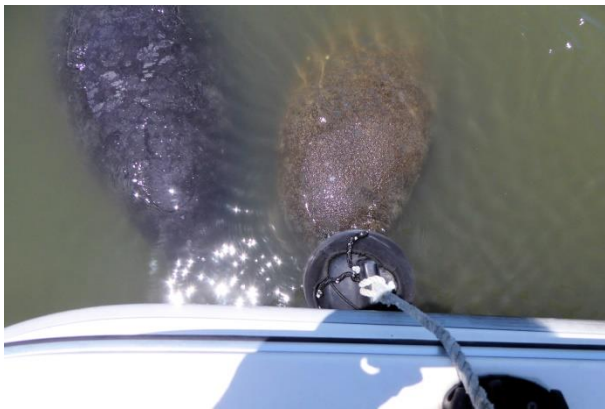
Boat traffic headed north on the ICW

There's a spot on the Haulover Canal where there's a cove and a small boat ramp. There's also a dock but no power or fresh water. We stayed there two years ago and the cove was full of manatees. We weren't sure the dock was still there after last year's storms but it was so we pulled in and got ourselves tied to the dock. As before, the place is full of manatees doing what manatees do. There are probably over a dozen swimming, splashing and diving. Some came to HIGH COTTON and began sucking on our boat fenders to get the grass and algae off. Kiki watched and barked at them. There were a lot of people watching the manatees as well. *(Kiki writes: "These are special big fishies, not like the ones I normally get to see on the water.")*

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Manatees in Haulover Canal



The Manatees checking out HIGH COTTON

We went back to the boat where Patti whipped up some tuna salad sandwiches. We ate lunch and the manatees quieted down. Captain Ron found that his Verizon Hot Spot had no Internet access but his phone did so he is using his phone as a hot spot. It makes one wonder what the advantage is to having (and paying for) an actual Hot Spot.

Captain Ron still had leftover Jambalaya from St. Augustine so that was his dinner. Patti had microwave “boat food” from the storage area under the seat.

We talked to a couple of guys on a small fishing boat and they told us that there’s supposed to be a rocket launch tonight at nearby Cape Canaveral

(postponed from last night). Maybe we’ll set the alarm and get up to watch it.

Our plan is to go to Titusville tomorrow for the weekend. It’s a short trip but we can restock the boat and watch the manatees. Most of all, we can avoid the weekend boat traffic.

Captain’s Log, day seventeen (May 17, 2019)

Well, after we posted this, we were lying in bed, naked and watching the season finale of The Big Bang Theory when we heard a loud rapping on the window. Patti threw on a robe and went to see what was going on. It was a park ranger with the news that we could not stay at the dock, we had to leave. Patti told her that it was dark and it was unsafe for us to leave. She didn’t care, she insisted that we leave. We asked if we could anchor in the cove and she said “no”.

So, we got dressed, fired up HIGH COTTON and left the dock and the canal in the darkness. We entered the Indian River and pulled off to the side where there is supposed to be about five feet of water (the whole river is shallow except for the channel) and anchored. Just to be clear, there are no signs on or near this dock prohibiting overnight docking. None.

We found a website with the countdown for the rocket launch and it was only an hour away so we decided to stay up and watch it. What we didn’t know was, the launch had been cancelled but the website was still counting down. We found out about the cancellation on a different website so we went ahead and went to bed.

We slept in a bit since our trip to the marina from our anchorage was less than ten miles and we didn’t want to show up too early. Patti fixed scrambled eggs and sausage.

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Since “plan A” hadn’t worked for the depth sounder, Captain Ron decided to try “plan B” (mount the transducer directly to the hull) before we got underway. That experiment produced no reading at all so it was back to “plan A”. The depth sounder performed as expected all the way to the marina but that wasn’t a real test.

When we got to the marina, we found we didn’t have floating docks; we had a short finger pier and pilings. We have docked like this before but we forgot about it so there was some scrambling with lines. The dockhand was a big help getting us tied up.



HIGH COTTON docked at the Titusville City Marina

Once we got tied up and connected to shore power, we went to the office and checked in and paid our bill. Kiki got a dog biscuit and some petting.

There’s a boat repair shop near the marina so we walked over to see about buying a replacement transducer. The lady took our information to the guy in back and came back saying they could get us one but not before Monday and it would cost \$340.00. There was another one shown in the catalog for \$180 but when they looked it up it was no longer listed by their supplier.

Captain Ron wasn’t pleased with this so he decided to do some research before committing

to spending that much money and staying an extra day.

He got on the Internet and found that West Marine does in fact charge \$340, but most other vendors are selling the transducer for much less, as low as \$99 on eBay.

That won’t do of course because we are travelling and have to have it sent to a marina we will be staying at. Purchasing on amazon.com wouldn’t work for the same reason.

He found the transducer at the GPS Store and was able to call and talk to a human who was able to take our payment from one address and ship to another. We should get the transducer Tuesday at the Vero Beach Marina (in Vero Beach, FL).

We took Kiki back to the office for more treats and attention. It was pretty slow so Patti took her off her leash and the women in the office played with her and gave her treats.

After that flurry of activity, we set off for town and an Italian restaurant we remembered from our last stop two years ago. We couldn’t find it on the Internet so we walked all over town, only to find it gone and the building vacant. We ended up at KFC.

We walked back to the marina, walked the pooch and took showers. With any luck and ambition, the boat will get washed and vacuumed tomorrow.

Captain’s Log, day eighteen (May 18, 2019)

The crew must have been tired last night because nobody stirred until 9:30 AM. Eventually, we got up, got dressed and walked the Sea Dog. There was a group doing voluntary boat safety inspections. These aren’t required and carry no

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weight with the actual Coast Guard but they are a good way to make sure a boat is compliant so we asked the guy to inspect HIGH COTTON.

The gentleman who came to the boat was an older man who decided that he wouldn't be able to actually get onto the boat because of the way it was docked even though Captain Ron and Patti had no problems. So, mostly he asked questions and Captain Ron showed him things. In the end, we got a written report and a decal.

After this, Patti and Captain Ron walked to town to exchange a container of body wash that was leaking and to eat lunch. By the time we reached the restaurant we had walked nearly a mile. This was a "diner" with a wide selection and generous portions. We ate too much.



Patti ordered a chef salad



Captain Ron had the roast turkey dinner

On the way back, Patti decided she wanted to visit some of the shops along the way. She suggested to Captain Ron that he could go ahead back to the boat so he did.

Once he climbed onto HIGH COTTON, he took the puppy to the V berth, laid down beside her, turned on the TV, and having just consumed a turkey dinner, fell asleep.

Eventually, Patti returned from shopping and got out the vacuum cleaner and began to clean. Captain Ron went to the lounge to get out of her way. He returned to the boat, got out the hose and bucket, began to wash the outside.

Once Patti finished with the vacuuming, she went out and helped with the boat washing. It's not a great job, but most of the real filth is gone.

The boat cleaning deserved a reward so we headed for the marina office where they sell ice cream. Patti asked Kiki if she wanted some and of course she did. We sat on the bench outside the office eating ice cream and sharing it with the pooh.

After that, it was time to take our showers and slide between the sheets for another night's rest.

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Captain's Log, day nineteen (May 19, 2019)

You would think that a person who did nothing all day but walk and eat, walk and eat and walk some more could have found fifteen minutes to post about his activities, but alas, that was not the case yesterday and there is no guarantee it will not happen again.

So, as has happened every year on this date, the Birthday Bunny found his way onto a locked boat overnight and left birthday cards for Captain Ron. There was no cake, however, because lighting that many candles on a cake would require a special permit from the fire department.

We started the day as usual, by getting dressed and walking the Sea Dog. The marina has a lawn and a sign that says "No pee or poop zone". They want dogs to do their business across the street in the rough grass. Unfortunately, Kiki has trouble with that concept and it's hard to get her past the "no pee" grass to the "ok to pee" grass. Sometimes she makes it, sometimes she does not.

Once the puppy was done and back to the boat, she got her breakfast and the humans decided to walk the mile to the diner for breakfast. It seemed like all the locals were there, but we got the last table in the back. We had a decent breakfast and headed back towards the marina.

We had passed an antique car show at a local lodge on the way to the diner so we headed back in that direction. Captain Ron headed for the car show while Patti detoured to CVS for something she had forgotten and then met up with Captain Ron. It was a small show so by the time Patti got there, Captain Ron had seen all the cars. It's a bit depressing when the cars you drove as a teenager are now in antique shows!

Back aboard HIGH COTTON, we rested up from the walk. We walked the K-9 along the sea wall

where she saw some manatees eating the grass off the wall. Then we walked her to the local dog park. We let her off her leash but as usual, she pretty much stayed by our side.



Kiki checks out the manatee

There was a child's plastic wading pool in the corner with a hose for filling it. We put her in and she walked around and lay down in it. Once she tired of that, we sat down at the table in the shade with the other dog owners and their dogs. They all sniffed Kiki but she didn't sniff back.



Kiki cools off in the pool

We headed back to the boat and rested a bit. Then it was time to walk to a different restaurant for dinner. This one was at the end of a pier next to the bridge and again, further than it appeared on the map. There was a band playing outside

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and a lot of drinking but we opted for a quiet table inside.

By the time we made it back from dinner, the marina office was closed so we couldn't get ice cream. Kiki met some people and got fussed over and petted.

The marina is in the process of remodeling the men's showers and restrooms so it dedicated the handicapped restroom for the men's shower. That's fine, but it's single user. Captain Ron went to take a shower but someone beat him to it by a few seconds. He came back to the boat and sent Patti for her shower. After Patti's shower, he went back but someone else was using it. This time, he waited on a bench for his turn.

By this time, he was too tired to write so we all went to bed.

Captain's Log, day twenty (May 20, 2019)

We got up, got dressed and did our engine checks. Patti and Kiki set out for their morning constitutional while Captain Ron topped off the fresh water tanks and put the hose and shore power cord away. We waited until the office opened at 8:00 AM so we could say goodbye, the Sea Dog could get another treat and Patti could get a bag of ice and some Dr Pepper sodas (her favorite).

We rearranged our stern lines so we could cast off from the dock without help and away we went back into the Indian River. We have reservations at the Vero Beach City Marina for Tuesday and Wednesday. It's about seventy five miles away so we wanted to break this up into two day's travel. The Indian River is very wide and very shallow in this area with a dredged channel about ten feet deep.

The ICW at this point passes west of Cape Canaveral and if you're lucky, you may get to see a rocket launch. We've never been this lucky, but we did see a rocket and the facility in the distance.



Cape Canaveral in the distance from the ICW near Titusville

We stopped to see dolphins and we had a pair swim with the boat for a few minutes. The pooch enjoyed that and talked to them as they were swimming.

We had hoped to go a little further than half way, but looking at our resources, we couldn't find a good alternative to the little cove we anchored in twice on our last Florida trip. It's a nice, protected cove with about fifteen feet of water, but it's near a highway with cars and trucks passing by. There is also a railroad track with trains blowing their horns all night long. The trick is, getting over an area where it's only five feet deep to get into the cove.

Anyhow, we made it in about 2:00 and have been sitting here swinging on the hook since then. Captain Ron wrote yesterday's "blog", we ate leftovers from Titusville, and we're about to go to sleep for the night.

Our replacement transducer, ordered Friday, has made its way as far as Jacksonville, FL so it should get to Vero Beach while we are there.

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Captain's Log, day twenty one (May 21, 2019)

We had a decent night's sleep last night in spite of the highway (US route 1) and train noise. It was calm and cool. In the morning there was a guy fishing in a small boat but he didn't bother us.

Patti decided to fix breakfast since she had leftover scrambled eggs and hash browns from the diner in Titusville. She shared with the Sea Dog. Captain Ron was satisfied with a bagel and cream cheese.

We began pulling the anchor up but the rope and chain were covered in black mud. Captain Ron went inside and turned on the pump for the hose to rinse the mud off but it didn't work. Something else to diagnose and fix. Actually, we seldom need or use it so this may fall to the bottom of the list.

We headed out through the five foot deep water dodging crab pots until we got back on the ICW channel. The first two hours was much like yesterday, a wide, shallow river with a ten foot deep channel in the middle. Eventually, the river narrowed down and curved and we were closer to shore.

We stopped for dolphins a couple times and a pair swam with us for a few minutes. The Sea Dog gets very excited when the "big fishies" swim alongside HIGH COTTON.

The rage these days seems to be boaters using smart phones or tablets instead of chart plotters for navigation. Captain Ron had his doubts but he bought a tablet and the "app" just to see how it compares. He got his tablet and took it to the flybridge and set it up beside the chart plotter.

Well, it does show the nautical charts and the boat's position just like the chart plotter, but as Captain Ron expected, it was difficult to read in

direct sunlight. Chart plotters are made for this, tablets are not. Also, accidentally touching the screen in the wrong place turned the chart and boat direction upside down or did other things like changing the app to display on half a screen.

Finally, the tablet turned the app off saying that the device was overheating. Well, a navigation device that turns itself off when it gets hot isn't ideal for navigating a boat in Florida in the summer time (actually, it's still spring). Captain Ron is not impressed. The eleven year old dedicated marine chart plotter continues to do what it's designed to do and it does it well.



Some things on the water are just hard to explain

About noon, we arrived at our destination for the day, the Vero Beach City Marina. We backed into our slip and got tied up with the assistance of one of the experienced dockhands.

Captain Ron went to the office to check in and pay and found his replacement transducer from the GPS Store in North Carolina was waiting for him. Oddly, the original transducer performed flawlessly all day. More to think about.

Patti and the K-9 showed up after the customary dog walk and the dockhand had dog treats for her. Most marinas welcome dogs. A few do not.

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HIGH COTTON docked at the Vero Beach City Marina

The City of Vero Beach provides a pretty unique and helpful service, free bus transportation. It's only once per hour but there are several routes and you can transfer at the hub and get to West Marine, several shopping centers, the beach, the mall and Walmart. There's a stop at the marina as well.



Patti hops on the Vero Beach free city bus

We put the pooch on the boat and took the bus to West Marine and Publix (a big grocery store). This particular Publix has not only a salad bar, but a "hot bar" with hot prepared foods including Chinese food. You just scoop up what you want into a container and pay by the pound. There's even a place to sit and eat your food.

We each fixed a plate of Chinese food, paid and ate and then Patti got a grocery cart and picked up what we needed.

We rolled everything across the parking lot to the bus stop in the cart and waited about fifteen minutes for the bus back to the marina. What a deal!

Once everything was loaded aboard the boat and put away, we rested for a bit. Then we decided to explore the grounds with the help of the K-9. We walked around by the dingy dock and the picnic areas. Patti had the idea of going to the office for ice cream and Kiki agreed so we got the ice cream and sat on the picnic bench and ate it.

We decided to walk a bit more so we followed the K-9. She led us to a puddle where she walked in and sat down. After that we headed towards the boat ramp but she decided she didn't want to walk that far.

On the way back to the marina, Kiki found a drainage ditch with six inches or so of water (it was really mud) so she jumped in. When we got back to the boat, she got a complete bath before she was allowed inside. She really doesn't mind getting a bath on the back of the boat.



Kiki cools off in the muddy water

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One dirty dog about to get a bath

Patti and Captain Ron took turns taking showers while Kiki caught up on her napping. It will soon be time for bed.

Captain's Log, day twenty two (May 22, 2019)

Today was a day in port so there's no boating news. We got up, got dressed, walked the dog and had breakfast. A real breakfast with eggs and sausage cooked on board.

The puppy has been "scooting" (scratching her bottom on the floor) for a couple of days so Patti decided we should take her to the vet. She got on line and found a place in town but they couldn't see her until 2:30 PM. Then Patti found a coupon for a free first visit. We just hung around until a little after 1:00 PM and then called for an Uber ride.

When we got to the vet's office, Kiki was excited to get out of the car and ran to the door. Once she got inside and figured out where she was, she tried to get back out. We did get her to step on the scale and she weighed in at 16.12 lb. That's down about a pound but she needs to lose more weight according to our vet at home.

They finally took her in and expressed her anal glands. The doctor said they weren't that bad but

told us to cut out all "people food" and keep an eye on her. He gave us his card and phone number and told us to call if we had problems.

We called Uber for a ride back and the driver got lost looking for the vet's office even though it was on a main highway. He finally found us and brought us back to the marina. The vet visit was free; the Uber rides were not.

Captain Ron was having a hard time figuring out where to go next, so eventually we settled on staying here an extra day and then going south to Ft. Pierce City Marina for the holiday weekend. That's better than being on the water with the crazies and drunks. We called and made our reservations and decided to go for dinner.

Captain Ron was in the mood for an "overpriced hamburger" (his exact words), so we walked the half mile or so walk to the restaurant under the bridge. For \$12.00 he got his cheeseburger and potato salad. Patti had the same without the cheese and with French fries, not potato salad. We also ordered a giant hot pretzel for an appetizer. We brought some home for tomorrow.



Patti's pretzel

Walking back to the boat, we saw a nice little "doggie beach" between the boat ramps but then we saw the sign "No Dogs Allowed" so we'll probably have to keep this from the K-9.

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We came back to HIGH COTTON, got the pooch off and walked her. She met some people and got petted. She also met a very large dog and a very small dog.

We get a lot of TV channels here but half are trying to save our souls and a bunch more are in Spanish. Some are trying to save our souls in Spanish!

Time for showers and bed.

Captain's Log, day twenty three (May 23, 2019)

Another day in port. Patti beat Captain Ron and the puppy but eventually we were all up and dressed. The Sea Dog got her morning walk and then her breakfast. The humans decided to go to the beach so we each had a protein shake for breakfast and walked to the bus stop.

The bus route goes by the beach so we got off at the second stop. We checked a couple of the shops and then walked down the steps to the beach. The water was bright green at first but as the sun went behind a cloud it turned dark.



Patti and Captain Ron on the beach, Vero Beach, FL

We walked along the beach, parallel to the main road and boardwalk watching a man with a metal detector scanning the beach for treasures. We

didn't see him find anything or even dig for anything.

After what amounted to three or four city blocks, we walked up the steps to the city park and the restaurant Patti remembered from our last visit, a pizza and Italian restaurant.

It was a bit early for lunch so we checked out a few more shops and Patti bought some tee shirts for her nephews and nieces. The man with the metal detector was putting it in the trunk of his car so we stopped and talked a bit. He had the same brand and model metal detector that Captain Ron has at home.



Stranger metal detecting on the beach



Patti checking out the clothes in one of the shops

We went back to the restaurant and ordered lunch, lasagna and a salad for Patti and a sub for Captain Ron. Patti finished hers but the sub was

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too much for Captain Ron so he brought half home.

We started walking back along the main street in the direction of the marina. We went in a few more shops and Patti tried on some dresses but couldn't find any that she liked that fit right. We did get more tee shirts for the nephews and nieces and two tee shirts for Captain Ron.

We didn't have a bus schedule and it only runs once an hour anyway so we eventually took the street that goes to the marina and walked back. Walking is supposed to be good for you.

It turns out; Vero Beach is a much bigger town than one would guess from being at the marina or even with our trips to Publix and the vet. It's actually a "two Walmart" town. There's also a mall. We didn't get to these, though.

Once we got back to HIGH COTTON, it was time to rest our feet. We ended up taking short naps. Kiki napped too. Eventually, it was time for her to get her exercise in so we walked around the marina grounds. We talked with a couple boaters who keep their boats on the mooring balls and use a dinghy to get to and from their boats. One had just come back from town in a car with several bags of groceries and five five gallon jugs of diesel fuel. It's cheaper at the corner gas station than at the marina but it is a lot of work carrying it around in jugs, especially when you have to load them into the truck, out of the truck, into the dinghy and out of the dinghy. We just pull up to the fuel dock and use the hose. It's much easier that way and there's less chance of spilling.

After the dog walk, we went back to HIGH COTTON. Patti and Captain Ron took turns going for showers.

We weren't hungry enough for dinner so we had some snacks and took our pills. Patti took the Sea

Dog for another walk while Captain Ron pecked at the keyboard. Tomorrow we're off to Ft. Pierce. Distance, about twelve miles. We should be ashamed but we want to be someplace for the holiday weekend and there are things to do in Ft. Pierce.

Captain's Log, day twenty four (May 24, 2019)

Back on the water today! But first, the usual: Get up, get dressed, walk the dog, etc. We didn't want to get to our next marina too early so we split a bagel; cream cheese for Captain Ron, butter and jelly for Patti. We checked the engine oil and the bilges, unplugged the shore power cable and were ready to go.

The slips at Vero Beach City Marina are fixed, not floating and a bit high for HIGH COTTON which makes it difficult to get on and off the boat, especially at low tide, even though there's only about a one foot tidal range. We were tied to the dock in such a way that it would have been difficult for Patti to untie all the lines and get back on the boat so we asked for help from the dockhands. They untied us and we were on our way.

It's a no-wake zone leaving the marina through the anchored boats and that's fine, it gives the engine a chance to warm up. Once we got back to the ICW, we were ready to bring the boat up to its seven knot cruising speed. We met a few sailboats headed north and actually passed one heading south. We're not sure it was really heading south; it may have just been out sailing around for the day, not going anywhere in particular.

A fairly large power boat passed us at high speed which rocked HIGH COTTON. Strangely, the depth sounder has been working flawlessly ever since

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the replacement transducer arrived, even though Captain Ron hasn't installed it.



Following the traffic south on the ICW

We arrived at the Fort Pierce City Marina around noon. We were expecting a floating dock, but were directed to a slip with a fixed dock. We asked the dockhand about a floating dock, but apparently they were all in use. He said we could move to the floating breakwater that partially surrounds the marina, but it would have been a very long walk to the heads and town so we decided to stay where we were and deal with it. It's not as hard to get on and off the boat as it was in Vero Beach.



HIGH COTTON at the Ft. Pierce City Marina

We walked the pooch, of course, and she got dog treats in the office. We came back to the boat and covered the top and put things away. We ate

leftovers for lunch, Captain Ron's half sub and hamburger for Patti. Then, it was time to walk the puppy some more. The marina is part of a big park so she had plenty to see and smell.



Kiki cools off in the marina office

Eventually, we came back to the boat, left the Sea Dog and walked to town. HIGH COTTON has "fender boards" that Captain Ron constructed for when we are docked against pilings, but the lines to attach them to the boat are a bit shorter than they need to be. There's an Ace Hardware store in town so we walked to it and bought more line so he can fix the problem with the fender boards. We walked around town but there's not much else but restaurants. Eventually we got a bit hungry and settled on a Mexican restaurant and ordered tacos. These turned out to be a lot better than the tacos we are used to, much more filling and homemade shells. We had flan for dessert. There was an NFL football game showing on the TV in the restaurant, apparently from 1991. It was 20 to 19 with just a few minutes to go when we left so Captain Ron never found out who won.

Back at the boat, we took turns taking showers and walked the K-9 again. There's a band playing at the restaurant behind the marina so we walked over for a look and a listen. We'll probably be hearing them from bed.

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Captain's Log, day twenty five (May 25, 2019)

The band wasn't that loud inside the boat last night and we drifted off to sleep. Or maybe they stopped playing. Anyhow, we had a decent night's sleep. We got up a little before 8:00 AM, knowing the farmer's market was about to start.

We got dressed and walked over with the K-9 in tow. Actually, she led the way. It's really a lot more than a farmer's market, there were stands selling everything from donuts to Jamaican beef patties and crab cakes. There were health foods and cosmetics and a couple stands selling actual farm grown produce. Patti picked up some fresh vegetables and green beans for the puppy.



The farmers market at Ft. Pierce

We got some donuts and sat and listened to the band for a bit. As many of you may know. Captain Ron was a professional musician for many years. He was not impressed. His actual comments are best left unsaid.

We came back to HIGH COTTON and Captain Ron and Kiki stayed on board while Patti went back to the other part of the market where the clothes and crafts were being sold.

Eventually Kiki and Captain Ron went to look for Patti. They found her, Patti took her goodies back to the boat and we walked to the marina office

where the Sea Dog got some treats and entertained the staff.

We sat out in front by the water and watched as people strolled by. As we said earlier, the marina is part of a public park so there are more than just boaters walking by.

Patti had a desire for a pizza so we took the pooch back to the boat and set out for town. We found the pizza restaurant but it was closed and not due to open for a couple more hours. We walked around and settled for a "Bistro" (a bar that sells food). Patti ordered an "individual pizza" and Captain Ron ordered a chicken pot pie. When the pizza came, it would have been enough for both of us. Patti ate half of her pizza and Captain Ron ate half of his pot pie. It wasn't up to his standards. Actually, it compared poorly to KFC's chicken pot pie.

There was a map of the downtown area on the wall of the parking garage and we noticed a boat ramp adjacent to the marina so after returning to the boat, we asked the Sea Dog if she wanted to go swimming. She did, of course, so we hooked her to her leash and headed for the boat ramp.

Once she saw the water, she ran right in and began swimming back and forth. Then she got out and began rolling in some sea grass that had washed up on the ramp. This was repeated a few times and then it was time to go.

She did a lot of exploring on the way back but eventually we made it to HIGH COTTON where she had a serious bath before being allowed inside.

Patti and Captain Ron took turns showering. By this time, a different (from last night) band had started playing at the restaurant so we strolled over to have a listen. They were OK, but they really butchered one song. Kiki left her mark on

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the grass and we returned to HIGH COTTON for bed.

Captain's Log, day twenty six (May 26, 2019)

Yep, Captain Ron is late again but he has an excuse. More on that later.

We got up as usual, got dressed and walked the K-9. Captain Ron found a ten dollar bill lying on top of the mulch around a palm tree. This should help to finance our cruise but the percentage will be pretty small.

Patti decided to do some laundry so she took a load to the marina. That accounted for most of the ten dollars that Captain Ron found.

We were talking to some of our slip neighbors and they invited us to a "dock party" where everyone brings a dish to share. Patti said she didn't have anything appropriate on the boat so we would have to walk to the grocery store. One of the women offered her a jar of macaroni and a bottle of salad dressing and Patti had the rest of what she needed to make her famous pasta salad so she did. It seems many of these people live on their boats at the marina.

The party was supposed to start at 5:00 PM but we looked along the dock and nobody was there. About 5:30 PM the people on the large boat behind us (HIGH COTTON is the smallest boat on the dock) invited us onto their boat and this turned out to be the location of the party. Ham, chicken, baked beans and potato salad eventually showed up in addition to Patti's pasta salad and people kept coming.

Eventually some dogs showed up so we went and got Kiki, took her for her evening walk and then to the party. After a bit of butt smelling and

growling, they all made friends and ran loose on the boat.

About 9:30PM we realized that it was well past our bedtimes so we said goodbye, returned to HIGH COTTON and went to bed. There was some noise but we drifted off to sleep and it soon stopped. This is why there was no post.

Captain's Log, day twenty seven (May 27, 2019)

Another day in port today so there's no boating and little else to report. We walked the puppy several times, Captain Ron checked the engine and bilge for tomorrow's early departure and topped off the water tanks. He also spent some time researching where to stay after tomorrow night.

We had a coupon for 20% off at a nearby restaurant so we walked there for dinner (just the humans). We ordered our meals and they came, but no napkins or silverware. We had to ask the waiter and he brought them to us.

The food was very good but they sat a family with a baby next to us. The baby was whining through our entire meal. Both Patti and Captain Ron believe that if your children are unable to sit quietly in a restaurant, you shouldn't bring them and disturb the other customers.

We took showers, walked the Sea Dog and we'll hopefully have an early departure tomorrow. Once we pass Stuart, FL, we'll be in new territory.

Captain's Log, day twenty eight (May 28, 2019)

We awoke as the sun was rising, got dressed, walked the puppy, etc. One of the dock hands

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was walking by and offered to help us with our lines so off we went at about 7:00 AM.



Pulling out of the Ft. Pierce City Marina

Once we cleared the entrance channel, we hit the ICW and turned south. We passed a sailboat headed north. We saw very few boats for the first three hours or so but we did see a fairly large pod of dolphins. We stopped to let the Sea Dog admire them. As we started back up, two of them swam with us for a couple minutes.

Once we got as far as the St. Lucie Inlet, boat traffic started to pick up and we had to yield to a boat coming from Stuart and heading out to the ocean. Apparently, this boat sells live bait to fishermen (and women) on the water.



Unusual boats on the ICW

We hit one slow speed zone after another for the rest of today's journey, but for the most part,

going a bit slower wasn't bad. We saw large, beautiful homes that boggled the mind. Makes one wonder how so many people can have enough money to not only build these homes, but maintain them and pay the taxes on them. We have a fairly nice home in a nice neighborhood, but it's a shack compared to some of these mansions.



One of many beautiful homes on the ICW in Florida



Party Island on the ICW

We had made reservations at Loggerhead Palm Gardens marina just south of Jupiter, FL. It's just off the ICW and surrounded by luxury condominiums. It's a luxurious marina with beautifully landscaped grounds and walkways. It has a pool! The marina seems to be built for larger boats than HIGH COTTON, but with the help

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of a dockhand, we got ourselves tied up and situated.



HIGH COTTON safe in her slip at Loggerhead Palm Gardens

We went to the office to check in and pay and Kiki got some doggie treats and entertained the staff.

Leaving the K-9 behind to guard the boat, the humans wasted little time heading for the pool. We had the pool to ourselves so we swam and relaxed (mostly relaxed) for an hour or so.



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

We walked back to the boat (at the other end of the marina), walked the puppy and then set out for the "Thirsty Turtle" restaurant. It was supposed to be a mile away, across the bridge and it was every bit of that mile. We ordered and ate and pondered the walk back to the marina. Captain Ron opted for Uber so it was a quick and easy ride back. \$6.44.

Back on the walkway, we stopped to talk to one of the other boaters who was walking his dog. He and his wife and dog are staying long term here.

Patti took the puppy for a walk while Captain Ron got on the computer. She met up with the same man and his wife and they had another conversation. Once that was done, she brought the K-9 back to the boat and headed for the showers. Once she was done, Captain Ron took his turn. These are beautiful tiled single user showers with plenty of hot, pressurized water and spotlessly clean.



Patti and the puppy walk at Loggerhead Palm Gardens

So now we've had a long day and it's well past our bedtime. We also don't have a reservation for tomorrow night.

Captain's Log, day twenty nine (May 29, 2019)

We weren't sure what we were going to do today so we were in no rush to get up. We eventually decided there was no point in staying where we were so we went to the office at 8:00 AM, got Captain Ron a large cup of free coffee, got the Sea Dog some treats, turned in our key and said goodbye.

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We were able to get ourselves untied and out of the slip without difficulty, wove our way out of the marina channel and turned south on the ICW.

The dockmaster at Loggerhead Marina had given us a printed list of all the drawbridges we will pass through as far as Miami. The list shows the location, name, clearance (without the bridge being opened) and the times the bridge would open (some open only a couple times per hour at set times). This proved invaluable as we continued south.

As was the case yesterday, we alternated between normal speed (seven knots) and reduced speed, minimum wake. Captain Ron had called two marinas yesterday. One said they were booked for tonight and one did not return his call. At about 11:00 AM, he called another marina and had to leave a message. Just for fun, he had Patti call the one that had told him they were full today. They told Patti that there was one slip available so we told them we would take it (sitting here now, there are ten or fifteen empty slips).

Again, we marveled at the mansions along the waterfront and the luxurious boats docked in front of or beside them.



Interesting condo at Riviera Beach, FL

We got to the Port of Palm Beach and the waterway opened up. There were hundreds of boats in marinas, anchored and on mooring balls. Small boats, large boats and megayachts a hundred feet or more long. There was an ocean going cruise ship docked and a couple cargo ships being loaded or unloaded.



Boats anchored on Lake Worth

As we headed south on Lake Worth, we saw another Camano Troll on a lift in front of the owner's house. He was walking towards his boat and saw us and waved so we waved back.



Another Camano on a lift at Lake Worth

We were approaching a lift bridge that was on a restricted schedule, opening only fifteen minutes and forty five minutes after the hour. We weren't sure we would make it so Captain Ron pushed the throttle forward giving us enough speed to make

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the bridge opening. This was an old, decrepit looking lift bridge that is in the process of being replaced, hopefully with a higher bridge.



Lift bridge on the ICW

We've been talking about the incredibly luxurious mansions along the waterway. Well, when we got to Boynton Beach that changed. There was actually a trailer park on one side of the canal and what looked like barracks or public housing on the other. This continued for a bit and then it went back to luxury homes.



Boynton Beach, the "poor side of town"

We eventually got to Delray Beach where we had reservations for the night but first, we had to get through two more drawbridges. The first was unrestricted. We called the bridge tender, he opened the bridge and we went on through.

The second was not so easy. It was on a restricted schedule and we could not get there for the opening. We had to wait about twenty five minutes, circling in the ICW. Boats don't have parking brakes.



The seldom seen underside of a drawbridge

The bridge eventually opened and we passed through. It was about ten more minutes to our marina. We called on the radio but got no answer so we called on the phone and got our slip assignment and docking instructions. We are on a floating dock and this makes it much easier to get on and off the boat.



HIGH COTTON docked at the Delray Harbor Club Marina

We went to the office and checked in. The Sea Dog got some treats and attention and then she explored the grounds and did her "business".

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Once we got the boat straightened out and everything put away, we headed for the pool, leaving the K-9 to guard the boat. It's a nice pool, directly on the ICW and a comfortable temperature. Hey, it's a tough job but someone's got to do it.



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

After swimming and lounging a bit, the phone rang and it was the marina where we were planning on spending the weekend returning our call. Fortunately, it was Patti who answered the call, because for some reason, everything had to be spelled out, some of it twice and it took about twenty minutes to complete the reservation. She even had to spell "Charleston". We've decided to stay here another night and then head to Ft. Lauderdale for the weekend.

After we left the pool we got cleaned up and walked across the street to the shopping center. We had dinner in a small Chinese restaurant. We walked to Ross, where Patti bought some things she apparently needed and then to Publix. We will return to Publix tomorrow with the grocery cart.

Much to the Sea Dog's delight, there are a lot of lizards in this area for her to chase. She doesn't catch them, she just chases them.



Anyone want to buy some insurance?

So, it's been a long day, the Widmans are up past their bedtime again and we're signing off for now.

Captain's Log, day thirty (May 30, 2019)

We had a day in port so there was no reason to get up early. Once we did get up, we decided to go across the street to McDonalds for breakfast, but first, of course, the Sea Dog needed a walk.

That done, we walked to McDonalds and had breakfast. From there we walked to the nail salon where Patti and Captain Ron had pedicures and manicures. Patti got her legs waxed, Captain Ron did not. Captain Ron was finished first so he walked to Publix for a six pack of club soda and then continued on to HIGH COTTON where he and Kiki watched a bit of TV.

Patti did some shopping after her leg waxing and then returned to join Captain Ron and the pooch.

We forgot to mention it, but yesterday on our trip to Delray Beach, we were passed by a large boat and had to deal with its large wake. The depth sounder began flashing again so Captain Ron knew it was time to replace the transducer with the one he had ordered.

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The original plan was to pull the old cable out with a string attached and then use the string to pull the new cable through the nearly inaccessible interior of the boat. Well, it seems that when Captain Ron originally installed the electronics ten years ago, he was a bit too neat and the old cable was strapped to other wires and secured in place.

At this point, he decided the best thing to do was to leave the old transducer and cable in place and just run the new cable through the space. This was a bit more work and he will want to re-do it once we get home, but the new transducer and cable are in place and connected. Over the next few days we will see if this cures the problem.

Since Captain Ron had to remove a lot of stuff from the head to get to the wiring, Patti decided this would be a good time to do a good cleaning so she did and then put the stuff back. Stuff like shower gel, shampoo, medicine, etc. Stuff that we had stockpiled for the trip.

Once everything was again “shipshape”, we changed into our swimsuits and headed for the pool for some rest and relaxation. We stayed in the pool for an hour or so. On the way back, at the bottom of the ramp, Captain Ron slipped. He didn’t fall but he had been noticing that his Sperry boat flip flops that he wears to the pool and showers didn’t seem to have the non-slip qualities that they did when they were new. Actually, the soles were as hard as a rock and not rubbery at all.

There’s a shoe store in the shopping center across from the marina so we decided to go there and remedy the situation before he actually falls.

On the way, we stopped at McDonalds for the second time today, this time for dinner.

From McDonalds, we walked to the shoe store where every pair of Shoes Captain Ron wanted to try on required a trip up the ladder by the

saleslady. There was a sale so he ended up with a new pair of boat flip flops and a new pair of boat shoes.

We headed back to the marina and found the gate closed and the security guard missing. There was a number to call so Patti called him and he said he would come let us in. About that time, one of the residents came through in a car so we just followed the car through the gate.

Tomorrow we head for Ft. Lauderdale for the weekend.

Captain’s Log, day thirty one (May 31, 2019)

Today was to be a short run so we were in no rush to get going. We walked the puppy, fixed and ate breakfast, got a bag of ice from the marina, and off we went.

As has been the case lately, we alternated between 25 MPH zones (we can’t go that fast so it doesn’t matter), “slow speed, minimum wake” zones and “idle speed, no wake”) zones. We saw a new one today, “Speed limit 25 MPH, maximum wake 15 inches”.



The ICW looks a bit different in South Florida

We also had to pass through four bridges that had to be opened for HIGH COTTON to fit through.

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These bridges had restricted schedules, opening either on the hour and half hour or fifteen minutes after the hour and fifteen minutes before the hour. We were waiting for the first bridge when a very small work barge came up behind us and called for a bridge opening. Commercial vessels have priority and the bridges open for them.

Well, we pulled in behind the barge and went through the bridge behind him (this is allowed). He just about matched our speed so we did this for all three remaining bridges and didn't have to wait.

We posted previously about the luxurious homes and boats along the waterfront, but when we got to Boca Raton, it was unbelievable. Gigantic luxury homes on the ICW with canals beside them and multi-million dollar yachts docked next to the homes. Again, it boggles the mind to think of this display of wealth.



Our next home

There were a few pockets of more modest homes with smaller boats as well.

We got to Fort Lauderdale and called the marina for docking instructions. We were put on a floating dock as we requested. For the first time on our trip, the dockmaster declined a tip,

explaining that he was a city employee and not allowed to accept tips.



Welcome to Fort Lauderdale

There is a construction project going on involving the marina and this makes the walk to the office and showers much longer than it normally is, but we can deal with it. Also, we are spending three days, but could only pay for May 31, because the summer rates start on June 1 and they haven't been posted yet. In Florida, "summer rates" are probably lower than "winter rates". We shall see, but we paid less than half of what we have paid at the last two marinas we stayed at. No pool, though.



Las Olas Marina (Ft. Lauderdale City Marina)

It's about three blocks from the boat to the beach so we put the puppy on her leash and walked to the street that runs along the beach. We are in

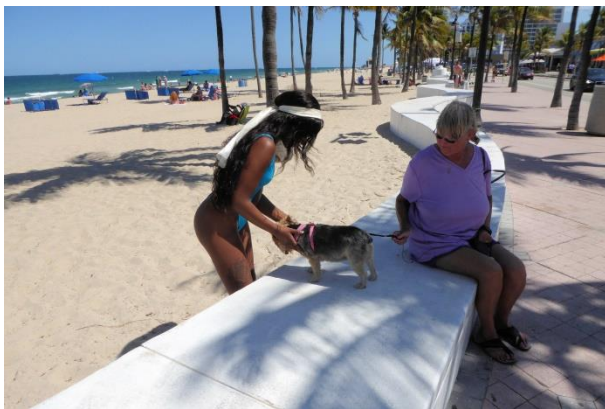
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one of the busy tourist areas with restaurants, bars, tee shirt shops, etc. It was crowded.

We found an ice cream shop so we bought two cups and crossed the street to the beach wall to eat. Being Florida at the beach, it was melting as quickly as we could eat it. Kiki got her share so she was pleased. She also got petted a few times.



The beach at Fort Lauderdale



Kiki makes a friend on the beach

Unfortunately, dogs aren't allowed on the beach so we eventually decided to walk back to the boat. It was hot and Kiki had to be carried part of the way. We met a local lady and her dog on the way back to the boat. She was pushing her puppy in a special "doggie stroller". Would the Sea Dog sit in a stroller? Doubtful, we think.

Once we got back to HIGH COTTON, Kiki got a cooling shower and she and Captain Ron rested in the V berth for a while and watched TV.

We thought it would be fun to observe (if not be a part of) the nightlife along the beach so we took showers, got dressed and walked back up to the beach area, leaving the Sea Dog to guard the boat. There was a band playing for a free event on the beach (we could hear them from the boat) and each bar or restaurant had its own band or musical group playing. We had to push our way through the crowds.



Night life in Ft. Lauderdale, FL

We were looking for a particular restaurant we had seen ads for. As we walked along the street, each restaurant had a young girl out front giving out coupons for 10% off their meals.

By the time we found the restaurant we were looking for, there was a one hour wait so we walked back to the beach and eventually (since it was way past our usual meal time) settled on grilled ham and cheese sandwiches from a booth in a mall.

We walked back to the boat, took the K-9 for a walk and went to bed way past our usual bed time.

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Captain's Log, day thirty two (June 1, 2019)

After our wild night last night, we slept in late. We were up at the crack of nine. We walked the Sea Dog as usual and then walked to the French bakery for croissants. We could see the top of a cruise ship in Port Everglades from the road to the bakery. We brought the croissants back and ate breakfast on HIGH COTTON. Kiki got dog food, green beans and carrots.

We (the humans) decided to walk to the beach and swim in the ocean so we changed into our swimsuits and headed out. The water was nice but the waves prevented swimming except for the serious swimmers. We pretty much stood there and let the waves entertain us. We watched as some relatively small boats anchored off the beach and watched a container ship heading out to sea from Port Everglades. As we were leaving the water, a woman said she had seen a shark swimming by. Was this true? It could have been or it could have been her imagination. The life guards didn't empty the beach.

We walked back to the boat and then back to the office for showers. Captain Ron paid less than \$62 for two nights including electric power and tax. This is a third of what we have been paying. No pool though except for the big saltwater pool that borders on England, Spain, etc.

After our showers and a change of clothes, we headed back to the restaurant we tried to eat at yesterday. It was busy, but we were seated immediately. Captain Ron got his lobster roll and Patti had a burger.



Captain Ron's lobster roll

After dinner, we walked back to the boat. Patti decided this would be a good time to do some laundry so she gathered up the dirty clothes and headed for the machines.

On one of her walks today, Kiki decided it would be a good idea to roll in the gravel and got fine gravel dust in her hair. She needed a bath so after washing the clothes, Patti washed the dog. We'll have a clean dog sharing the bed with us tonight.

Captain's Log, day thirty three (June 2, 2019)

Fort Lauderdale is overrun with electric scooters. At least that's the case in the Los Olas beach area. Apparently, you install an app on your phone and then wherever you find one of these scooters, you can activate it with the app and scoot all over town. The problem is, of course, the operators. They drive in the street, they drive on the wrong side of the street, and they drive on the sidewalk. There don't seem to be any rules and if there are, nobody obeys them. These things go pretty fast, perhaps 20 MPH and are heavy enough that if one were to hit a pedestrian it could cause serious injuries. We've come close to being hit a couple of times.

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But, we digress. We got up again, walked the K-9 and had breakfast on HIGH COTTON. A bagel and cream cheese for Captain Ron, scrambled eggs and bacon for the rest of the crew.

After breakfast, Captain Ron and Patti decided to walk to the “mall” on the main street. It’s not a “mall” in the traditional sense, just a bunch of shops and food stands and a bar in a courtyard. We each got a cup of ice cream and Patti checked out the merchandise. Then we walked back along the beach, stopping in each shop along the way. A few South Carolina dollars were left in Fort Lauderdale today. We stopped in the 7-11 store and bought a bag of ice for the cooler. The marina doesn’t have ice.



Patti tries on a hat



Captain Ron tries on a hat

Captain Ron spent quite a bit of time trying to find a suitable marina in the Miami area but in the end, we decided to anchor in a well-known spot.

Since we plan on anchoring tomorrow night, we walked back to the beach for dinner with leftovers in mind. Our portions were big enough that this won't be a problem.

We figured out a plan to combine walking the pooch, taking showers and doing a load of laundry so the entire crew headed for the office. There was a crowd so we had to wait our turn for the showers. Time was spent talking to another boating couple about places we were going and places we have been.

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The humans are clean and the laundry is in the dryer. We'll have to retrieve it before we turn in.

Captain's Log, day thirty four (June 3, 2019)

Captain Ron woke up about 11:00 PM with a painful knee. A return of the gout he has from time to time, we suspect. He's probably eaten too much shellfish. Patti gave him a pill and rubbed CBD oil on it. He eventually drifted off to sleep.

We woke up this morning to the sound of – rain! First it was just a little pecking on the roof, but eventually, it was full-fledged rain. We rolled over and went back to sleep.

Eventually, the rain stopped so we got up. Captain Ron topped off the water tanks while Patti swept the water off the flybridge deck. We untied and unplugged everything and took off down the ICW. We needed diesel fuel and there was a marina with a fuel dock just a mile or two down from where we had been staying.

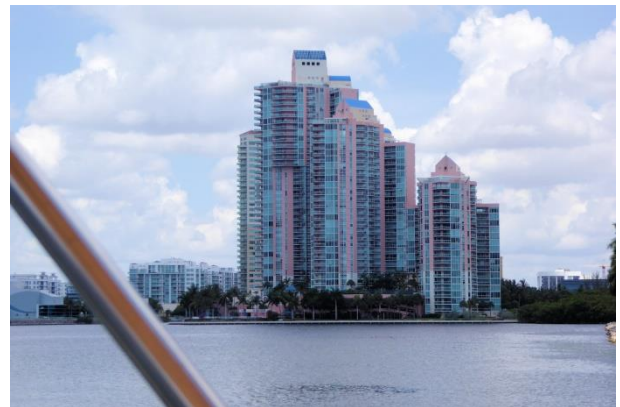
The attendant had us pull up to one end of the fuel dock but it was determined that we couldn't use the high speed pump so we had to wait for another boat to leave and move HIGH COTTON to the other end of the dock. The bottom line is, we didn't really get underway until after 10:00 AM.



Our next home and boat



Party on the ICW



South Florida architecture

As has been the case for the last few days, our trip was a series of "no wake" zones, "minimum wake" zones and unrestricted speed in the ICW. We had to wait for a couple bridges to open. The last one was a bit confusing because there are apparently two bridges with the same name but "east" and "west" but they weren't marked. Radio contact was confusing because there were several boats and bridges talking on the same channel.

Finally, Captain Ron used the horn signal for a bridge opening and got the bridge tender's attention. He explained that we were the trawler circling in front of the bridge and everything got straightened out.

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We passed the channel where the big cruise ships dock and saw several of them docked. The Coast Guard doesn't let private boats use this channel and they had a guard boat enforcing this.



Miami cruise ships

There's a popular anchorage across from Miami called "Miami Stadium". It used to be used for boat races back in the day and there are actual stands for spectators. There are no races anymore but it's a popular anchorage. We are anchored near the entrance with a good view of the city. Dozens of other boats are anchored further back in the anchorage. We'll take showers in the cockpit as soon as it gets dark.



Miami, FL viewed from our anchorage

Captain's Log, day thirty five (June 4, 2019)

We woke to rain again this morning. We could see the rain in parts of the city but not in other parts. We were in the part that got rained on. We did get to see a rainbow, though. The Marine Stadium Anchorage is a pretty decent anchorage but it was hot yesterday and hot most of the night. Captain Ron and the Sea Dog missed their air conditioning.

Our route today was mostly straight through Biscayne Bay, Card Sound and Barnes Sound. We travelled through beautiful, clear green water, where we could see the bottom ten feet below the boat. We saw a few dolphins but they didn't hang around long enough for the Sea Dog to see them.



South of Miami, heading into the Keys

Captain Ron left Patti at the helm and went below to find a marina for the night. The first one he called had vacancies but their docks hadn't been fully repaired since the last hurricane and they had no electric power. If we're not going to have air conditioning, we might as well just anchor again.

Fortunately, the marina just across the creek from the first one he called also had room for us. We made a reservation.

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We got to the marina, tied up and connected the shore power and went inside to check in and pay. This is where we got good news and bad news. Our stay at the marina costs less (with our BoatUS discount) than Captain Ron had expected. Considerably less. That's the good news. The bad news is, this place is not "dog friendly". Dogs aren't allowed in the building or on the grounds except on the walkway to the exit. Dogs are to remain on the boat and there's even a "no barking" clause in the rules. We can handle the dog rules and it's a decent place with a pool just a few steps from HIGH COTTON. *(Kiki writes: Why aren't some places nice to dogs? I am cute and I don't bite.)*



HIGH COTTON at the Anchorage Resort and Yacht Club

The pool was calling us so after walking the K-9 (outside the marina gate) and getting settled in, we put on our swimsuits and headed for the pool.

After washing today's cares (and last night's sweat) away, we took showers and walked to the one restaurant within walking distance. From the outside, it didn't look promising, but the food and service was great and the prices were reasonable. Maybe this is the Keys lifestyle.

The puppy is waiting to go to bed and the humans will follow shortly.

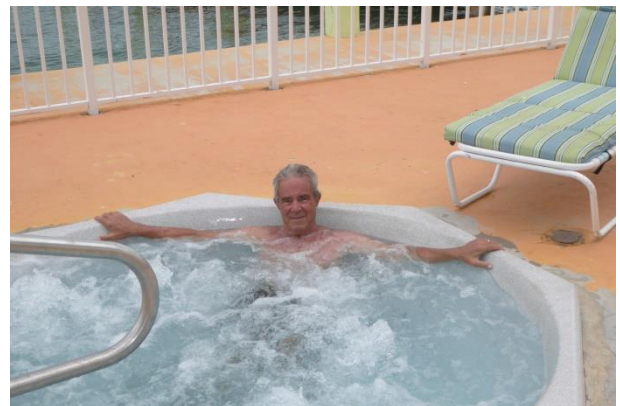
Captain's Log, day thirty six (June 5, 2019)

We decided to stay another night here since we hadn't figured out where we are staying next. We figured out (we were told by some of the guests) that this place is actually a time share resort with boat slips. Most of the people come here one week per year and some trailer their boats and spend time fishing or scuba diving. This probably explains why there are only two restrooms and showers and why they aren't air conditioned. The people all have showers in their rooms.

Anyway, Captain Ron went to the office to pay for another day and get a free cup of coffee while Patti walked the hound. Once back on the boat, Patti fixed breakfast for the crew while Captain Ron continued to plan our next few days.

In late morning we decided to head for the pool as Captain Ron was getting nowhere with his planning. It seems many of his resources have conflicting information and many places listed as "marinas" aren't really marinas.

As it was yesterday, we didn't really swim much, we just floated around enjoying the comfortable water and the Florida sunshine.



Captain Ron rests his bones in the hot tub

Back on HIGH COTTON, we had sliced tomatoes and cucumbers from a farmers market near the

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marina in Ft. Pierce while Captain Ron continues searching for marinas.

After lunch, we took the K-9 for a walk. We walked past the restaurant and found a boat ramp. Kiki saw it too and away she went, down the ramp, into the water and swimming back and forth. This was after we checked for alligators, crocodiles and the like.



After ten minutes or so, she was done so we started walking back to the marina. She stopped and started rolling in the loose dirt and gravel. She was enjoying this but mawmaw and pawpaw weren't. She was filthy and had to go back to the boat ramp to rinse off. Once we got back to the boat she got rinsed again.

The humans got their swimsuits on and went back to the pool. Again, we just floated around but we

talked to some of the other guests and learned a bit about the area.

After the pool, we got dressed and walked back to the same restaurant we ate at last night (the only one in walking distance). Captain Ron hadn't finished his fish sandwich last night so he brought it back to the boat. He wondered out loud if he could just take it back to the restaurant and have them re-heat it, but Patti put a stop to those thoughts. Anyway, we had dinner and again, Captain Ron had to bring half of his back to the boat. They serve large portions there and the prices are reasonable. We tried an order of conch fritters because we had never had them before. We weren't impressed.



The Restaurant

After dinner, we walked the puppy back to the boat ramp. She swam a bit but seemed tired so we came back to the boat where she got shampooed. We have a tired but happy puppy on our hands.

We took turns taking showers (no air conditioning in these showers and they were small and cramped) and now it's time for bed. Captain Ron finally found a place for us tomorrow and another one (in Marathon, FL) for the weekend so we're set for a while.

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Captain's Log, day thirty seven (June 6, 2019)

We were all ready to leave this morning by 8:20 AM or so but the office didn't open until 8:30 AM and Captain Ron wanted his free cup of coffee. People were in there and they could see him looking through the glass door, but they wouldn't let him in.

Finally, Captain Ron got his coffee and we backed out of our slip, turned around and continued south. Again, it was mostly wide open water, but shallow except for the channel. In some places the channel was a bit shallow as well but we never touched bottom.

A speed boat passed us doing 45 knots (we cruise at seven knots). We could tell his speed from his AIS transmission. For you landlubbers, that's over fifty five miles per hour!



Fifty five miles per hour passing HIGH COTTON

Captain Ron saw what looked like a large clump of grass but once we got to it, it turned out to be a sea turtle, perhaps three feet in diameter. It dove for the bottom when we got close. As it was yesterday, the water was clear to the bottom, something we're not used to. Patti saw a large starfish.



The Sea Dog making sure we stay in the channel

We had to leave the ICW and travel about two miles to the Bayside Marina, part of a Bass Pro complex. Near the marina the water got very shallow but there was still enough for HIGH COTTON's three and a half foot draft.



Bayside Marina (Bass Pro), Islamorada, FL

For some unexplained reason, rather than sending us to our slip, the dockmaster had us dock at the fuel dock and come to the office for "paperwork" and then move to the slip. So we docked twice today.

We couldn't complete the paperwork in the office because we had to get the documentation numbers from the boat and go on the Internet to get the insurance policy number (we've never been asked for that before that we can recall). So, he had us move to our slip and bring the

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paperwork back to the office once we completed it. Anyhow, we finally got everything settled.

There was a group of people on the dock near land so we walked over to see what was going on. There were eight manatees (Patti counted them) swimming and feeding in the corner where the dock and the shore meet, There were also dozens of tarpon (we had to ask) up to five or six feet long and a brown nurse shark (again, we had to ask). Kiki, of course was fascinated by all the manatees and fish, as were we.



The Sea Dog checking out the manatees

That was the water. We took the Sea Dog to dry land and found lizards, iguanas, and chickens (yes chickens) roaming around the grounds. This marina is part of a large Bass Pro complex, as we mentioned, so it's a big place with a Bass Pro store, the marina and a restaurant. It's right on US route 1 (the Overseas Highway) so a lot of people visit by car.

There's also a small boat ramp and Kiki saw it and decided it would be nice to cool off swimming in the water so she did.

After a quick visit to the Bass Pro store, we returned to the boat where Captain Ron and the pooch napped while Patti returned to the store with her purse! Captain Ron could get only two stations on TV and both were in Spanish so his nap

was really a nap. Later, he tried the cable hookup and got nothing so this will be a "no TV" night.

Once Patti returned to the boat with a bag of goodies, we walked to the small grocery store about a half mile north of the marina. We got green beans and carrots for the hound and a few things for ourselves.

Back at the boat, we walked the puppy again, let her swim some more and then headed for the restaurant for dinner. It's all outdoor seating and chickens were walking around eating the scraps that made it to the floor.



Chickens everywhere

We walked back to the boat, walked the pooch again and took turns showering. We have reservations for the weekend in Marathon so we'll be out of here in the morning.

BTW: "Here" is Islamorada, FL. We're in the Keys!

Captain's Log, day thirty eight (June 7, 2019)

We were up and ready to go by 8:00 AM. Kiki chased the lizards and tried to chase the chickens. Captain Ron did his engine checks. We had to wait for some manatees that were grazing beside HIGH COTTON before we could pull out. If you're ever stuck for a conversation starter at the dinner

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table or a cocktail party, a group of manatees is called an “aggregation”.

We churned some mud getting out of the marina, but were able to follow our track from yesterday to get back into deeper water, where we turned and continued south towards Marathon. It was a relatively long day today, made longer by the fact that we had to travel an extra four miles or so along the seven mile bridge to get to the opening and then travel four miles back the other way to our marina.

We called the Marathon Marina and Resort and were met by a dockhand who helped tie us up and brought a special box to test our electrical system for ground faults. The electrical code has changed in the last few years and new and rebuilt marinas are required to have ground fault protection (similar to the receptacles in your home’s bathrooms and kitchen) for boat receptacles. Many older boats have ground fault issues and cause problems with the new electrical systems. HIGH COTTON passed the test of course; we have been to several of these marinas in the past.



HIGH COTTON at the Marathon Marina and Resort

Once we got settled, we walked to the office where the Sea Dog was given doggie treats. She took them and played with them to everyone’s delight. Patti unhooked her leash and she ran

around the office, playing with the employees and her treats.

Eventually, of course, it was time to leave and let the employees get back to work. We walked around the grounds, checking out the “tiki huts” (covered picnic areas), and the pool. Patti went into the restaurant and got a cup of water for the pooch. This marina is a combination marina, boat yard and RV park, with new floating transient slips and fixed “live aboard” slips. It’s fairly new and well done.

After our exploration, we walked back to HIGH COTTON, where the humans ate lunch, changed into their swimwear and headed back to the pool, leaving the K-9 to guard the boat (*Kiki writes “Yea, they keep saying that, but the boat has a lock on the door and doesn’t need to be guarded. I like to swim too.”*)

So we’re floating around in a swimming pool in the Florida Keys, surrounded by water and palm trees, thinking “We could live like this.” And then we realize that we actually are living like this. Eventually, of course, we will have to return to reality.



We could live like this

After the pool, we walked back to the boat, changed clothes and walked to the restaurant for a light supper. Then it was walk the pooch one

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more time and hit the sack. Captain Ron did a scan on the TV and found zero stations so it will be a “no TV” few days.

Captain’s Log, day thirty nine (June 8, 2019)

No rush to get up this morning since we are spending the entire weekend, but for some reason, we were out of bed by 8:00 AM. We walked the Sea Dog, of course and took her to the office for more treats.

Patti decided to do some laundry while we’re here since they have a nice laundry facility. After taking the clothes and putting them in the washer, she returned to the boat and fixed breakfast. Corned beef hash with a poached egg for the Captain and scrambled eggs with cheese and bacon for the first mate and Sea Dog. Yum!

Since Patti stripped the bed to wash the bedding, she decided she might as well vacuum the area as well so she did. Captain Ron attended to some minor boat chores. While Patti was waiting for the laundry, we took the Sea Dog to the office and she met a family with small children. The children wanted to “pet the doggie” and of course, Kiki thought that was a great idea. The petting continued for a few minutes until the parents decided it was time to leave.

Once all the work was done and the bed re-made, we took the hound for a short walk and then put her on the boat while we walked up to the main street (US RT 1) to see what we could see. We didn’t see much but there was a little tee shirt and souvenir shop and a Cuban restaurant. This was a very small place with additional outside seating.



A street legal golf cart parked at the marina

There was very little English spoken there and we had a hard time ordering Cokes. We each got a Cubano sandwich (sliced ham and pork with Swiss cheese, pickles, mustard and mayonnaise on a small loaf of Cuban bread) by pointing at it on the menu. They were authentic and much larger and better than the ones we find in Charleston. They were also big enough that we should have split one between us. We each brought a half sandwich back to the boat for lunch tomorrow.

There were other things on the menu that we’ve seen being made on the TV cooking shows but it was only lunch time and we weren’t hungry enough for a dinner. And we wouldn’t have been sure what we were getting anyway. What we got was good.

We walked back to the boat, walked the hound and then headed for the pool. We happened to be near some boaters so we ended up talking about (what else?) boats and boating. Where we are from, where we are going, marinas we have been to and of course, boat repairs.

Eventually, they decided to get out of the pool and dry off so they left. We got out and walked back to the boat. This seemed like a good time to shower so we took turns showering.

We walked the hound and now it’s time for bed.

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Captain's Log, day forty (June 9, 2019)

Forty days and we're not there yet? We could have driven the car in two days or flown to Key West in a few hours! But, we're having fun and stopping in nice places along the way. We should be in Key West by next weekend.

So we got up this morning walked the dog, etc. and then walked to the main road to a restaurant for breakfast. This was a roadside "joint", half indoors and half outside with picnic tables. The restrooms were around back. They call it a "landmark" and apparently it's been there for many years.

Patti ordered a waffle, home fries and bacon. OK, fine. After much careful study, Captain Ron asked the waitress for sausage gravy over biscuits. No dice, the waitress said they had an unexpected rush this morning and had run out of gravy and biscuits. Captain Ron had a waffle.

We had to cross US RT 1 to get to the restaurant and now we had to cross it again. No light, no crosswalk, no median, no help whatsoever. When it was clear one way, traffic was coming the other way. After ten minutes or so there was an opening and we made a dash for it.

Back at the marina, the Sea Dog took us to the office for petting and treats. She played with the treats and entertained the staff. Patti and Ron got souvenir tee-shirts although we had to walk to the main office on the other side of the marina for the correct sizes.

Patti washed another load of clothes while Captain Ron tried to figure out our next few stops. We're moving to another marina in Marathon for two days to be near the stores. From there it is a longer distance than we usually travel to get to Key West. The only suitable marina between here and there can't accommodate us so it looks like

we'll be anchoring for one night. Captain Ron is waiting for a return call from the marina in Key West.

We went back to the pool and again spent time talking with other boaters about the places we have all been and of course, boat repairs. It is a very nice pool, surrounded by palm trees.

After the pool, we returned to HIGH COTTON, took turns showering and went to the nearby restaurant for dinner. There are several liveaboards in this marina and we walk past them when heading in or out so we stopped and talked to a couple of them. One woman is a painter and Patti may have her paint a picture of the Sea Dog.

There was a woman walking another Yorkie on the dock so Patti invited her and her dog onto the back of our boat where the two Yorkies sniffed each other. *(Kiki writes: "Yes, I know I'm not the only dog around but I'm the cutest one.")*

We're hearing thunder and seeing lightning so we brought everything in that needs to be dry just in case. It might rain, it might not, we're going to bed so we'll be dry and won't care.

Captain's Log, day forty one (June 10, 2019)

We had thunder and lightning in the distance but no rain where we were. We got up, walked the puppy and readied the boat for our two mile journey to the other end of the harbor. We decided to top off our fuel tanks so we wouldn't have to fuel up in Key West where the price is higher.

One of the things this marina does is host Boy Scout sailing groups so we had to wait for two sailboats loaded with Boy Scouts to leave the slips

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next to us and clear the fairways. We tied up at the fuel dock, got our fuel, paid, and cast off.

Boot Key Harbor is a sight to see with hundreds of boats tied to mooring balls, all in a row. The City Marina installed the mooring balls and rents them to boaters. The rent includes use of the land based facilities (heads, showers, laundry, etc.) and a pump out boat that comes by once a week and empties the holding tanks. Outside of the mooring field we saw several boats that were once somebody's pride and joy but were now just hazards to navigation waiting for time and storms to break them up into smaller pieces that will either sink or drift out into the ocean. That's a shame, but it happens all too often.



Some of the boats on the mooring balls at Boot Key Harbor



Some of the boats are not as well kept as HIGH COTTON

We headed for the Skipjack Marina and Resort, but saw no signs. Patti called the marina and the lady tried to give us directions but we passed right by it and ended up having to turn around on a dead end canal.

This place bills itself as a "Marina and Resort", but it's more of a resort with a few slips along the seawall. No marina sign, no marina office, etc. They did send two guys out to direct us to our slip and help tie us up. One of them appeared to know what he was doing.

We got everything hooked up, covered the seats and helm in case of rain and walked to the office to check in and pay for our stay. Instead of the expected dog biscuit, the first thing out of the receptionist's mouth was "Dogs aren't allowed in the buildings, she will have to leave." At least here, she is allowed on the grounds, she doesn't have to stay on the boat like the place we stayed at several days ago.

So, we finished with the paperwork and credit card, walked the puppy and headed back to HIGH COTTON where the air conditioning was running and cooling the boat down.



HIGH COTTON (and Kiki) at Skipjack Marina and Resort

We got our folding grocery cart and set out on foot for "town" and the Publix grocery store. Once we got there, Captain Ron sat in the

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"husband's waiting area" while Patti did the shopping.

Our folding cart was loaded to the gills and Captain Ron was concerned the wheels might fall off, but we made it back to the boat and unloaded everything and put it away.



Patti with the fully loaded "Granny Cart"

We got our Cuban sandwiches out of the refrigerator and ate them for lunch. Captain Ron still has some left over.

Captain Ron arranged for a slip in Key West for the weekend. We know we'll probably have to anchor for one night between Marathon and Key West but we still have to decide where to spend Wednesday night. Or, we could call Key West and see if they have an opening Thursday night. We'll figure it out by the time we need to.

We changed into our swim wear and headed for the pool. It was nice and refreshing but not quite as nice as the one we just left. We did talk to some boaters and Patti made a three year old friend.

After the pool, we walked the Sea Dog to the boat ramp. A guy was launching his boat and left his trailer in the water so Kiki didn't swim as much as she usually does. She did get wet though so she got a rinse when we got back to the boat.

When we went to the grocery store earlier, Patti wanted to get some green beans for the pooch (she loves raw green beans and carrots). Publix had no loose green beans, only pre-bagged beans so she ended up with more than we need before they go bad. So, she cooked a bunch for us to eat tonight with our leftovers from the restaurant last night.

We ate dinner, walked the K-9 again and now it's time for bed. No TV again here.

Captain's Log, day forty two (June 11, 2019)

Today was a day in port again. We got up, got dressed and walked the munchkin. After the walk, Patti fixed breakfast for everyone. Captain Ron had his poached egg on corned beef hash and the others had scrambled eggs and bacon. Captain Ron was reminded that he needs to fix the egg timer as timing a poached egg with a Garmin Viva Fit doesn't work very well.

We decided to walk back to town to check out the Kmart. Patti found several souvenir tee shirts that we really needed and some other items that we might need.

We saw a McDonalds about a block away so we headed there for ice cream. Along the way was a Winn Dixie grocery store. Patti wanted to check it out so Captain Ron found a seat in the lunch area while she shopped. She bought a few more grocery items that she had missed yesterday at Publix and then we continued to McDonalds. We ended up with burgers, fries and ice cream.

It was a long, hot walk back to the marina and the air conditioned boat, but we made it, put things away and rested a bit. Speaking of air conditioning, even though HIGH COTTON has an oversized air conditioning system, it has a hard

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time keeping up with the Florida sun and 95 plus degree heat. Boats aren't usually insulated and we have a lot of glass.

After resting, we walked to the pool for a cooling dip. Once we returned from the pool, we took the Sea Dog to the boat ramp for a swim. Back on the boat, Patti made pasta salad and then cooked dinner. We had hot dogs, baked beans, sauerkraut and of course, pasta salad.

On one of our walks, we passed by what used to be the dockmaster's office but is now the captain's lounge (boater's lounge). Apparently, this was once one of the rental units and it is air conditioned with a bathroom and shower. Since the other showers aren't air conditioned and a longer walk from the boat, we took turns showering in the captain's lounge. There's actually a TV in the lounge with cable but we're leaving in the morning so it's not going to do us much good.

We called the marina in Key West and added a day to our reservation so we can come in on Thursday. We'll have to anchor somewhere Wednesday night. We haven't decided where yet.

For now, it's time for bed.

Captain's Log, day forty three (June 12, 2019)

We had a big scare last night and that's why the log is late. We'll have more on that later.

As usual, we got up and walked the pooch. Patti went to the office to buy a bag of ice (\$4.00 for ten pounds) and return the pool and head keys. Meanwhile, Captain Ron topped off the water tanks and got the lines ready so we could cast off by ourselves.

We eased out of our slip, past the floating carcass of a large dead fish, and past the broken dreams of many of the boats in the harbor. The word is, it used to be much worse until the city took over the harbor and installed mooring balls. Of course, there are some decent boats as well and some of the homes along the shore are nice. Not Boca Raton nice, but decent.

It took us an hour to get back to the point we were on the ICW where we turned off for Marathon.

We were cruising along when Captain Ron spotted a pair of dolphins, probably a calf and its mother in front of us. He slowed the boat down and Kiki spotted them too. The difference between seeing dolphins in Charleston and the Keys is that in the Keys, the water is clear and you can see them swimming below, not just when they surface. As usual, Kiki enjoyed watching them swim and surface.



"Big Fishies" swimming alongside HIGH COTTON

After a while it was time to go so Captain Ron pushed the lever forwards and brought us back to our typical cruising speed of seven knots.

It would have been a pretty long run from Marathon to Key West so Captain Ron had a few anchorages selected. The one we actually used

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was off a nice sandy beach, accessible only by boat.

When we got there, we found one trawler and several smaller boats already there. There was also some sort of excursion boat with a dozen or more passengers swimming and lounging in the water.

We anchored off shore in about eight feet of water and Captain Ron began inflating "Que Tip" (our dinghy). Once Kiki saw this she began jumping and barking, knowing she was about to take a ride to the beach.

We got everything organized, installed the outboard motor and away we went, the Sea Dog at the bow, barking at the water and announcing our presence.



HIGH COTTON anchored off the beach

We got to the beach and out she jumped (wearing her leash and life jacket of course). We took the life jacket off and she swam around the dinghy and up and down the beach and ran in the sand with the humans right behind her. We talked with the couple from the trawler and Captain Ron threw their dog's ball for him to retrieve. They are locals who bring their boat to this anchorage whenever they get a few days off and spend a couple of nights.



Patti and the pooch at the beach

Eventually of course, it was time to go. Did we mention that the air temperature was ninety four degrees and the water temperature was eighty four degrees? And no shade.

On the way back to the big boat, Kiki got sick a couple times. Once we were back on HIGH COTTON she got sick again and began having trouble breathing. Here we were on a boat with no way to get her to a vet and over three hours from a town anyway. We were without air conditioning and all we could do was keep cool wet towels on her.

We called our vet at home who said dogs often ingest water when swimming and not to give her water or food. Our concern was that she might have not just swallowed salt water, but could have gotten some in her lungs.

To make a long story short, it was a very anxious night and nobody got much sleep. In the morning, she seemed better but that's tomorrow's story.

Captain's Log, day forty four (June 13, 2019)

We got up at first light and headed for Key West. Kiki was breathing fine and acting tired but normal. We had tried to make contact with a

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couple veterinarians in Key West last night without luck.

Captain Ron added a little throttle to increase our speed, but it still took more than three hours to get to our marina in Key West. It was about 9:00 AM by the time we got there. Kiki seemed normal but we wanted to be sure so Patti called a vet and they said to bring her in.

We ordered an Uber ride and it came in three minutes but the driver couldn't find us. Apparently, the address Uber has for the marina is not exactly where the dockmaster's office is.

After two telephone calls from the driver, we finally got together and were driven to the vet's office. Kiki was given an examination and some antibiotics just in case. She was otherwise fine so we paid the vet and got another Uber ride back to the marina. Patti and Captain Ron stepped on the scales (separately) at the vet's office when she wasn't looking and apparently have lost about ten pounds each. Kiki has been getting her exercise as well.



HIGH COTTON at Key West Bight City Marina

Patti and Captain Ron decided that they badly needed showers and a change of clothes so they took turns showering. This is a large city marina in the tourist area of town and the showers, heads

and laundry facilities are a long walk from our slip. They say walking is good for you.

After cleaning up, Patti and Captain Ron walked a few blocks to a pizza joint recommended by the dockmaster. Instead of a whole sixteen inch pie, Captain Ron had one slice. Patti ordered one slice but went back for another. We shared a soda.

By now, we were just a block from the famous Duval Street so we continued to it and walked along with the rest of the tourists checking tee shirts and the like. One store was having a sale for "one day only" (yea, sure) so we did buy some \$5.00 shirts and a visor for Captain Ron.

We passed a CVS so Patti thought we could go in and get some prescriptions filled. No dice, there was no pharmacy. Who ever heard of a drug store with no pharmacy?



An iguana waiting for a table at a local restaurant

We walked back to HIGH COTTON where Captain Ron was able to find six stations on the TV. Two are in Spanish, one is 24 hour rap videos, two are test patterns (remember those?) and one was in English, but is nothing but commercials for local restaurants and bars. No programs, just commercials. One after another, continuously.

Captain Ron fell asleep watching the commercials (remember nobody got any sleep last night).

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When he woke, he found the K-9 and Patti sleeping beside him.

He was eventually able to tear himself away from the TV commercials and got up to write yesterday's log. Eventually, the rest of the crew woke and we all left the boat to walk the dog.

One minor problem with this marina from the K-9 point of view is that there is no grass. The entire area has been paved over except for a few bushes with gravel mulch.

She finally found a spot that met her requirements so she did her business and we headed back to the boat. It appears as though it will rain tonight but we'll be safe and dry on HIGH COTTON. Maybe the rain will wash some of the grime away. We can hope.

Captain's Log, day forty five (June 14, 2019)

It must have been a very tired crew on HIGH COTTON last night. Captain Ron woke up at 10:00 AM to find the rest of the crew still soundly sleeping. We all finally got out of bed and dressed and set out with the puppy looking for a grassy area. No dice but she found some bare dirt under a tree.

She led us to the West Marine store so we went inside even though our credit cards were still on the boat. Kiki got a treat and some petting from the cashier. Next, she took us to a small souvenir shop which oddly, also sold guitars, banjos and ukuleles which were hanging from the rafters.

Once we made it back to the boat, Patti took a load of dirty clothes to the laundry room. She waited for the washer to finish and put them in the dryer.

While the clothes were drying, Patti fixed tuna salad on sliced tomatoes for the humans. The K-9 had dog food.

All three of us walked to the laundry and head area. Patti got the "almost dry" clothes out of the machine and we walked back to the boat where the pooch helped her fold them and put them away.

Captain Ron checked the maintenance records and determined that it was time to change the oil in the engine and transmission. Ideally, he would have done that as soon as we arrived yesterday when the engine was hot, but of course we had more pressing matters.



Captain Ron changes the oil



Kiki supervises

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It began to rain but of course, that didn't affect his work and he got the oil and filters changed. At Patti's suggestion, he did this shirtless so there were no additional oil stained tee shirts to deal with. We don't know if this marina has a place for used motor oil and filters but if it doesn't we'll just keep it on the boat until we find a place that does.

This seemed to Captain Ron like a great time to take a shower so he walked (in the rain) to the bathhouse and took his shower.

One of the restaurants adjoining the marina advertises a happy hour with raw oysters at \$12.00 per dozen. That got Captain Ron hankering for oysters so that's where we went. Patti had nachos.



Captain Ron got his oysters

After dinner we came back to the boat, got the puppy and walked around. Lots of people stopped to say how cute she is and pet her and of course, she loved every minute of this.

Patti took a shower and it's time for bed.

Captain's Log, day forty six (June 15, 2019)

We woke up at a more reasonable time today, about 8:00 AM. We got dressed, Captain Ron made a cup of coffee and we took the pooch for a

walk. Again, she led us to West Marine where she got a dog biscuit and a lot of attention. Captain Ron felt bad going in there for dog treats but not buying anything. Neither of us had money or credit cards with us.

Once the puppy did her business and explored the area, we all came back to the boat. Kiki stayed to guard the boat while Captain Ron and Patti went to breakfast. The restaurants in Key West have character (and often, "characters"). Captain Ron had eggs Benedict which he doesn't get very often. Patti had pancakes, which she gets all the time.

After breakfast, Patti wanted to shop and Captain Ron didn't so she stayed and shopped while Captain Ron went back to the boat to keep the Sea Dog company.

When Patti returned, we set out with the Sea Dog for another walk. She took us to West Marine once again but this time Captain Ron was armed with his credit card so he bought fittings to make a plug for his oil change machine and some holding tank treatment that we had run out of (never mind that there's a quart of it sitting at home in the storage shed).

Once again leaving the K-9 to guard the boat, the humans set out to explore Key West. We were in one of the tee shirt and souvenir shops when it began pouring down rain. We sat inside for a while and then broke down and bought cheap ponchos. Once we had purchased them and put them on, the rain slowed and after walking a block or two, it stopped so we took them off (they were hot) and carried them the rest of the day.

There's a free bus service in Key West called the Duval Loop. We kept looking for signs but didn't see any. We asked in a store, but the person didn't seem to understand the question. Finally,

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we asked somebody who knew the answer. The Duval Loop bus doesn't run on Duval Street, it runs on parallel streets.

We walked over one block and along the street until we saw a group of people who looked like they were waiting for a bus. We asked and they were, so we waited with them.

The bus took us almost to the marker for the southernmost point in the USA so we got off and walked the rest of the way. There was a waiting line for taking pictures so we got in line and waited our turn. A person behind us in line was nice enough to take our pictures standing on the marker.



Patti and Captain Ron at the southernmost point in the USA

We walked back to the bus stop and waited for the bus. It came and brought us back to the marina. We decided to eat dinner before going back to the boat so we checked out a few restaurants and settled on one. The food was good and the portions large so we have tomorrow's lunch.

Just as we neared the boat it started raining again so we had to wait an hour or so before Kiki's evening walk. She walked through every puddle she could find including one up to her belly so she had to get rinsed off before going inside.

It's time for bed so that's it for today.

Captain's Log, day forty seven (June 16, 2019)

We got up this morning a little after 8:00 AM. We got dressed, of course and walked the puppy. This time we directed her away from West Marine. After her walk, we returned to HIGH COTTON where Patti fixed our usual breakfast.

We decided that we (the humans) should walk to the famous Mallory Square where the cruise ships dock. We knew one was there because we could see it from our slip. We walked to Duval Street and turned towards Mallory Square. We began seeing familiar places and decided that we must be going the wrong way so we turned and walked the other way. Eventually, we figured out that we had been going the right way the first time so we turned around again, but not before checking out the grocery store which turned out to be fairly complete. We can restock the boat before we head back north.

Speaking of heading back north, we decided it would be nice to stay here a few more days but our slip is booked so we have to move the boat to another slip tomorrow. No big deal, we hope.

Once we got ourselves headed in the right direction, we saw an ice cream shop so of course, we stopped in for that special treat. Then we passed a tee shirt store where everything was five dollars so we went in and bought more tee shirts. *Kiki writes "Yea, they think they are fooling be but I can smell ice cream on their breath."*

Mallory Square wasn't impressive except for the cruise ship, but apparently it comes alive in the evenings with performers and vendors. We'll return one evening and see.

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Captain Ron and Patti enjoying their customary ice cream



One of the cruise ships at Mallory Square

We returned to the boat with aching feet, but of course the K-9 needed a walk so we took her around the block a couple of times. She got petted and fussed over as usual. We checked with the marina office about our extended stay and new slip and then returned to the boat.

By this time, Captain Ron's feet were hurting so he lay down in the V berth and turned on the continuous commercial channel on the TV. Patti rubbed some CBD oil on his feet and he went to sleep.

It's been raining on and off this afternoon so we decided to stay on the boat and eat some of our leftovers accompanied by Patti's home (boat) made pasta salad.

Our slip at the marina has a fixed (not floating) dock so the boat rises and falls with the tide while the dock does not. These slips were apparently designed for boats larger than HIGH COTTON, because at low tide it's pretty difficult to get on and off the dock. Patti has to stand on the boat, turn around and sit on the dock and then get up from there. So far, Captain Ron has been able to step from the boat to the dock, but just barely. They should give consideration to us old folks when they assign the slips!

So after dinner, we walked the K-9 again and then each went for much needed showers. We're seeing lightning and hearing thunder now so it's time to hit the hay.

PS: Captain Ron received Father's Day calls from both his human children and a cuddle from the Sea Dog. All is good on HIGH COTTON.

Captain's Log, day forty eight (June 17, 2019)

As usual, we got up and walked the K-9. Patti fixed Captain Ron a half bagel with cream cheese. She ate cookies and Kiki ate dog food. The marina called with our new slip assignment but we had to wait for the other boat to leave.

Once our new spot was ready, we unplugged the power, disconnected the lines and backed out of the slip. We had to just go around the pier we were on and down the other side to a "side tie" (not an actual slip, just docked alongside the dock). We were between two boats with about three feet of space on each end, but the dockmaster was there to help and we just slid right in, hooked everything up and we're good for three more days.

We decided to walk around a bit as it had gotten a bit cooler and the Sea Dog decided to go with us

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so we walked down some different streets into a more residential part of town. As usual, the puppy found some people to fuss over her and pet her. On the way back to the boat, we went into an air conditioned store and she didn't want to leave. She likes the cool floors of air conditioned buildings.



Chickens run wild in Key West



There are interesting sights in Key West

As we neared the boat, the clouds came and the wind started blowing. It wasn't long before the rains, thunder and lightning came but by that time we were safely inside HIGH COTTON, dry and comfortable. Our new location seems to be a little better protected from the wind and waves and it's closer to the office and the heads.

Since it appeared we wouldn't be going anywhere soon, we decided to eat leftover hot dogs and

baked beans for lunch so we did. After lunch it was still raining and it had cooled off a bit so Captain Ron decided to clean the strainer that feed water to the air conditioner. It turned out to have a lot of shells and debris in it so by cleaning it, maybe the system will be a bit more efficient and cool better. We shall see.

It eventually stopped raining so we went back to the restaurant where Captain Ron had raw oysters the other night. We sat down, the waiter brought us water and Patti ordered ribs (a small bucket of ribs at happy hour price). Captain Ron ordered a dozen oysters. No oysters! Yep, they were out of oysters.

Captain Ron had his heart set on oysters so we got up to leave. The waiter suggested the place across the way so we went and they had oysters. Captain Ron got his oysters and then some shrimp. Patti had shrimp and French fries and a salad.

We went back to the boat, walked the puppy and then set out for Mallory Square to see the sunset and the entertainment. As we were leaving the marina, we saw the bus go by so we decided to walk. Well, we got lost again. We were using the bus map and it doesn't have all the streets on it.

We saw the bus, hailed it and got on. Eventually we got off near Mallory Square and walked the rest of the way. There were a few entertainers, some getting tips for their talent and some, apparently out of pity.

Most of the people were lined up at the seawall to watch the sun set. All had cameras and were jostling for position. Captain Ron and Patti got their photos but it wasn't much of a sunset. Maybe tomorrow will be better.

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Sunset at Mallory Square

Once the sun went down, we walked back to the bus stop and waited in line for the bus to arrive along with about twenty other people. These busses aren't that big so many of the riders had to stand. We were lucky and got seats though.

We had to ride almost the entire loop to get to the marina. Walking would have been quicker but we were tired. We got undressed and got in bed.

Captain's Log, day forty nine (June 18, 2019)

Today was another day in port. As usual, we got up, Captain Ron made himself a cup of coffee and we walked the Sea Dog. Once she did her business and checked the area for new smells, we walked back to the boat, fed her and walked to the diner for breakfast. Sausage gravy over biscuits this time.

We went back, walked the puppy again and then walked to the grocery store, stopping at shops along the way.

Once back on HIGH COTTON, Captain Ron took a short nap. He woke to find the K-9 on the bed beside him and Patti missing. It turned out that she had taken a load of clothes to the laundry area.

We mentioned before about going into a CVS and finding that it had no pharmacy. One of the CVS stores in town does have a pharmacy so Patti called them and arranged to refill some of our prescriptions. We hopped on the free bus, picked up our prescriptions and hopped on the bus again to get back to the marina. There's a website where one can view the route and watch as the busses move around the loop. That's pretty neat.

We decided to eat dinner before returning to the boat so as to not disturb the puppy. The food was good but the waitress was probably better suited to some other line of work. Captain Ron considered calling the restaurant on the phone and asking if they would send our waitress to our table.

After dinner, we returned to the boat, got the pooch and walked again. She has found her favorite spots and she always knows where HIGH COTTON is when she comes back.

We took turns showering and went to bed.

Captain's Log, day fifty (June 19, 2019)

More of the same today. We got up and walked the puppy. Once that was done, Patti stripped the bed and did another load of laundry while Captain Ron walked to the marine hardware store for a pumpout adapter. Once he returned, we both walked to the Ace hardware store and then to Duval Street where we had lunch and ice cream.

Back on the boat, Patti made the bed while Kiki helped. We rested a bit and then went to the restaurant for their \$11.00 per dozen (Happy Hour) oysters. Again, they had none. Captain Ron settled on chicken wings while Patti had the "bucket of bones" (ribs).

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We walked the dog, took showers and went to bed in anticipation of an early departure tomorrow.

Captain's Log, day fifty one (June 20, 2019)

It's been fun, but it's time to leave Key West and head back north. It's an interesting place and a place worth experiencing at least once. There are a lot of bars, many with live music (usually a guy on a stool playing guitar and singing Jimmie Buffet songs, but sometimes more), restaurants and tee shirt shops. People are everywhere. There are also the homeless people eating out of garbage cans and begging on the street. Not everyone is here on vacation.

We set the alarm for 5:30 AM thinking we would be underway by 6:00 AM. Unfortunately, we miscalculated daybreak and had to wait about twenty minutes for enough light to navigate safely. We walked the Sea Dog and turned in our restroom keys.



Bye bye Key West

The first hour or so of our trip was in relatively unprotected water and there was quite a bit of rocking. Fortunately, once we got into the protection of the actual keys, the seas quieted

down and we had a pretty smooth ride. It was hot, but we had a breeze.

At one point, Patti started to go down from the flybridge to get something and noticed that we were towing what appeared to be the remains of an old wooden fish trap of some sort connected to HIGH COTTON by two long ropes.

We stopped the boat and Captain Ron hooked the lines with a boat hook. He got a knife to cut the lines, but when he moved from the swim platform to the cockpit for a safer place to work, the lines slipped loose from the boat.

We hauled everything in and took it with us to be disposed of at our next stop so nobody else would get tangled up in it. This could have turned out badly because if the lines or the trap got caught in our propeller or rudder, we would have had to call for a tow and then a diver to untangle everything. Apparently, we were having our lucky day.



Unwanted hitch-hiker

We got to the Marathon Marina (where we stayed a little over a week ago) at about 3:00 PM. After taking Kiki to do her business, we walked to the office where Kiki got dog treats and the marina got a tidy sum of money. Not really, this marina is well worth the cost.

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Although this marina is “dog friendly”, dogs are not allowed in the pool area so Kiki stayed on the boat with more treats while the humans headed for the pool. After eight and a half hours on the boat, the pool felt great.



The pool at Marathon Marina

We ended up talking to a lady who is staying here in her RV and then a couple who are here on a boat. We talked about our boats and places we have been and plan to go.

Eventually, we began to wrinkle from being in the water so we returned to the boat and heated up leftovers from the restaurants in Key West.



Patti working on her tan

Patti walked the puppy, Captain Ron took a shower and it's off to bed. No stations on the TV. Not a one.

Captain's Log, day fifty two (June 21, 2019)

We got up a little after 8:00 AM this morning. Captain Ron made a cup of coffee and we walked the Sea Dog. We mentioned before that we really enjoy this marina but there is a serious lack of grass for the puppy to do her business. She sometimes has to use the gravel.

Once the K-9 was finished, we put her back on the boat and walked to one of the restaurants along US route 1 for breakfast. Captain Ron had Eggs Benedict and Patti had hot cakes, bacon and home fries. She brought some home with her for later.

Walking back, we saw several iguanas on the walls and in the trees.

As he has been doing each day, Captain Ron spent some time trying to find suitable marinas for the next few days. The one we stayed in in Islamorada on our way south had no suitable slips available. Another had no vacancies either. He called one several times over two days and never got an answer or a call back. Many of the marinas in this area are too shallow or aren't really marinas at all, just boat sales or rental places.

He finally found one for us for tomorrow night. The location is not ideal as far as splitting the mileage between here and our stop Sunday night, but it looks like a decent place. He also has one lined up for Monday night in Miami.

After much frustration dealing with the Internet and the phone, he decided that we should go to the pool so we did. There's a lady who lives on her boat here and works at the marina who is also an artist and has agreed to paint a portrait of Kiki so we stopped and made arrangements with her on the way to the pool.

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Kiki's portrait (mailed to us when we got home)

As usual, we did little swimming and mostly just relaxed and talked to the other guests. After an hour or two, we returned to the boat, got dressed and walked back to the marina restaurant for dinner. Someone had told us about the restaurant's "happy hour" menu but when we asked about it, we were told that we would have to eat outdoors at the bar if we wanted to order from it.

Nothing caught our eye so we went back to where it was air conditioned and ordered off the regular menu. The food was good and we each brought home enough for another meal.

After dinner, we changed into our swimsuits and went back to the pool where we talked to the

same people (they are staying in an RV in the RV area next to the pool).

We returned to the boat and walked the puppy and took showers. We are leaving early in the morning to get to our next stop at a reasonable time.

Captain's Log, day fifty three (June 22, 2019)

Well, the days are getting shorter now! We got ourselves up at 6:00 AM to make what turned out to be the six hour plus trip to Mangrove Marina in Tavernier, FL. We walked the puppy, of course and bought a bag of ice for the cooler. We had planned on topping off our fuel tanks again but two large boats spent the night on the fuel dock and they were blocking access. Captain Ron did some calculations and figured that we can make it to where we are staying in Miami and fuel up there so we just slid on out of the marina and out of the harbor.



Leaving Marathon, FL in the early morning

The Seven Mile Bridge has a sixty five foot high opening for large boats but it's in the middle and quite a bit out of the way for those coming from or heading north. For smaller boats like HIGH COTTON, it's possible to cruise under the bridge near the east end and save several miles so after

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checking with the folks at the marina, that's what we did.

It's easy to think of the Florida Keys as being south of Miami, but in reality, they curve around to the west (Key West, remember?). What that meant for us is, we were cruising directly into the morning sun. This made it difficult to see where we were going and see the chart plotter. Eventually, of course, the sun rose high enough in the sky where it wasn't a problem.

About three hours into our trip we saw a couple dolphins so we stopped to let the Sea Dog watch. It turned out to be a pod of perhaps a dozen or more dolphins, including mother and baby pairs and they were very active, jumping and diving. Kiki was fascinated and so were we. (*Kiki writes: "I just love watching the big fishies playing in the water."*)



The Sea Dog on the lookout for the big fishies

Eventually, of course, it was time to move on. We had hopes that they would swim with us, but apparently, they had other plans.

Being away from home and travelling from place to place on a boat, it's easy to forget what day it is. We hadn't really realized it, but today was Saturday in Florida and the boats started coming out. As we got within a few miles of Tavernier, the boat traffic really increased and at times we

had four or five boats coming towards us on either side.



Boating in South Florida on the weekend

We made it to Mangrove Marina and were met by a brand new, inexperienced dockhand (an older gentleman). Fortunately, the slip was easy to get into and Captain Ron backed HIGH COTTON into place. The dockhand called the fenders "bumpers" and he plugged the power cord into the outlet without turning the breaker off first even though Captain Ron mentioned it. He will learn, of course.



HIGH COTTON safely docked at Mangrove Marina

We went to the office to check in. Kiki got dog treats and enjoyed the air conditioned office. Patti unhooked her leash and she ran around greeting each employee and entertaining everyone. She didn't want to leave but eventually

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we took her back to the boat which had begun to cool with the air conditioning.

Speaking of air conditioning, the sea water temperature is eighty seven degrees. That makes it pretty hard for our water cooled air conditioner to produce seventy four degrees air. The air conditioner runs all day when plugged in and only cycles at night.

Captain Ron and Patti decided that they really needed to hit the swimming pool so they left the K-9 to guard the boat and went for a dip. It's a small pool but it was refreshing. As often is the case, we spent most of the time talking to the folks, not actually swimming.

After the pool, we decided to walk the half mile or so to the Winn Dixie grocery store for sodas and green beans (for the pooch). We were walking down the dock with our folding cart when one of the liveboards asked where we were going. We told him and he said "I'll drive you there." We couldn't turn down that offer so we hopped into his car and off we went. He offered to wait for us and bring us back but we decided to eat dinner at the restaurant next to the grocery store so we thanked him and off he went. You meet some nice people at marinas some times.

After a diet busting meal, we walked to the grocery store, got what we needed, stopped at CVS for a couple things and walked back to the marina. We checked the showers on the way back to the dock and they're not much and a long walk from the dock, but they will do.

There's still nothing on TV so we'll go to bed in a few minutes. It's a short trip tomorrow so we'll probably sleep in and eat breakfast before we head out.

Captain's Log, day fifty four (June 23, 2019)

Yesterday evening, Patti saw what she thought was an alligator swimming through the marina. It turns out it wasn't an alligator, it was a crocodile. Not a large one, but a crocodile none the less. Kiki will not be swimming in the river anytime soon.

Anyway, we slept in a bit, got dressed and walked to the office (with the Sea Dog of course). As before, she entertained everyone, got petted and got treats. The office people volunteered to keep her but we said no. They also tried to talk us into staying longer and we would have but we already had reservations for tonight.

We said our goodbyes, unhooked everything and slid out of our slip into the shallow harbor and then onto the ICW. The weather was hot with less of a breeze than yesterday.

Even though our trip was just over two hours, it was a hot one. We saw a pair of dolphins and stopped to watch but they just went on about their business doing "dolphin things" so we continued on our way.



Leaving Mangrove Marina

The place we are staying tonight is a place we stayed on the way down. It's not really a marina; it's a timeshare hotel with docks. There are no dock hands, but they offered to send a

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maintenance person out to help. Having been there before, we didn't think we would need help, but it turned out we had a different slip and there was a current pushing us away from the dock. Docking wasn't pretty and in retrospect, we should have asked for the help. After finally getting tied to the dock in a satisfactory manner, Captain Ron connected the shore power cord. Nothing happened so he tried another outlet. Still nothing. By now, it was in the high nineties, he was dripping with sweat and not in a great mood.



Approaching the Anchorage Resort and Yacht Club

He searched for, and found the maintenance man and asked if he could turn on the power. It turns out that these outlets had just been installed and weren't connected yet. There was no sign.

To get power, Captain Ron had to re-route the cord around the boat and plug it into an outlet near the bow of the boat. Power (and AC) finally! He grabbed his wallet and went to the office to check in and pay. The lady took one look at him and suggested that he grab a cup of water and sit down for a couple minutes, which he did. Meanwhile, Patti covered the flybridge and brought stuff down.

Once all that was taken care of and the boat started to cool down, Captain Ron and the pooch went to the V berth to rest (with the fan running). After a while, Patti took Kiki for a walk. Patti and

Captain Ron walked to the restaurant for lunch, returned to the boat and went to the pool to cool off. We had the pool to ourselves.

After the pool, Captain Ron and Kiki watched TV while Patti did laundry.

Once that was all taken care of, Patti warmed up leftovers for our dinner. After that, the K-9 got another walk and the humans took turns in the non-air conditioned, cramped showers.

Where we ate lunch today, we were supposed to get a ten percent discount because we are staying at the marina. The waitress forgot to figure in the discount so she gave us a piece of key lime pie instead. We had that tonight for dessert. We got the best end of that deal.



Sunset from the flybridge

Captain's Log, day fifty five (June 24, 2019)

We had the alarm set for 6:00 AM. That's a good thing because Captain Ron was dreaming that his brother was supposed to drive him to the airport but he called and said his car was broken down. The alarm got him out of that predicament.

We got dressed, walked the puppy and got the boat ready for today's journey. The couple next to

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us was pulling out as well but they were going for a day's fishing and we were heading north.

We didn't have the madhouse boat traffic that we've had the last two days. Apparently many of the folks work during the week like we used to do. We did see a sailboat and a few smaller boats but they were all heading off in different directions.



Captain Ron keeps cool driving with his wet towel

We had a couple dolphins swim along with us for a few minutes today. Kiki enjoyed watching them and barked at them. They didn't bark back, they just swam along. Eventually, of course, they turned away and went about their business.



The Miami skyline in the distance

We had a hard time finding a marina at a decent price in Miami, but we finally found one for \$3.50 per foot. It also had a decent price for diesel fuel so we planned on fueling there.

We passed by the docked cruise ships and under a couple of bridges but we had to wait about twenty minutes at a drawbridge just before our marina. Once we got through the bridge we had to wait for a boat to leave the fuel dock.

We got tied up at the fuel dock and took on nearly seventy gallons of diesel fuel. In theory, HIGH COTTON holds ninety gallons but we don't want to let it get low enough to find out. With two fuel tanks, if either runs dry, the engine will suck air and quit. We don't want to have to deal with that.

We were directed to our slip, but even though we hinted, nobody showed up to catch our lines. There was a lot of current so after two failed attempts to back into the slip, Captain Ron went down the fairway, turned around and backed in from the other direction. Success!



HIGH COTTON tied up at Sea Isle Marina

The thirty amp electric receptacle didn't work properly so Captain Ron used our adapter with the fifty amp receptacle and all was fine. He reported this to the dockmaster so they could fix it for the next user. At last, we had air conditioning.

Captain Ron did a scan on the TV and found sixty one potential TV stations, but after eliminating the Spanish language stations, religious stations, shopping stations and duplicates, there are about

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a dozen left. We're only here for tonight so it doesn't really matter anyway.

When we checked in, there was no map provided or any mention of restrooms or showers so we went back to the office. The dockmaster showed us where we could shower but it looked more like an employee lounge. He told us about the nearby restaurants so we went to one we had seen on the phone. It was inexpensive but good.

Walking to the restaurant, we heard thunder and saw lightning to the north of where we were but it never rained at the marina. It did cool down a bit though.

Once we finished with dinner, Captain Ron set off for the showers. This is where it got interesting. There was a room with a toilet and a urinal and sink. Behind that were three shower stalls and about a dozen lockers.

All three had "out of order" signs on them, but the dockmaster had assured us that two of them worked. The one with the missing valve and handle obviously didn't work.

Captain Ron turned the first one on and started to undress. He felt it and it was only warm, not hot so he turned on the other "working" one and it got hot so he decided to use it.

Captain Ron thought he had locked the door, but about this time, one of the marina workers walked in, a small Hispanic male with an accent. He asked Captain Ron if he was using the (first) shower and Captain Ron explained about it not getting hot. The worker said it worked fine; he had been using it for six years. At this point, he stepped into the running shower and pulled the curtain behind him, still wearing his clothes! Captain Ron shook his head and stepped into the hot shower and showered as usual.

After he finished and returned to the boat, it was Patti's turn. When she got to the building, the office was closed and the employee who was supposed to let her in claimed he didn't have a key. She returned to the boat in the same condition as when she left. She may shower on the boat when it gets dark.

We walked the Sea Dog and she met several other dogs out walking their owners. Two were in a stroller being pushed by their humans.

It's only about a three and a half hour trip to our next stop in Fort Lauderdale tomorrow, so there's no rush to get out and no alarm clock to break the peace and quiet.

Captain's Log, day fifty six (June 25, 2019)

Well, we spent the night in Miami (Havana North). We didn't see the city or any of the famous sights or places though. We did meet a few of the locals.

The sun was well above the yardarm by the time we got dressed, walked the puppy and turned in the gate key to get our fifty dollar deposit back. They must really like that key!

Getting out of our slip and the marina was far easier than getting into it yesterday and we were soon heading north on the ICW. After a while, we looked in front of us and saw a boat coming. We thought it looked like a trawler. As it got closer, we thought it looked like another Camano. It turned out that it was another Camano, the one we had seen on the lift on our way south a few weeks ago. We talked to them on the radio and learned that they were heading south to the keys. We wished them well and they wished us well. There are not that many boats like HIGH COTTON so when we see one, it's a bit special.

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HIGH COTTON's sister ship, another Camano Troll

We mentioned that this would be a short trip today but with endless “no-wake” and “minimum wake zones”, it took a bit longer than we had planned. As we passed through Port Everglades, the Coast Guard was doing some sort of training where people were jumping from helicopters into the water. We didn't get close so we don't know exactly what it was that they were doing. There was also a large container ship headed for the harbor but we passed through before it got there.

We were assigned the same slip at Las Olas Marina that we were in on the way south, but they had nobody to help with our lines. We got ourselves tied up and plugged in so the AC could run and cool the boat down.

As we headed for the office, we found the gate to exit the marina closed and locked. Apparently the construction had moved to that area. The sign directed us to a different gate in the opposite direction. As we were exiting, we met one of the marina liveaboards who showed us how to get to the office from there.

Kiki enjoys this stop because there are lots of lizards to chase, and of course, she found some and chased them. They always get away but that doesn't stop the Sea Dog from trying. (*Kiki writes: “Yea, you keep saying that but I'm going to catch one one of these days!”*)



Lots of iguanas in this part of Florida

Captain Ron spent some more frustrating time trying to find us a place to stay after Fort Lauderdale. Patti called the marina in Delray Beach where we stopped on the way south. It had a nice pool and access to shopping and a nail salon, but they were full and couldn't take us at this time.

He finally found a place forty miles up the ICW, but they wouldn't take a reservation over the phone. They had to send a form to be filled out and returned. For some reason, their emails didn't show up in Captain Ron's inbox. After several tries, he found that they had been routed to a “bulk” folder on his computer, not where he expected them to be.

Eventually, after far too much fuss and bother, the form was completed and sent back to the marina and we have a reservation. The rate is cheap enough but we have to pay for a forty foot minimum so it's still nearly one hundred dollars for a night. It's thirty one dollars a night where we are now in Ft. Lauderdale.

We took showers and then walked to a restaurant for dinner. Back on the boat, we took our pills, walked the K-9 and it's time for bed.

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Captain's Log, day fifty seven (June 26, 2019)

It was up at the crack of dawn today for our forty mile cruise north to our next stop. Between the "no wake" zones, the "slow, minimum wake" zones and waiting for several drawbridges, our six hour trip took seven and a half hours.

We were cruising along when Kiki ran to the side of the boat and started barking. We had a dolphin swimming alongside HIGH COTTON and she was the first to notice. It swam with us for several minutes and then went back to whatever dolphins do when they are not swimming alongside boats. The Sea Dog got her "big fishie" fix for the day. We also saw a sea turtle, but only it's head as it came up for a breath of air. It went back down quickly.



Ship in Port Everglades



The Jungle Queen sightseeing boat



Our next house

As we mentioned, it was bridge after bridge for forty miles today. Some bridges we could pass through without an opening, some we had to have opened. Only one was "on request" (opened anytime a boat needed it to open), the rest were on a schedule so we had to wait anywhere from just a few minutes to nearly a half hour.

Finally, we spotted Palm Harbor Marina in West Palm Beach, FL. We called on the radio and were directed to an empty slip. Two dockhands were there to assist and we backed into our slip next to a multi-million dollar yacht. As often is the case, HIGH COTTON is one of the smallest boats in the marina. This is a very big marina full of very big boats. It's also a first class operation.



HIGH COTTON docked at Palm Harbor Marina

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Once we got everything hooked up and cleared off the flybridge, we went to the office to check in and pay. They already had our information so we just had to sign a couple papers. We got a “welcome bag” containing two Palm Harbor Marina hats, two bottles of Palm Harbor Marina water, maps and lists of places to go and things to do in the area.

The office had no dog treats, but there’s a sandwich shop in the office and the lady running it gave Kiki a strip of (cooked) bacon. (*Kiki writes: “I think all marinas should give their canine guests bacon. Treats are nice but bacon is BACON!”*)

Since it was past lunch time, and we were staring at the menu while Kiki ate her bacon, we decided to just go ahead and have lunch there while the boat cooled down. Captain Ron got a sandwich, Patti got a salad and Kiki watched us eat. Patti snuck her some cheese from her salad.

Eventually, it was time to go so we walked back to the boat. Captain Ron hooked up the cable TV and found sixty or so channels to watch, mostly in English.

We took turns taking luxurious showers in the yacht club, then Captain Ron went back to trying to find us places to stay while Patti gathered up the dirty clothes for the free washing machine.

She took the clothes and a few minutes later called and suggested that Captain Ron bring the puppy to the air conditioned captain’s lounge.

We went to the lounge where it was nice and cool and sat on the luxurious sofa watching the eighty four inch TV, waiting for the clothes to finish in the washing machine. This was a fancy new electronic washing machine but when the clothes should have been ready, the door was locked and there was an error code. We couldn’t get the clothes out!

By this time, the marina staff had left and only the security people were around. The security guard tried unplugging the machine and plugging it back in but it was still locked. We did this a couple more times until we heard a “click” and were able to open the door.

The clothes were dripping wet but we didn’t want to risk putting them back in the washer so Patti wrung them out by hand and put them in the dryer. We’ll report this in the morning.

We tried to go back to the boat, but the K-9 wanted to walk the other way so we ended up walking around the block first.

We haven’t found a spot for tomorrow yet and this looks like an interesting town so we’ll probably stay here another day. We’ll walk into town and see what West Palm Beach is all about.

Captain’s Log, day fifty eight (June 27, 2019)

So today was a day in port. We slept until 8:00 AM or so, walked the puppy, told the marina people we were staying another day and went back to the boat where Patti fixed scrambled eggs and sausage for all. Kiki, of course, only got a taste. Most of her breakfast was dog food. She is not supposed to eat “people food”. *Kiki writes: “Yes, I’m not supposed to eat people food, but it tastes much better than dog food and it makes me feel like I’m a people too.”*

After that, the humans walked a few blocks to town to shop and sightsee. The downtown area is being “fixed up” so there was a lot of construction and some of the streets were closed. We were expecting high end shops but mostly we found just restaurants. We went into one and had tacos for lunch. OK, but nothing special.

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Downtown West Palm Beach, FL

After lunch, we caught the free trolley that makes a big circle (more or less) through the business area. It took us almost to Publix. Publix is in “City Place”, sort of an outdoor mall arrangement of stores and restaurants so we walked through, bought some tee shirts and ate some ice cream.

Once we were done, we walked back to Publix, got what we needed and walked back to the trolley stop. The trolley took us close to the marina but we had to walk the rest of the way with our bags. When we got to the end of the marina opposite our dock, we spied a dock cart so we put the bags in it and continued towards HIGH COTTON.



Obligatory tourist photo in West Palm Beach, FL

Patti went into the office to ask for a bag of ice (you can’t just carry it; the dockhands deliver it to

your boat). She came back out and the dockhand came by in a golf cart with our ice. He told us to hop on so we put our groceries in the back and rode to HIGH COTTON in luxury.

As we mentioned earlier, this is a large, first class marina with many megayachts docked. Unlike most of the marinas we stay in, the floating docks here are concrete and wide and sturdy enough that golf carts can be driven and even turned around on them.

We got the groceries put away and took the Sea Dog for a walk. After she finished her business, we went to the yacht club to sit and relax with a soda and watch TV. Captain Ron used the computer to select a couple more stops on our way north but their offices were closed by that time so he couldn’t confirm anything. He will do that tomorrow.

As we were getting ready to leave, a couple came in to wash some towels so Patti told her about the difficulties she had with the washing machine last night. Talking with her, we learned that they had just bought a brand new boat and this would be their first night sleeping aboard. She pointed it out on the dock.

We left and Kiki wanted to go the other way so we followed her and walked past the couple’s new boat. It was a big one! There’s a yacht brokerage at the marina with photos of boats for sale in the window so Captain Ron took a look. It seems this couple’s new boat costs upwards of four million dollars!

When we tried to get onto our dock, our key card wouldn’t work. Since we originally were going to stay for just one day, we think they only programmed the card for one day. Anyway, we convinced the security guard that we belonged so

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he let us in. We decided to skip showers tonight to avoid any more troubles getting back in.

We have a destination for tomorrow in Stuart, FL. It may rain, it may not. We've been very lucky so far, but our luck may run out. We can run in the rain but it's easier and more fun when it's not raining.

Captain's Log, day fifty nine (June 28, 2019)

Our plan for today was to leave West Palm Beach about 8:00 AM and we pretty much did that. Our expired key cards wouldn't let us back on the dock so we had to keep that in mind.

We walked the puppy and then got the security guard to let us into the yacht club. This marina has several security guards on duty overnight even though it's in a nice neighborhood and all the docks have key operated gates. Maybe it's because most of the boats docked here are worth millions of dollars and the owners want that sense of security.



A few of our boat neighbors at Palm Harbor Marina

We thought the office opened at 8:00 AM but the people were there early so we went in. turned in our keys, got our receipt for our stay and a cup of coffee for Captain Ron. We had to ask for a

dockhand to let us back on our dock and he gave us a ride in his golf cart back to HIGH COTTON.

We unplugged and untied everything and pulled out of our slip. Another boat pulled out just ahead of us so we had to follow it through the no-wake zone. Once we reached the Port of Palm Beach, it turned towards the inlet and we continued north on the ICW.

Our trip was uneventful except for the continual change in speed zones. We fit under all the bridges so they were not an issue. As usual, we were amazed at the wealth and luxurious homes and boats we passed. As before, there were a few more modest communities as well. We saw a cruise ship and some large cargo ships in the Port of Palm Beach. One was docking as we approached but it was docked by the time we actually got to it.



A cargo ship docking in the Port of Palm Beach

We did have some rain today, enough that we had to move from the flybridge to the lower helm several times. Each one was just a few minutes and then it stopped. The "rain drill" is; Patti takes the helm, Captain Ron grabs Kiki and takes her down the ladder and inside, he takes the lower helm and blows the horn so Patti knows he is in control. Then Patti covers the helm and seats and puts other things away, out of the rain and comes

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down the ladder and inside. Once the rain stops, everything is reversed.



Someone's floating condo



How the other half lives



A little fun on the water

When we got to the St. Lucie Inlet, we turned up the St. Lucie River and then into Manatee Pocket. Pirate's Cove Resort and Marina is near the end.

Docking was a zoo with two pilings at the bow and two lines from the stern to the dock. We've done this many times before, but the wind was howling and the slip was basically too big for our little boat. Anyhow, with the help of the dockhand, we finally got ourselves positioned and powered up.



HIGH COTTON docked at Pirate's Cove Marina

We walked to the office to check in. They had no dog treats. Kiki kept looking at the dockmaster but nothing was forthcoming. (*Kiki writes: "Last time we docked I got bacon. This time I got nothing. I don't understand why a marina wouldn't have free dog treats."*)

We walked around a bit and then went back to the boat. Captain Ron and Patti changed into swimwear and headed for the pool to cool off. Kiki got treats and then presumably, took a nap.

The pool was refreshing, but since this place is as much a resort as a marina, most of the folks in the pool were from the resort, not boaters. The boating around here seems to be more focused on offshore fishing than cruising. We haven't seen another trawler.

After the pool, Captain Ron hooked up the cable TV and scanned for stations. Once that was done, we (the humans) took turns showering and then went to the restaurant for dinner. As seems to happen far too often, the waitress screwed up

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captain Ron's order. He is beginning to think that a Kiosk like they have at some McDonalds restaurants might work a little better than live servers.

After dinner, it was time to walk the pooch and turn in for a good night's sleep.

Captain's Log, day sixty (June 29, 2019)

The weather forecast was calling for rain today. Actually, it rained overnight but wasn't raining when we got up. We got up around 8:00 AM. Boats were leaving the marina (for the offshore fishing grounds, we presume) at first light. Captain Ron made himself a cup of coffee and we walked the puppy around the grounds. There are lots of lizards here, several different varieties and sizes and Kiki likes to chase them all.



There's a lizard in there, I saw him go in

We came back to the boat and Patti fixed a bagel for Captain Ron and a protein shake for herself. Kiki had dog food, carrots and green beans. After this, she went back to the gift shop while Captain Ron and Kiki watched TV.

Patti returned to the boat and we were sitting on the boat when a large boat pulled up to the dock behind us. We assumed it was coming in for fuel, but it tied up and is staying there for a while. This

is a sixty eight foot "sportfish" boat, the kind often seen in movies and TV fishing in the ocean for trophy fish.

Captain Ron talked to the owner (or it might have been the captain). He said it holds two thousand, five hundred gallons of fuel. A little math tells us that at three dollars a gallon, that would be a seven thousand, five hundred dollar fill up. Plus tip.

We took Kiki on another lizard hunting expedition around the resort grounds and then returned to the boat. It started raining so we had leftovers for lunch.

We stayed on the boat for most of the afternoon because of the rain. Eventually it stopped so we walked the puppy. We called a seafood restaurant that's supposed to have Maryland style blue crabs but they were sold out so we had dinner in the marina restaurant again.

After dinner, we walked the K-9 one more time. There was a guy under a tent playing guitar and singing. He had a lot of foot pedals that made it sound sort of like there were other people playing and singing along with him. A "robot band", more or less. Captain Ron was not impressed.

After the walk, it was back to the boat to take our pills and go to bed.

Captain's Log, day sixty one (June 30, 2019)

We ate steamed blue crabs today! But first, Patti rolled out of bed early today. Captain Ron and the Sea Dog remained in the sack until nearly 9:00 AM. Once everyone was awake and dressed, we took the pooch on lizard patrol. She chased several, but with her leash holding her back, she didn't catch any. Chasing lizards entertains her

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greatly. The lizards probably have a different view of it though. There are several varieties here, some with curly tails, some with straight tails, and some larger, multicolored ones.



One of the local lizards

After the lizard safari, we all went back to the boat where Patti fixed fried eggs for herself and the pooch and a poached egg over corned beef hash for Captain Ron.

After breakfast, we went to the pool but the sun went behind the clouds and the water seemed cooler than yesterday. We stayed a while and then returned to the boat. Kiki had rested from her earlier hunt so we took her out again. Again, she chased every lizard she could find.

We hadn't really been out of the resort except for a walk on the waterfront so we decided to head for "town". We passed a marine consignment shop and Captain Ron wanted to go in and see what they had but it was closed on Sunday. Oh well!

We did pass a few restaurants and a strip mall. The strip mall contained a beauty shop, a Mexican Restaurant, a Mexican Grocery store and a Mexican produce store. We made a mental note to return and walked to the "Get Crabby" restaurant.



We should be safe here

We went in and they actually had steamed blue crabs, choice of Maryland style or New Jersey style. We have no idea what New Jersey style is, but we like Maryland style (if you don't already know this, we are both originally from Maryland).

We ordered a half dozen at \$5 per crab. Unfortunately, they didn't have corn on the cob to go with it, but the crabs were delicious, just how we remembered them.



Blue crabs fixed Maryland style

After our crab mini-feast, we went back to the Mexican stores. We got ingredients for a ground beef and zucchini dish that we sometimes make. These were genuine Mexican establishments; little English was spoken (except to us). Tripe and menudo were available as well as things we had never seen or heard of. Strangely, neither store

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had canned tomatoes but luckily there was a can on the boat already. One of the stores had a nice selection of cowboy boots but since Captain Ron is no longer playing music, we left them on the shelf. On the way back to the marina we passed an ice cream shop, but like the marine consignment store, it was closed on Sunday.

Back at the boat, it was time for another lizard safari. It had rained a bit while we were eating and there were puddles around the resort and lots of lizards. Kiki ran after them until she tired herself out. Then she lay down in a ditch filled with mud and water to cool off.



Cool, cool mud

We headed back to the boat but stopped at the fish cleaning station to hose the mud off the puppy and cool her down. It's a tired but happy puppy we have on the boat tonight. *Kiki writes: "I like to chase lizards and when it's hot I like to lay in the nice cool mud."*

We filled HIGH COTTON's water tanks so we can get an early start tomorrow. Not at daybreak, but not at 10:00 AM either. Then we took turns showering. This place has surprisingly nice heads and showers, especially compared to some we have used.

It's time for bed, more tomorrow.

Captain's Log, day sixty two (July 1, 2019)

The birthday bunny did it again, somehow found his way into a securely locked boat and left a birthday card, this time for Patti. She is catching up to Captain Ron!

We got ourselves out of bed by 7:00 AM. We got dressed and Patti took the Sea Dog for a walk while Captain Ron did the engine checks and disconnected the shorepower and cable TV.

The way HIGH COTTON was tied up (between two large and expensive looking boats), we decided it would be best to ask the dockhands to help untie us. Patti went to the office to get our receipt and ask for help. There was a thirtyish female and an elderly obese male working so the female came to help. It turns out she had never worked in a marina or around boats before so we had to tell her what to do. This included walking on the other two boats which Captain Ron was reluctant to do.

In the end, we got out of our slip and the marina with no difficulties and were on our way. As happened a few days ago, our path was directly into the rising sun for a couple miles. It was hard to see the channel markers and hard to read the chart plotter, but we made it out of Manatee Pocket and the St. Lucie River and back to the ICW.

Our trip north was uneventful. We saw a couple dolphins but none that stuck around or played for the Sea Dog. She kept looking for them though.

We had booked a slip at the Suntex Vero Beach Marina which is actually a few miles north of Vero Beach proper. We called the marina and followed the channel into the marina. We had an easy "side tie", no backing in, no pilings, just pull up to the dock, stop the boat and tie it up. We were halfway done when the dockhand came running

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up. He finished tying us up and then plugged the shorepower cord in without first turning off the circuit breaker, something that Captain Ron is not fond of. It sparks and burns the end of the plug and of course, that means it will have to be replaced sooner. These things are not cheap.



HIGH COTTON docked at the Suntex Vero Beach Marina

We got ourselves settled and walked to the office to check in. Kiki got her expected doggie treat and we got a brief tour of the facilities. This marina is part of a gated residential community. The facilities are luxurious, including a swimming pool with a waterfall feature.

We came back to the boat and found a small snake curled up around the dock cleat. A very small snake, perhaps a foot long. Captain Ron poked it with a boat hook and it slithered down the piling and into the water. After that, we changed into our swimsuits and went to the pool to cool down. It was refreshing.

Perhaps the only drawback to this marina is, it's about a mile to exit the gated community where there are stores and restaurants. They have loaner bicycles but neither of us has ridden a bicycle in fifty years and trying to relearn this far from home is not a wise idea.

So, for her "birthday dinner", Patti cooked up the ground beef, zucchini and onion that we bought at

the Mexican markets. It was good. She will get her real birthday dinner in a couple more days.

After dinner, we walked around the neighborhood with the K-9. They have lizards here but much smaller than the ones thirty five miles south. Yep, that's an average day for us, thirty five miles.

It's dark and time to turn in for now.

Captain's Log, day sixty three (July 2, 2019)

Patti woke up fairly early today. Not so, Captain Ron and the pooch. The sun was well above the yardarm when they finally rolled out of bed. We all set out for the Captain's Lounge where Captain Ron got his free coffee. We followed the K-9 around as she found an appropriate place to do her business and then to hunt lizards.

After the hunt, we returned to HIGH COTTON where Patti fixed breakfast for the crew. After breakfast, Patti took two loads of dirty clothes to the laundry area and washed and dried them. She brought the clean clothes back to the boat where Kiki helped her fold them and put them away.

Then, it was time to walk the dog again. We met a father and son who were originally from Maryland and had a conversation about boating in Maryland while the puppy sat and rested. Some lizards were chased but again, none were caught. Walking back to the boat, we saw dolphins swimming in the marina. Kiki got a glimpse, but they were apparently busy doing dolphin stuff so we didn't see much of them.

The sky darkened and we heard thunder but this lasted only a few minutes and the sun came out again. We changed into our swimwear and headed for the pool to cool down and relax.

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

The lady in the marina office had mentioned an Italian restaurant that would deliver food to the marina. That sounded like a good idea so once we finished at the pool we called them and ordered dinner. It came, it was good and we have leftovers for tomorrow.

We walked around the complex again, following the pooch. Back at the boat, it was time for showers, Patti first and then Captain Ron. Tomorrow, after Captain Ron gets his free coffee, we'll say goodbye to this lovely place and head north again. Other than the fact that it's not within walking distance of anything, this is one of the nicest marinas we have stayed at. It's a shame they don't have a courtesy car like some other marinas.



The water feature and landscaping at the pool

Captain's Log, day sixty four (July 3, 2019)

Patti somehow had the alarm on her phone set for 6:00 AM and of course it woke us up. She turned it off and we went back to sleep for an hour or so. We got up, got the boat ready and walked to the office (with the Sea Dog, of course). She got some dog treats and Captain Ron got his coffee.

We got ourselves disconnected and untied and headed out of the marina. There's a narrow, but well marked channel back to the ICW so we stayed between the poles and then turned north.

We saw a few dolphins on the way but none came close to the boat or did any tricks for us. Around mid-morning the boat traffic picked up with lots of rental pontoon boats and a few other assorted vessels. One larger boat going our way actually called us on the radio to arrange a "slow pass" (the boat being passed, in this case us, slows down so the passing boat can pass at a slow speed without a big wake). We've done this before but this may be the first time it happened on this trip. Most boats just fly on by with no consideration of the people in the slower boat.



The Sea Dog on the lookout for big fishies

We approached Melbourne and turned into the channel for the harbor. We called the marina and got our docking assignment and instructions. The dockmaster helped to tie us up safely and

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efficiently. He also plugged the shorepower cord in.



Here we are in Melbourne, FL

Once we got settled, we went to the office to pay. There were no doggie treats because they once gave a dog a treat and the owner claimed it made the dog sick. No more treats at this marina.

Our trip in the morning didn't seem extremely hot, but as the afternoon wore on, the temperature outside hit the mid-nineties with a heat index of one hundred and ten degrees. The entire crew stayed inside the boat trying to just keep cool.

We spent some time researching where to eat dinner but it was no contest since the restaurant a few feet from our slip had prime rib for \$15. At least that's what the on-line menu showed.

We took showers and walked to the restaurant where the actual menu showed no prime rib and prices that were considerably higher than the on-line menu showed. We stayed and ate. The food was good and the prices were not that bad. We got a discount for having a boat in the marina.

After dinner, it seemed much cooler outside so we got Kiki off the boat and went to the nearby park. We met some folks from the Midwest and talked

to them a bit. We took group pictures of them and they took group pictures of us.



A walk in the park with the K-9

After our walk in the park (where the K-9 found a few lizards to chase), we returned to the boat for the night.

According to the dockmaster, there will be a big Independence Day celebration in the park and a big fireworks show over the river. We will have a front row seat. We shall see.

Captain's Log, day sixty five (July 4, 2019)

There was a bridge run this morning across the Indian River. Patti was awake to hear some of the ceremony and announcements over a bullhorn. Captain Ron and the puppy were not.

Eventually, everyone was up and there was the morning dog walk/lizard hunt and then it was back to the boat. By this time the bridge run was over and the participants were heading back to wherever they came from.

We weighed the possibilities of finding a grocery store here or at our next stop in Cocoa, FL and decided to just go ahead and stock up today. We arranged for an Uber ride. We were delivered to Publix in about fifteen minutes. The driver said he

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was going to park and if he didn't get another call, he would be there to take us back to the marina.

We cruised the aisles of Publix, getting items from our shopping list and a few more things. Once we had everything we needed and checked out, we walked outside to find our driver still there. He couldn't just take us so we logged onto Uber and requested a ride. They sent another driver even though we were standing there talking to the first one. Why? Who knows?

Once we got back to the boat and had everything stowed in its proper place, we decided to walk around the town a little bit. The shopping center where the Publix was is a couple miles from the waterfront. The main businesses within walking distance of the waterfront seem to be bars and restaurants and many of these were closed for the Independence Day holiday, including the Cuban restaurant that Captain Ron wanted to visit. We did walk around the park by the river where they were setting up for tonight's show. It's a nice park.

Patti was hungry at this point so when we got back to the marina we went into the restaurant for lunch.

After lunch we took the pooch for a walk. This time, we headed the other way, towards the river. Kiki found a place where she could walk down into the river so of course, she did just that. The bottom was rocky, not sandy so she didn't go far. We were next to a restaurant with outside dining. It wasn't open yet but there must have been food smells on the deck because the K-9 insisted on sniffing around each table.

We came back to the boat where Captain Ron spent time trying to plan our trip. We have the weekend booked in Cocoa, FL but haven't made arrangements after that. It's time to get on the

Internet and then the phone. It's hard to imagine doing this sort of trip in the days before the Internet and cell phones.

We took the pooch out again after it began to cool down. People were headed for the waterfront with their folding chairs and coolers. Some of them stopped to pet the "cute puppy". Of course the "cute puppy" is fine with that.

We took turns showering and were sitting on the boat when we noticed skydivers. We missed the airplane but there were about a dozen heading for the bridge (if they were lucky) or the river if they weren't. From our vantage point, we can't see where they land. A few minutes later, they were followed by a dozen more, carrying large American flags.



Part of the Independence Day celebration

Once it got dark, the fireworks show started. At first, Kiki barked after each bang but after a few, she just ignored the noise. Because of where our boat was docked and the large boat beside us, we had to stand on the flybridge to get a view of the fireworks. They were nice.

Tomorrow we head north but not very far. For now, it's time for bed.

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Captain's Log, day sixty six (July 5, 2019)

Our cruise today was a short one, about three hours. We could have bypassed Cocoa but we've been there before and it's a nice marina in a lovely town. There are all sorts of restaurants, shops, and parks to visit.

So, we got up, walked the pooch, turned in the shower key, checked the engine and bid farewell to Melbourne, FL.



So long Melbourne, FL

We did see a few dolphins along the way but briefly. They didn't stick around long. The Sea Dog saw the big fishies so she was happy. We also passed a few trawlers and sailboats heading south.

The Indian River is a long, wide river and straight as an arrow. Cocoa has some relatively tall condo buildings and a bridge. We could see our destination for about two hours before we finally got there.

We turned into the entrance channel, called on the radio and got our slip assignment and docking instructions. Two dockhands were waiting at our slip and had us tied up and plugged in in short order.



HIGH COTTON at the Cocoa Village Marina, Cocoa, FL

We took the elevator to the second floor office, but there is apparently a new policy of "no dogs" in the building so Patti and the puppy had to stay outside while Captain Ron checked us in and paid the fee.

We walked back to the boat which had been cooling off and ate a lunch of sliced tomatoes and cucumbers from the Mexican produce stand we visited a few days ago.

As hot as it was, we left the K-9 on the boat and walked to town to check things out. Apparently, Cocoa is doing well; there were several new businesses and restaurants including a German restaurant. Our plans are to eat dinner there tomorrow night. We also found a nail salon where Patti hopes to get her nails done tomorrow.

We hated to do it without Kiki but we stopped at the ice cream shop for ice-cream. If it's not too hot, we'll go back with the Sea Dog tomorrow or Sunday and get her some.

Back at the boat we heated up our leftover Italian food from Vero Beach for dinner. We took turns showering and took the pooch for her evening walk. The clouds started rolling in and there's lightning in the distance so we headed back to the boat. Maybe it will rain, maybe it won't but we'll be safe and dry on HIGH COTTON.

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Captain's Log, day sixty seven (July 6, 2019)

A day in port today. We got up and got dressed to walk the dog and get Captain Ron his free coffee. Since Kiki is not allowed in the office, Patti took her one way and Captain Ron went the other. He was apparently still half asleep because he poured creamer and sugar into the cup before he realized that there was no coffee. Nobody was around so he went outside and found Patti and the pooch.

We ran into the dock lady and she went back in to make coffee. Captain Ron went back in and got his first cup of the day. He hadn't brought his personal cup so it was a small one.

We all walked back to the boat where Captain Ron decided to find out why water no longer came out of the transom shower. He could see a kink in the hose but had to remove some things from the lazarette to get to the hose to remove the kink. Now we will again have water to rinse the deck after the K-9 goes potty in the middle of the night.

Patti confirmed her appointment at the nail salon so she headed off to town. Captain Ron went to the marina office and filled his personal cup with coffee and returned to the boat. He and Kiki watched TV.

Patti returned from her nail appointment with a milkshake and some ice cream for the pooch. Then we all took a walk.

Walking past the marina on the town boardwalk, we discovered a very small beach. Reaching it required walking on the concrete seawall and jumping down about two feet so it was unclear if people were supposed to be on it or not, but Captain Ron and Kiki made the leap.

The Sea Dog headed directly for the water and swam back and forth. She did this a few times; into the water and swim, then back on the beach.

Then she discovered what even Captain Ron and Patti have seldom seen, a live, swimming horseshoe crab. She wanted to go after it and see what it was, but without knowing if it could sting or otherwise hurt her, Captain Ron kept her away from it. Eventually, it swam into deeper water and Kiki returned to swimming.

She didn't want to leave so eventually, Captain Ron put her back on the sea wall and climbed up himself. Once we got back to the boat she got a thorough rinse from the newly repaired transom shower.

After a while, we (the humans) left for dinner at the German restaurant. There was a guy dressed in German attire playing a keyboard (with a little electronic help) and singing German songs and "audience participation" songs. He had the audience and especially the children participating. He did Edelweiss with cowbells, the Hokey Pokey and several others. Captain Ron was truly impressed and if you've been following along, you know that this is pretty rare. The food was delicious as well. The restaurant owner stopped by our table and when Captain Ron commented on the quality of the entertainer, the owner said that because Disney World is so close he can find professional entertainers easily.



Entertainment at the German restaurant

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Patti ordered a pretzel



It's rare to find a restaurant with good German food

We came back to the boat with the intention of getting the Sea Dog and going back (it's outside and dog friendly) but before we could leave again it started raining. Eventually it slowed but by then it was too late to walk back so we took her for a short walk and came back to the boat for the night.

Captain's Log, day sixty eight (July 7, 2019)

Today was another day in port, but we got a few things done. We got up and walked the dog. Captain Ron went for his free coffee and again, it hadn't been made. He had to find the employee on duty and ask him to make a pot. Apparently, the staff doesn't drink coffee so they just wait for one of the boaters to ask for it. Anyhow, it got

made and Captain Ron filled his cup. Back on HIGH COTTON, Patti made breakfast. A poached egg on corned beef hash for Captain Ron and (leftover) steak and scrambled eggs for herself and the four legged one.

Patti decided to do a couple loads of laundry so she gathered up everything and headed for the marina building. Captain Ron and Kiki stayed behind and watched TV. Patti stayed for the wash cycle and then put the clothes in the dryer and returned to the boat. She got out the vacuum cleaner so Captain Ron decided to walk to the auto parts store for new windshield wipers for the boat. According to Google, it was less than a mile each way and the weather forecast is calling for rain. The current wiper blades are beyond their useful life. Patti vacuumed the boat while he was gone.

They say walking is good for your health so Captain Ron is unusually healthy today. He got his wiper blades, returned to the boat and rested and cooled off. Then he began the task of lubricating the wiper arms and replacing the blades. It began raining so he had to come inside for a while but he eventually got it done.

While waiting for the rain to stop we had a lunch of sliced tomatoes, cucumbers and mozzarella cheese.

We took the Sea Dog for a walk and she wanted to ride the elevator so we went up to the second floor, used the heads and took the elevator back down. The puppy seems to like elevators.

We walked her some more, keeping an eye out for rain. It started raining again so we quickly walked back to the boat.

Captain Ron had leftover Italian food and Patti made herself a bacon and cheese sandwich for

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dinner. We had plans to walk to the ice cream shop but it started raining again.

We did walk the pooch between episodes of rain. Hopefully, it won't be raining tomorrow morning as we shove off for Titusville.



Kiki heads for the elevator

Captain's Log, day sixty nine (July 8, 2019)

Today's cruise was to be a short one, less than three hours so we planned to sleep in a bit. Unfortunately, our slip neighbors decided that it would be best for them to warm up their engines for thirty minutes before they left so we finally got up and got ready ourselves.

Patti got the flybridge uncovered and walked the puppy while Captain Ron did the engine checks. He decided not to bother with free marina coffee because the office wasn't open yet and they haven't been making coffee until he asks for it. He made his own on the boat.

As we were getting ready to pull out, one of the dockhands was walking by and asked us if we needed a hand so we accepted his offer and away we went.

It took us a bit less than three hours to get from Cocoa to Titusville. We would have liked to go

further but the distance between Cocoa and the next marina past Titusville was too far to comfortably travel in the heat.

Kiki was hoping to see a "big fishie" today and kept looking over the side. Patti was driving and saw one but it dove under the boat and we didn't see it again.

We turned into the marina entrance channel and called the marina for docking instructions. A dockhand met us at our slip and we were tied up and plugged in in short order. We walked the Sea Dog so she could "do her business" and then went to the office to check in and pay. Kiki got her usual doggie treat and got petted and fussed over.

After we got back to the boat and straightened everything up, we (just the humans) walked to the edge of town to the KFC for a fried chicken lunch. After lunch we had the choice of heading back to the boat or walking across the street to the CVS for a few things. We went to CVS and apparently that was the wrong choice.

We got our stuff and started walking back to the marina. It started to sprinkle. Then it started to rain. And then it started to pour. We were on an open sidewalk with no buildings or businesses to take cover in. It was hard to see where we were going because the rain was getting in our eyes.

By the time we got back to the marina where we found shelter under the overhang, we were completely soaked. Soaked to our underwear. Soaked to our skin. We made a dash for the boat and got inside. We put a towel down and disrobed.

Captain Ron had been carrying his camera in its case and hadn't really thought about it. He removed it from the case and wiped it dry.

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Well, it turns out it wasn't just wet on the outside. Sometime after he set it on the counter, it turned itself on, extended the lens and went dead. He suspects it's "kaput" but will know in a day or two, once it's had a chance to thoroughly dry out and he can charge the battery. This is not his only camera, but it's his best one with the 40X zoom lens. Oh well, as they say, it's only money. [Note] It took about a week, but eventually the camera returned to normal operation

It rained for a long time so Captain Ron went below to watch TV. He actually took a nap. Patti waited for the rain to subside and put our wet clothes in the dryer. Later, we had a chance to put Kiki's flea and tick medicine on her and take a walk. It started to sprinkle again so we headed back to the boat.

Dinner was the leftovers from the German restaurant in Cocoa but without the entertainment.

The showers here are very nice so as usual, we took turns showering. Then it was time to walk the Sea Dog. We have about a five hour cruise tomorrow to New Smyrna, FL. We'll leave early to beat the possibility of rain in the afternoon.

Captain's Log, day seventy (July 9, 2019)

We woke up early this morning so we decided to get up and head out in case it rained. We walked the pooch of course and Captain Ron made his coffee and did his engine and bilge checks. We unplugged the shore power, untied the lines and headed out to the ICW. It was quite foggy so we had our running lights on so other boaters could see us.

As we approached Haulover Canal, about an hour into our journey, we could see that the

drawbridge was open but we couldn't see what went through it. Nothing came our way so we knew it was some sort of vessel going the same direction we were going (north). As we exited the canal and turned onto Mosquito Lagoon, we could see (with binoculars) that it was a tug pushing a barge. We followed this tug and barge all the way to New Smyrna Beach and had almost caught up to it when we turned into the marina.

We did see a couple dolphins today and Kiki got a glimpse of them but they don't seem to be as social in this area as some we've seen. Captain Ron and Patti saw a large stingray leap several feet out of the water and do a belly flop on the water. This is something we've seen before but not as close as this one was. We also saw a few manatees today. We didn't get to test the new windshield wipers that Captain Ron installed but we're not complaining about that.

As we approached New Smyrna Beach, a tug and barge (not the one we had been following) was heading south and would have reached the bridge opening at the same time as HIGH COTTON. The tug captain radioed us and asked us to stop and let him through first so we did.



Waiting for the barge and tug boat to pass

We called the marina on the radio and got no answer so we called on the phone. Two dock hands met us at our slip and tied us up. We have

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a floating dock here, much like in Charleston, and it's much more convenient for getting on and off the boat.

We walked the pooch and went to the office to check in and pay. Kiki saw the marina cat sitting under a table outside the office but she didn't bother it.

We walked back to the boat and tidied up a bit and then walked to town, once again leaving the hound to guard the boat. We went to a nice "diner" style restaurant we remembered from our stop here two years ago. Patti had breakfast while Captain Ron had lunch. It was as good as we remembered.

After our meal, we walked up and down the main street, checking out the shops. Patti found some ornaments for the Christmas tree and a few other things. Captain Ron found nothing he couldn't live without.

We stopped at the marina office on the way back to the boat to talk to a fellow cruiser. He told us he bought his boat in Miami and was headed north. As he pulled into the marina here, his bow thruster and batteries caught on fire so he is stuck here and staying in a hotel while repairs are being made and the smell is being dealt with.

Eventually, we made it back to the boat and rested for a bit. We took the K-9 on a lizard hunt, took turns showering and will soon hit the hay. Tomorrow will be a six hour trip to Palm Coast.

Captain's Log, day seventy one (July 10, 2019)

We got ourselves up early again this morning to lessen the chances of being caught in the afternoon rain. We walked the puppy, did our engine checks, unplugged the power, untied the

lines and slipped out of the marina. Our destination today was Palm Coast Marina in Palm Coast, FL. The first several miles through New Smyrna Beach were a no wake zone. That's OK; it allowed the engine to warm up thoroughly.

A couple hours later we went through a long slow speed manatee zone and actually saw a few manatees that appeared to be resting. We also saw a few dolphins. Kiki saw the dolphins but not the manatees.

Captain Ron's original plan was to fill up on diesel fuel at our destination marina, but he decided that it was safest to stop halfway in Daytona Beach for fuel. Running out of fuel in a boat can be a pretty complicated matter so he figures it's best to be safe, not sorry.

One of our reasons for stopping in Palm Coast (we've been there before) is that Captain Ron's brother Dick and his wife Teresa who live in Bolivia have bought a house there and are visiting for a month. They invited us to visit so the timing worked out well.

We got to the marina, called for our slip assignment and docking instructions and a dockhand met us and helped us into our slip. Captain Ron called Dick to let him know we were here. A few minutes later, Dick and his daughter Sonia (who is also visiting from Virginia along with her children Isa and Nathan) showed up and took all of us back to his house.

The rest of the day was mostly spent talking as we hadn't seen them in over a year. Kiki enjoyed checking out the house and chasing lizards in the yard and around the pool. Patti went with Teresa and Sonia to the grocery store.

We had dinner and they brought us back to HIGH COTTON. It was too late for showers so we went to bed.

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HIGH COTTON tied up at Palm Coast Marina

Captain's Log, day seventy two (July 11, 2019)

We got up and walked the dog. Captain Ron got his free coffee. We called Dick and the entire family came and got us and took us to the beach. Kiki stayed on the boat.

This is when Captain Ron learned that boogie boarding is best left to the younger or at least more experienced generation. The surf was above the beginner's level and he failed miserably. Patti didn't try it so she didn't make a fool of herself.

We only stayed at the beach for an hour or so, then we returned to the boat for Kiki and then went to the house. Patti, Teresa and Sonia went to the farmer's market while Captain Ron and Dick discussed oil and fuel filtration and diesel engines in general. Dick is in the lubrication industry and an expert on the subject.

The ladies returned from shopping and we had lunch. Then it was time for a dip in the pool. The children joined us and we played a pool game with a ball and a Velcro covered float.

After our pool time, it was socializing and a dinner of leftover ribs from the night before. We

watched a bit of TV and they brought us back to the marina.

Captain's Log, day seventy three (July 12, 2019)

This morning was a repeat of yesterday with the dog walking and the coffee. We called Dick and he came and got us again. Patti, Teresa, Sonia and Isa went shopping again, this time to Ross and the grocery store (again). Captain Ron and Dick installed some hooks on the column near the pool for wet bathing suits. Dick did most of the work, Captain Ron supervised.

Dick brought us back to the marina so we could shower and change clothes. He came back for us after an hour or so and we all went to a local Mexican restaurant for dinner. After dinner, it was back to the boat for the night.



Captain Ron's Mexican dinner

Captain's Log, day seventy four (July 13, 2019)

As usual, we got up and walked the pooch. We should mention that this part of Florida is full of lizards and Kiki has been hunting and chasing them at the marina and at the house. Captain Ron

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got his free coffee and we called Dick for a ride back to his house.

Captain Ron decided to accompany Dick and Sonia on their morning walk along the river. There is a walking path with benches for resting and a dock for fishing or just watching boats. Teresa and Patti dropped them off at the end and they walked back. Captain Ron had to rest after his walk, then everyone got in the pool.



Captain Ron (right) and his brother Dick (left)

After the pool, Captain Ron, Dick, Sonia and Nathan went to the grocery store (there seems to be a pattern here). The main purpose was to get a piece of prime rib for Sonia's birthday dinner tomorrow but we got other things as well.

We socialized and Sonia began cooking steaks on the grill. The grill ran out of propane so they had to be finished on the stove.

After dinner, they brought us back to the boat. Patti took a shower but Captain Ron was too tired.

Captain's Log, day seventy five (July 14, 2019)

We promised the family a boat ride so they showed up about 11:00 AM and off we went. We had to dig out the spare life jackets to be legal even though we were going seven knots on a canal a couple hundred feet wide. We went south, past where they normally walk on the neighborhood path and showed them how everything looks from the other side.

It was Sunday so lots of folks were out on their boats and jet skis. We saw a couple dolphins and a couple manatees but not up close. We travelled about six miles down the river and six miles back. When we got back to the marina, there was a trawler in the canal and a sailboat moving in the marina so we had to wait for traffic to settle down.

We got docked and hooked up and then Dick drove us back to his house where we had lunch. Patti and Teresa went to the grocery store. The rest watched TV, played with their phones or jumped in the pool.

Today was Sonia's birthday so there was prime rib with all the fixings for dinner and an ice cream cake for dessert.

We said our goodbyes and got driven back to the marina. We took showers and it's time for bed. We're back on our cruise tomorrow morning.

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Patti and the pooch at Dick and Teresa's pool



The K-9 hunting lizards at the pool

Captain's Log, day seventy six (July 15, 2019)

We didn't need to get up early today but for some reason we were up about 7:00 AM so we decided to head out. The Sea Dog got her walk and her treat from the office and Captain Ron got his treat (coffee). We were underway a little after 7:30 AM, headed up the Matanzas River toward St. Augustine. We saw dolphins and manatees along the way.

There were dredges anchored to the side of the ICW and we heard a sailboat call the first dredge on the radio and ask which side to pass on. We could barely see the sailboat in the distance.

When we got to the dredge it was pretty obvious what side to pass on so we wondered why the sailboat had asked.

Anyway, the sailboat had AIS so we could see its speed. It was travelling about a tenth of a knot slower than us. We kept it in sight for about three hours until we finally caught up with it and passed it in a wide spot on the ICW. It eventually turned off the ICW to a marina just south of St. Augustine.

Our destination, Camachee Cove Yacht Harbor was just north of St. Augustine so we kept going. We passed several anchored boats that had seen better days. One was a large motoryacht that was boarded up. Most of the rest were sailboats but none looked like they had been moved in years.



This boat was once someone's pride and joy

There was a large sailboat with its sails up stopped sideways in the middle of the channel. We couldn't figure out if it was safe to pass behind it or if we needed to go out of the channel to go in front of it. Captain Ron called on the radio and was told that they were drifting and it was safe to pass behind them.

We continued on past the City Marina and the mooring field, passed through the Bridge of Lions, headed towards the ocean and then turned north and passed under the Vilano Beach Bridge and

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turned into the Camachee Cove channel. We called on the radio and they gave us instructions to our slip and sent a dockhand to catch our lines.



St. Augustine's Bridge of Lions

After getting everything plugged in and squared away, we gathered up the pooch and headed to the office to check in and pay. Kiki got a dog biscuit and then lay down on the cool tile floor (it was nearing a hundred degrees when we got to the marina). She likes those cool tile floors.



HIGH COTTON at the Camachee Cove Yacht Harbor

We asked about using the loaner car and were told that we needed to show proof of (car) insurance. We pretty much expected this as we had the same situation here two years ago. We carry this in our vehicles, of course, but not on our boat.

We went back to HIGH COTTON where Captain Ron called the insurance agent and asked them to fax the proof to the marina. Apparently, this is not the first time this has happened because no questions were asked.

We got our swimsuits on and headed for the pool. It's a nice pool but it's a long walk around this very large marina. As for the marina, it's in a large condo development and everything here is first class. The bath/shower rooms were recently renovated and everything was done well.



Captain Ron and Patti test the pool

After the pool, we took showers, walked the puppy (she didn't want to walk in this heat), and got the loaner car and headed for the outlet malls. Patti found some blouses she needed at a good price and we ended up eating in the food court.

We went to the other outlet mall where Patti found a sale on a type of shoes she likes so she got two pair (the second was half price). The clerk gave her a coupon for 25% off at the Sperry store so we went there and Captain Ron got a spare pair of boat shoes. There was a tool outlet store with "factory blemished" tools at good prices but Captain Ron was good and didn't buy any. There's no extra room on the boat for that sort of stuff.

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We put \$5 worth of gas in the loaner car, got a dish of ice cream at the Dairy Queen next to the gas station and headed back to the marina.

It's past our bedtime but we don't have to leave early tomorrow so that's OK.

Captain's Log, day seventy seven (July 16, 2019)

We didn't have to leave early today but we woke up about 7:45 AM so we got up. We walked the puppy, got the boat ready and eased out of our slip at about 8:30 AM. We have to mention again how nice and well-kept this marina is.

We exited the marina through its channel to stay in deep water and then turned north on the ICW. There's a small airport a couple miles north of the marina just off the ICW and small private planes were practicing landings and take offs.

This morning was overcast and relatively cool (for Florida in July). This lasted for about two hours and then the clouds lifted, the sun came out and the heat returned to normal. There was a breeze so the heat was tolerable.



The water is not all deep enough for HIGH COTTON

We saw several dolphins at different places along the way today and stopped a few times to let Kiki

watch the "big fishies". Patti also saw a manatee in the distance.

After close to four hours we spotted the channel to the Palm Cove Marina so we called them on the radio, got our instructions and headed on in. This is one of the marinas we stopped at on our way south and since we liked it and it fit our schedule we thought we would stop again. They have nice concrete floating docks, a nice pool and nice restrooms and showers. And laundry facilities.

We were put right next to the office (Captain Ron speculated that the dockhand didn't want to walk all the way to the dock we stayed on the last time) so checking in and paying was a very short walk. Of course that made it a longer walk for us to get to the heads, laundry room and pool, but they say walking is good exercise.

While Captain Ron was paying, Patti took the Sea Dog to shore to relieve herself and sniff around. Once that was taken care of we went back to the boat to put things in order.

We changed into our swimsuits and headed for the pool for a cooling dip. The dockhand had commented that the pool was hot, but we found it to be just right.

After the pool and a short rest, we put our clothes back on (we didn't want to leave that detail out) and walked to the "Shrimp Shack" for dinner and to Publix for a bottle of salad dressing. Our meals at the Shrimp Shack were delicious and we brought home enough for another meal.

We returned to the marina and Captain Ron took his shower. Next, Patti headed for the shower with a load of dirty clothes for the laundry. She came back and we walked the K-9. She will get the clothes out of the dryer and we'll turn in for the night.

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Our dinners at the Shrimp Shack



Leaving Palm Coast Marina

Captain's Log, day seventy eight (July 17, 2019)

We left Palm Cove Marina a little after 7:00 AM because our destination for today was a marina with a notoriously shallow entrance canal and we were told that high tide was at about 10:00 AM and we shouldn't wait too long after that to enter. Obviously, we did the dog walking and engine checks before that.

We cruised on up the ICW, stopping a few times to watch the dolphins. As we approached one bridge, a large sailing catamaran (under power) came out of a large private marina and headed for the channel. It was slightly behind us so Captain Ron speeded up a bit to provide a safe distance between the boats.

After we passed through the bridge, the catamaran pulled to the left and sped up to pass us. Nothing was said on the radio so Captain Ron kept a steady speed and course. Once it was safely past HIGH COTTON, Captain Ron pulled directly behind it to minimize the effects of its wake on our boat.

Once we got near the point where the ICW crosses the St. Johns River, the catamaran left the ICW channel to head downstream (towards the ocean). There was a large commercial freighter headed upstream towards Jacksonville, FL. So Captain Ron slowed down to give it plenty of time to get past our course.



It's best to stay out of the way of the "Big Boys"

Once we crossed the river, we came to the Jacksonville free dock where we often spend the night. There was some sort of festival going on and we would have stopped but we had our goal of getting to Amelia Island Marina early.

We did get to the marina an hour or so after high tide and had nine feet of water in the entrance channel. We only need three and a half feet so we could have stopped at the festival for an hour or two.

We called and got our docking assignment and a dockhand met us, caught our lines and tied us up.

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Railroad swing bridge just before the marina

We walked the puppy and walked to the office to check in and pay. The biggest drawback to this marina is, it's out of reasonable walking distance for any shopping or restaurants. They have a courtesy car but another couple had reserved it from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM. We told them we would take it from 5:00 PM until 7:00 PM and went back to the boat.

The air conditioning has been struggling with the ninety five degree plus heat in Florida so Captain Ron decided to check and clean the filter screen for the water intake. He spent a few minutes doing that and then we tidied up and rested.



HIGH COTTON at the Amelia Island Marina

We walked the Sea Dog around the premises and got the car at 5:00 PM. We drove to town, had dinner at a Chinese restaurant, went to the grocery store for salad dressing, and went to the Dairy Queen where we were waited on by a young

girl who had apparently been on the job for only a few minutes (she didn't know if they served mixed vanilla and chocolate soft ice cream).

We drove back to the marina, took turns showering, walked the pooch one more time and went to bed.

Captain's Log, day seventy nine (July 18, 2019)

We left Florida and entered Georgia today! More about that later.

Today's cruise was to be about five hours so we wanted to get an early start but at the same time, we were concerned about the water depth. We walked the K-9, did our engine checks and pulled out about 7:30 AM. We shouldn't have worried about the water depth; it was seven feet deep through the entire channel.

We headed north, passing the remains of the Fernandina Harbor Marina, which is slowly being rebuilt after extensive hurricane damage. We missed one of our favorite stopping places but we had a pleasant stay at Amelia Island Marina last night. We also passed Fernandina Beach's famous paper mills which, judging by the smell and smoke, are doing quite well.



Fernandina Beach paper mills in action

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There's no sign and no line on the chart, but a few minutes later we were in Georgia. We passed the entrance to the Kings Bay submarine base where we often see guard boats. There were no boats today so there were probably no submarines in port.



Kings Bay submarine base

As we continued north (we say "north", but as much as the ICW winds around, we could have been going in any direction at any particular moment) we saw a tug and barge in the distance. As we approached, we heard a call from the tug to the "motoryacht" heading north on the ICW. We'll have to start dressing up a bit more formally if we're on a "motoryacht".

The tug captain wanted to confirm which side we would be passing on and used the term "one whistle". In days gone by, ships used actual whistles (steam whistles) to signal other boats. Now they use the radio but still refer to the whistle signals. In this case, "one whistle" means port to port and that's the normal passing procedure and what we would have done anyway.

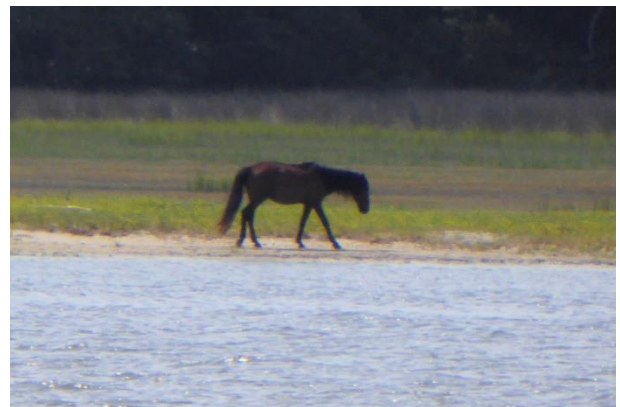
Captain Ron confirmed the "one whistle" even though Patti was operating the boat at the time.

We continued on and eventually passed another tug and barge. This one was much larger and we passed in open water without any signals.



Another tug and barge on the ICW

Captain Ron was back at the helm as we passed Cumberland Island and Patti spotted a wild horse grazing on the beach. We weren't close though so we didn't get a good view.



One of the wild horses on Cumberland Island

As we entered St. Andrews Sound, three small, fast boats passed us from the sound. We saw a larger boat out in the sound which turned out to be a shrimp boat with its nets out trawling for shrimp.

St. Andrews Sound is notorious for being rough since the ICW route goes out nearly to the ocean, but today it was calm and quiet, just a few more miles of cruising.

Jekyll Harbor Marina is just a bit north of St. Andrews Sound and that was our destination for tonight. It was pretty close to the estimated five

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hours when we pulled in to the fuel dock. We were met by two friendly and competent dockhands who got us tied up and fueled up. Then we just walked the boat back thirty feet or so to our spot for the night. We are docked just behind a boat named "Sea Dog".

Speaking of "Sea Dog", we took her to land to do her business and then to the office where she met the marina cat. She barked. The cat just stared at here and did nothing.



Welcome to Jekyll Island Marina

We decided to stay here for two nights as they have a pool and hot tub and a golf cart for boaters to get around town. We paid and walked back to HIGH COTTON to get settled in.

We straightened up the boat, rested a bit and then went back to the office for the golf cart.

Although Kiki barks at golf carts when she sees them moving, she loves riding in them. We all climbed in, fastened our seat belts (there was no seat belt for Kiki, mawmaw had to hold her in her lap) and took off for the local Dairy Queen. Patti went inside to order while Captain Ron and Kiki explored the grounds. *(Kiki writes: "Yes, I like riding in golf carts. We go fast and I can see all around. I wish Mawmaw and Pawpaw had one at home to ride in.")*



The crew heads out in the golf cart

Eventually, Patti came out with our ice cream. Captain Ron had asked for chocolate but they were out so he had vanilla. We are not having good luck with Dairy Queen lately.

There is a park with picnic tables right next to the Dairy Queen so we sat and ate our ice cream. Captain Ron went to set up his camera for a photo and Kiki helped herself to his cup.



The crew eats their customary ice cream

After we were done, we got in the golf cart again and set out for the historic district. We saw the "cottages" where the millionaires of years gone by spent their winters to avoid the cold up north. These "cottages" of course were mansions with dozens of rooms and servants.

We stopped at the collection of shops where Captain Ron found nothing of interest while Patti

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loaded up on tee shirts and other goodies. Kiki got petted by the shop owner while Patti shopped. We ran out of time for the golf cart (ninety minutes) so we had to head back to the marina and skip the other shops.

Once we returned, we left the Sea Dog to guard the boat while we changed into our swimsuits and headed for the pool. Unlike most swimming pools, this one is partially shaded by large old trees so it was a bit cooler than most. Patti soaked in the pool while Captain Ron eased his aches and pains in the hot tub. The people eating in the restaurant on the porch watched us.

After the pool, we took turns showering and then ate leftovers for dinner. Tomorrow we'll try the restaurant.

One more walk for the puppy and it's time for bed. Once you get to be this old, all this fun is pretty tiring.

Captain's Log, day eighty (July 19, 2019)

It rained last night. It rained hard and long. Of course, we were safe and dry on HIGH COTTON and the sound of the rain helped put us to sleep.

Today was a day in port so Captain Ron and the Sea Dog took advantage of this. Patti was up earlier. We got dressed and took Kiki for her usual morning walk. We had seen coffee in the marina office when we checked in. Captain Ron went to get some but nobody was around and the thermos was empty so he just made some on the boat. We had a bunch of eggs that needed to be eaten so Patti fixed scrambled eggs for everyone.

After breakfast, we discussed our plans for the next few days. Captain Ron researched marinas and called and made reservations for the next

three days. We will have a couple long days on the water but there are not a lot of marinas in this part of the ICW.

We decided to eat lunch in the marina restaurant so that's what we did. Patti asked for pickles on her hamburger but when it came, the waiter told her that they were out of pickles. How does a restaurant run out of pickles, especially one that serves hamburgers?

Anyway, she ate her hamburger (without the pickles) and Captain Ron ate his.

We walked back to the boat, got the puppy and Captain Ron's wallet with his driver's license and got the golf cart again. We went back to the Dairy Queen where they were still out of chocolate soft ice cream.

We sat outside and ate our ice cream (yes, Kiki got some) and got back into the golf cart. This time, we headed for the part of the island that's being developed. There is a convention center and a couple luxury hotels. There is also a series of shops. We checked out a few and Patti decided she needed to use the restroom. We could see the pathway to the beach so Captain Ron took the puppy to the beach while Patti did her business.

Kiki went straight to the water. Unfortunately, it was low tide and the water (the Atlantic Ocean) had receded, leaving mud instead of sand. The Sea Dog didn't seem to mind, she walked in the mud up to her belly and then lay down in the mud. It may have been cool, but it was mud. She never did try to swim.

She decided she was done and headed back towards the pathway. About this time, Patti joined us. There's an outdoor shower for rinsing off and we tried it on the puppy, but that wasn't getting the mud off so we just headed for the golf cart. We passed some more shops so Captain Ron

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sat outside with the muddy dog while Patti checked the shops.

Eventually, she was done so we got back into the golf cart with the muddy dog on a towel and headed back to the marina. The sky looked like a storm was coming but it never did.

Kiki got the full shower and shampoo treatment on the back of HIGH COTTON. Once that was done, Captain Ron topped off the water tanks for our trip north. The drinking water at our next stop is questionable, at least in our minds.

We had planned on eating leftovers for dinner but we weren't really hungry so we ate snacks so we could take our evening pills. We took turns taking showers and returned to the boat. One thing a bit strange about this marina is that the marina showers are on the porch of the restaurant and bathers have to walk through the outside seating area of the restaurant to get to them. Oh well, there's not much we can do about this other than to cover up.

Back at the boat, it's time for bed. We have a long day tomorrow.

Captain's Log, day eighty one (July 20, 2019)

We got up early this morning. Too early, actually, so Captain Ron and Kiki rolled over and went back to sleep for a few minutes. As it was starting to get light they got up. Captain Ron got dressed and made his coffee. Patti was already dressed.

We walked the Sea Dog, checked the bilge and engine, unplugged the shorepower cord, untied the lines and headed north up Jekyll Creek at about 6:40 AM. We exited Jekyll Creek into St. Simons Sound. As we were crossing the sound, we saw two motoryachts heading south from

Morningstar Marina in St. Simons. They turned west and then north which put them a mile or so in front of us on the ICW. They were travelling just slightly faster than us (we could tell their speed from their AIS signal) so it was an hour or so before we lost sight of them.



Patti takes the helm

We hadn't really been paying attention to the fact that today was Saturday, but at about 11:00 AM, we rounded a curve and saw a dozen or more boats rafted together just outside the ICW channel. More were coming towards us. Some were joining the group and some were leaving it to go somewhere else.



Party on the river

For the next hour or so it was a steady parade of boats, mostly runabouts and center consoles. It tapered off after that, we may have continued on

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to a less populated area. From where we were, we could see no marinas or boat ramps.

About noon, Patti went below and fixed egg salad sandwiches for the humans. The K-9 had carrots, green beans and dog treats.

We stopped several times for dolphins today. Kiki was happy to see them and even barked at them. None swam with the boat, though.

Along with the dolphins, the green headed flies were out. Kiki tries to hide from them while Patti tries to swat them to death. Eventually, the flies got bad enough that Captain Ron took Kiki down into the cabin to get away from them and for Captain Ron to get a break from driving.

It was after 3:00 PM when we got to Kilkenny Creek where the marina is located. It took about a half hour to get to the marina and get tied up.

Kilkenny Marina is not one of the luxurious places we've been staying at lately. It's more "rustic". The office and showers are not air conditioned and the dock sways back and forth when you walk on it. The ramp to land is about forty five degrees at low tide and it's more like walking up stairs.



HIGH COTTON tied up at Kilkenny Marina

Anyway, we checked in and paid (3% extra for using a credit card) and sat in the shade under the giant old shade trees. We went back to the boat

and, because it had been such a long, hot day, decided to take our showers early. As we mentioned earlier, the facilities are not air conditioned but they were better than nothing.



Patti and the pooch at Kilkenny Marina



Scenic Kilkenny Marina

Our original plan was to eat at the adjacent restaurant, but looking at the menu on line, we didn't see anything that excited us and we had leftover Chinese food on the boat so we just ate that. We know where to eat at our next two stops in Thunderbolt, GA and Beaufort, SC. With any luck, our next stop after that will be our home marina, the St. Johns Yacht Harbor on Tuesday.

After dinner, we went back to the office for ice cream. Kiki was happy with that. A little more walking and it's time for bed.

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Captain's Log, day eighty two (July 21, 2019)

We got up this morning a little before 6:30 AM. We noticed during the night that herons were roosting in the trees behind the dock, but by the time we got up they were gone, out on the marsh doing heron things.

Some of the boaters were already up and heading out to fish for the day. As we were walking the puppy, trailer boaters were arriving to have their boats put in the water.

We got everything ready and untied our lines about 6:40 AM. One of the reasons for leaving early is to beat the heat. It's normally not excessively hot early in the morning and we can get to where we're going earlier. The down side of leaving that early is that when we are headed east, we're looking directly into the morning sun. This makes it hard to see the navigational markers and hard to read the chart plotter. It seems every decision involves a trade-off.

We had no sooner left the dock than a dolphin decided to swim alongside the boat. Patti was putting things away and toasting a bagel for Captain Ron and missed the show, but the Sea Dog watched the whole time. She was happy.

We saw dolphins at several different times today. Some were just diving and doing what dolphins do and a couple more swam with the boat for a while.

It was low tide when we got underway today and for part of the trip we had the current against us. Of course, for part of the trip the current boosted us along so it all worked out in the end.

We got to the notorious "Hell Gate" (a spot that gets dredged but fills in quickly, making it shallow) a couple hours after low tide and had no

problems. We might have touched bottom if it had been dead low tide.

There's a very strange no-wake zone in one spot south of Isle of Hope, GA where it's a no wake zone for boats twenty six feet and larger but it's OK for smaller boats to speed and make wakes. One wonders but we suspect politics had something to do with this. There are some expensive homes along the shoreline.

We made it to Thunderbolt Marina (in Thunderbolt, GA) at just about slack current so docking was a piece of cake. We got everything put away, plugged in the shorepower cord for air conditioning and walked to the office (with a side trip to the grass for the puppy) to check in and pay. Kiki liked the air conditioning and the cool tile floor and didn't want to leave. Eventually, the dockmaster had to leave so he suggested going to the laundry and shower building which is also air conditioned.

We did as he suggested and Patti decided she might as well do a load of laundry since we were hanging out there anyway while the boat cooled down. It seems like she is doing laundry pretty often, but much of it is the towels we have been soaking and putting on ourselves or the K-9 to keep cool.



The Sea Dog waiting for the laundry to finish

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After the washer was finished, Patti put everything in the dryer and we went back to the boat. We left the pooch to rest on the boat and walked to Tubby's Tank House for lunch.

After lunch, we walked back to the marina where Patti went for the clothes and Captain Ron headed to the boat. He turned on the TV, did a scan for new channels, turned something on and promptly fell asleep.

After Captain Ron's nap, we decided to take the K-9 back to the air conditioned laundry facility for the cool floor. Captain Ron took his laptop, Patti took her phone. Later, as we were leaving, we had an interesting conversation with a professional boat captain who was being paid to move a boat from Florida to New York for its new owner.

We went back to the boat and took turns showering in the marina's facilities. Thunderbolt Marina (yes, in the town of Thunderbolt, GA) has very nice, but not fancy facilities. We ate some snacks so we could take our evening pills, walked Kiki one more time and it's time for bed. We have a seven hour trip tomorrow and will need our beauty sleep.



HIGH COTTON (and Patti) at Thunderbolt Marina

Captain's Log, day eighty three (July 22, 2019)

We crossed into South Carolina today!

Our plan was to leave at 6:30 AM this morning. That's the time the dockmaster told us he would be there. Sure enough, he was standing outside the office at 6:30 AM, smoking a cigarette. He said "I'll be back in a few minutes, I have to go get donuts for you guys" (Part of the deal here is free donuts each morning.) He came back in about thirty minutes with a half dozen donuts for each transient boat and put them on the table at the top of the ramp. Then he went back and stood by the door and smoked another cigarette. Patti asked him if the coffee was ready yet and he said he hadn't started it yet. Once he finished his cigarette, he went and got a pot of water and made the coffee. Finally, the coffee was ready and Captain Ron filled his cup. We got our box of donuts and went back to the boat. Now we were an hour late.

We backed out of the marina and headed north up the ICW. The entire Thunderbolt waterfront is a no-wake zone but that was fine as our engine wasn't fully warmed up yet.

Once we were through the no-wake zone we were able to speed up to our blazing seven knot cruising speed (that's a little over eight miles per hour for you landlubbers).

We slowed down where they are replacing a drawbridge with a high rise fixed bridge. We didn't have to have the bridge opened but we didn't want to endanger the workers. Once past the barges and cranes, we resumed our cruising speed.

An hour or so after leaving Thunderbolt, we crossed the Savannah River into South Carolina. We transited Calibogue Sound, Skull Creek behind Hilton Head Island and Port Royal Sound. Then we

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transited the extended no-wake zone on the Beaufort waterfront, passed through the bridge and turned up Factory Creek to the Lady's Island Marina. We called on the phone and the lady told us where to dock but didn't come out to help. Fortunately, Captain Ron and Patti made it look easy. It doesn't always work out that way though.



Leaving Georgia and entering South Carolina on the ICW



Parasailing near Hilton Head, SC

We got tied up and plugged in and took Kiki for her usual walk. She took care of business so we went inside to check in and pay. This is a less formal marina than some we have stayed at and dogs are welcome. So are cats. There are several people living on their boats here and they have dogs and cats. They have the run of the marina.

We went back to HIGH COTTON and rested. Then we took turns showering, got dressed and went to

the restaurant for dinner. The hostess seated us but apparently the waitress didn't notice because nobody came to take our order until Patti went and asked the manager to help.

From then on, everything went smoothly, we got our food and it was delicious.

After dinner, we walked to the boat, got the Sea Dog and went to the air conditioned Captain's Lounge for a bit. Kiki liked that.

Eventually, some of the liveaboards came in to eat their dinner so we decided to walk the puppy some more and head back to the boat. She will get another walk and we'll go to bed early. We will try to get underway at first light tomorrow and make it home about 2:10 PM when the current at the marina is minimal.



Sunset at Lady's Island Marina

Captain's Log, day eighty four (July 23, 2019)

We're home! We made it safe and sound.

We set the alarm for 5:15 AM so we could get an early start. We got ourselves dressed, made coffee and walked the puppy. Captain Ron did his engine and bilge checks while Patti uncovered everything on the flybridge.

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We unplugged the shore power, turned on the navigation lights (for running in the dark), untied the lines and slipped out of the marina a few minutes before sunrise, weaving between the anchored boats and trying to stay in the channel.

Our chart plotter has a feature where the screen automatically darkens when it's dark outside so as to not ruin the operator's night vision.

Unfortunately, it gets too dark and is unreadable. Captain Ron will have to see if that's adjustable. There is a manual setting but when the screen is automatically this dark, it's impossible to see the settings either.

Anyway, we made it safely back to the ICW where we saw a sailboat waiting for the 6:00 AM bridge opening. It was actually a bit after 6:00 AM, it seems when a drawbridge is supposed to open at a certain time, that's when the bridge tender thinks about stopping vehicular traffic on the bridge, not the actual opening time.



A sailboat waiting for the 6:00 AM bridge opening

We made our turn to the north and got up to cruising speed. The dolphins were up early, we had them swimming with us within a few minutes.

We were a bit concerned that we wouldn't get to St. Johns Yacht Harbor (our home marina) in time for slack current. Docking with the current running can be a bit tricky.

Luckily, for a change, we had favorable currents most of the way home. We continued to see dolphins and some swam with us. Kiki got to see the "big fishies" and she was happy. We have to be careful not to say the word "dolphin" out loud or she jumps up and runs to the side to look for one.



The Limehouse Bridge means we're back in Charleston, SC

As we were passing Ross Marine (where we had our boat repaired at the start of our trip), a small boat sped past us. It was "E", the dockmaster at St. Johns in the pumpout boat heading back to the marina.

As we neared the marina, the wind and waves picked up and we realized that somehow, our boating software had seriously miscalculated slack current as there was still nearly one knot of current. We thought it would be a good idea to go to the fuel dock first to fill our tanks and kill some time until docking would be easier.

We called the marina and learned that the diesel pump was not working because of a lightning strike a day or two ago.

Boating requires flexibility and the ability to deal with unforeseen events so Captain Ron decided to just go ahead to our slip and deal with the current and wind. It wasn't easy and the bow thruster was no match for the wind and current, but by

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backing and going forward a few times, he was able to back into the slip without hitting anything. He thinks he deserves an “A” for docking today.

Patti had already gathered clothes, bedding and everything else that was going home and put them in bags so after adjusting the lines and plugging in the power cord (he dropped the first one in the water so he had to get out another), Captain Ron walked to the far parking lot, got the truck and moved it to the loading zone. Patti got a dock cart and began loading it.

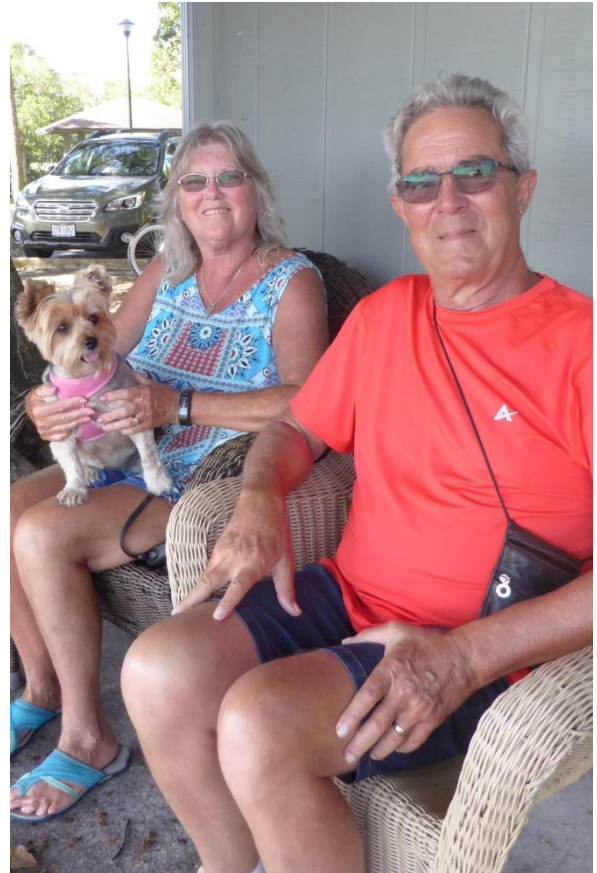
It took two trips with the dock cart and not everything would fit inside the truck. Coolers and cases of dog food had to go in the bed.

We drove home and unloaded everything. Captain Ron turned the water heater back up and the air conditioner back down from their “away” settings. We’ll go back to the boat on the weekend and clean and put things where they belong. Also, the oil needs to be changed so we’ll take care of that.

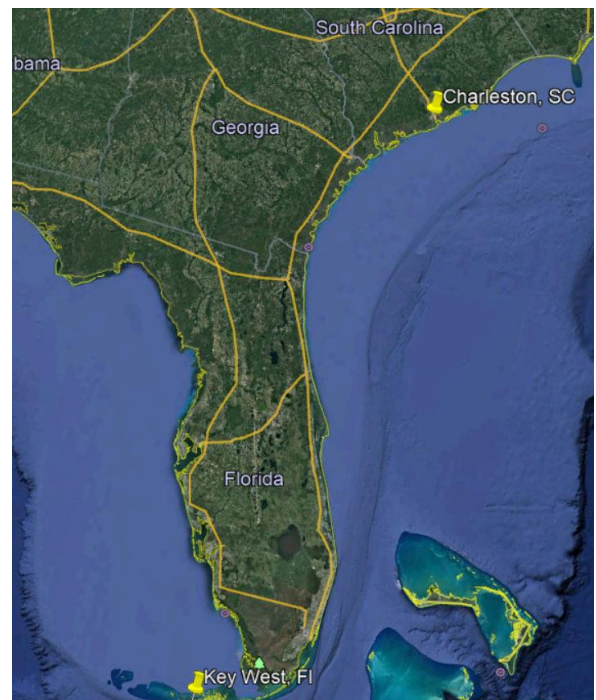
That’s it, thanks for your interest.



The vessel



The crew



The voyage

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Epilogue

Duration	84 days
Distance	1506.4 NM
Time underway	215.2 hours
Fuel used (diesel)	429.4 gallons
Fuel consumption	2.00 GPH
Fuel mileage	3.51 NMPG
Fuel cost	\$ 1382.51
Nights anchored	8
Nights on free docks	0
Nights in boatyard	2
Nights in marinas	74
Marina cost	\$ 4280.79

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.

Of course, there’s good reason to question travelling to the Florida Keys in June and July. It was quite hot for much of the Florida portion and even in marinas with shore power, the heat taxed our air conditioning system to the max. But, it was still fun.

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

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

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

<http://cruisersnet.net>.

Other resources were:

Dozier’s Waterway Guide Atlantic ICW
Dozier’s Waterway Guide Southern

Our neighbor kept our lawn mowed, brought in the mail and packages, and kept an eye on the house for us. We parked our vehicle in the marina’s remote parking lot, under a bridge to keep it out of the weather as much as possible. A friend who keeps his boat at the same marina checked on it from time to time.

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.