

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

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

The following is an account of a cruise south on the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) from Charleston, SC to Jacksonville, FL and south on the St. Johns River to Sanford FL and back.

---

## **Captain's Log, day one (September 14, 2020)**

Where are the Widmans? The original plan was to cruise north to the Chesapeake Bay, starting around May 1) Well, the Covid 19 quarantines took care of that.

2) It's just as well though, because we found we needed a replacement part for our engine that cost \$3200 in Charleston or \$1260 (plus shipping) from Norway. It took six weeks to get the part from Norway but we weren't going anywhere anyway.

Once the engine was repaired we took an overnight cruise down the river from our marina and back as a "test".

By the time we got everything in order and other commitments like doctor's appointments and a "procedure" for Captain Ron taken care of, it seemed too late to head to the Chesapeake Bay (usually a two to three month cruise) so we thought about plan "B".

We have cruised up the St. Johns River in Florida twice before so we decided this would be a good way to get a cruise in this year so that was our decision. It should take a month or a bit more depending on how long we stay at various places.

So, Captain Ron had an 8:30 AM doctor's appointment in Mt. Pleasant today. We got the boat ready yesterday and packed the puppy and any last minute items and were able to go from the doctor's office directly to the marina.

We have a friend at the marina who is a transient and has no vehicle so we handed her the key to our car, started the boat, dropped the lines and headed out about 10:30 AM.

The tidal current was against us for the first hour or so and then it switched and was with us for a while. This is typical of travel on the ICW in this area. As expected, it switched a couple more times on us.

We saw several pods of dolphins today and of course the Sea Dog saw them too. She barked at one group but they ignored her. They were busy doing whatever it is that dolphins do.

As far as boats, it was a slow day on the water. We saw just three or four cruising sized boats.

Since we knew we wouldn't leave our marina until late, our plan was to anchor for the night in a spot we have anchored in before, about two and a half hours from Beaufort, SC. It's quiet and just water and marsh, no signs of human habitation. Patti and the K-9 were sitting on the flybridge after

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

dinner when another “big fishie” swam by.

It’s getting dark so it’s time for bed or at least some TV. We should pull into Beaufort around noon tomorrow.



The line wench coils the dock lines



Leaving Charleston, headed south

## Captain’s Log, day two (September 15, 2020)

Last night started out pretty hot. We were sleeping with no covers and the Sea Dog decided to sleep on the floor, not in the bed. Sometime during the night, a cold front came through and we had to cover up with a sheet and blanket. The pup came back to bed.

We were in no rush to get underway so we had a “sit down” breakfast, checked the engine room and, pulled up the anchor and got underway.

Today’s journey took us through a man-made (“person-made”?) cut, up the Coosaw River and then Brickyard Creek to the Beaufort River and the city of Beaufort where we had a reservation for dockage. While on the Coosaw River, a butterfly began flying around HIGH COTTON. Eventually it landed on Patti’s hand. Patti held it a while and then set it on a blanket on the dash. It rode with us for about an hour. Eventually, it flew off, hopefully to the nearest shore.



## Our Butterfly hitchhiker

We saw a few dolphins along the way but none swam with us. The pooch saw them of course. We can’t even say the word “dolphin” out loud or she jumps up and starts looking for them.

We pulled into what is now known as the “Safe Harbor Beaufort Marina”, formerly the “Downtown Beaufort Marina” a little after 11:00 AM. A company named “Safe Harbor” has been buying marinas up and down the US east coast. So now they are everywhere.

We got tied up with help from the dockhand and Patti and Kiki set off in search of a place to pee. Actually it was the K-9 who had to pee; Patti had used the head on the boat.

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

Leaving the pooch to guard the boat, the humans set off to the sandwich shop for lunch. After that we walked the town a bit and checked a few shops.

We rested for a while and then gathered up the puppy and walked back to the sandwich shop for ice cream. Kiki likes her ice cream! (Kiki writes: *"Yes, I love my ice cream!"*)



**The Sea Dog gets her ice cream fix**

We checked a few shops and Patti bought a purse. Captain Ron has been using the same wallet since before the turn of the century but Patti has several dozen purses. Captain Ron doesn't understand it.

One of the advantages of staying in a marina is (in most cases) the ability to take long, hot showers. Patti went first and when she returned, it was Captain Ron's turn.

All cleaned up and refreshed, we got dressed and walked back to town for dinner. Our plan was to get small meals so there would be no leftovers, but the portions were so generous, we still ended up with leftovers.

Back at the boat, it was time to walk the Sea Dog before bed. Kiki met some people and we talked to a guy on a boat in front of us at the dock. They

bought their boat in Ohio and are taking it to Florida.



**The crew of HIGH COTTON takes a break**

The weather forecast for the next few days is pretty uncertain so at this point, we are waiting until tomorrow to see if we will move on or stay here another day or two.

## **Captain's Log, day three (September 16, 2020)**

We had a bit of excitement today but more on that later.

We woke up a little after dawn today with the decision to make to stay in Beaufort or head south. The weather forecast for today was for scattered thunderstorms all day and tomorrow was forecast to be the same. The only difference was, winds were forecast to be stronger tomorrow. It was supposed to have started raining around midnight but it hadn't started yet so we decided to head out.

Patti walked the pooch while Captain Ron got the boat ready. Because of the current and the fact that we were between two boats on the face dock, we had to loop a line from the bow to a cleat on the dock and swing the stern out into the river. The current caught the stern and swung the boat perpendicular to the dock. Patti released the

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

line and Captain Ron backed the boat out into the river. We were on our way.

As we left the Beaufort River and entered Port Royal Sound, Patti looked to the right and saw two cruise ships docked at the Port Royal port. Our guess is that they have been docked there due to the Covid 19 quarantines.

It was a bit windy on Port Royal Sound and more so crossing the sound towards Skull Creek and Hilton Head. Once we were in the creek, the wind and waves calmed down.

Once we were on Calibouge Sound, it began to drizzle so we went through our "rain drill" and moved to the lower helm. This lasted for an hour or so and then we were able to go back to the flybridge. We continued on past Dufuskie Island to where the ICW crosses the Savannah River.

Now the excitement: Captain Ron is steering HIGH COTTON across the Savannah River, looking both ways for cargo ships and tugs and heading for the narrow channel between the channel marker and a sign that says "Danger Rocks", when a small red boat with blue flashing lights pulls in behind us and a voice on the radio says "HIGH COTTON, HIGH COTTON, this is the US Coast Guard and we are going to board you for a safety check."

For you landlubbers reading this, you are probably used to the US Constitution's guarantee that the police can't just knock on your door and randomly search your house. Well, this guarantee doesn't carry over to boating. The Coast Guard can legally board your boat and check anything they feel like checking.

This is the third time we've been boarded while cruising and Captain Ron has figured out how to

take the stress out of it; He keeps driving and lets Patti handle the Coast Guard questions.

So, the boat pulled up beside us while we kept going, two officers swung onto HIGH COTTON and they checked what they wanted to check. They gave us a copy of the report, their boat pulled up beside us again and the officers swung back onto their boat and it took off, presumably looking for more "victims".



**The US Coast Guard making sure we have a safe boat**

By this time we were thirty minutes or so from our destination for today, Thunderbolt Marina in (where else?) Thunderbolt GA. Yes, we are in Georgia.

We swung around to face into the current, pulled up to the dock and got tied up. We topped off the diesel tanks, got the boat situated and Kiki went to explore the grounds. Thunderbolt can be reached from the ocean without any bridge restrictions so there are some pretty big boats here. There is a one hundred and twenty five foot long sailboat on the next dock. That's nearly five times as long as HIGH COTTON. There are even bigger boats in the repair facility.

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---



Yep, that's a big boat

We got on the Internet to check out restaurant menus. We decided to skip the traditional Tubby's Tank House and try Tortuga's for a change. We walked there only to find that they close at 3:00 PM and reopen at 5:00 PM. It was about 4:00 PM when we got there so we just walked back to Tubby's. Oh well.

We had our dinner and walked back to the marina. As we were sitting on the boat, a late arriving trawler came in so we helped them dock and told them where the restaurants were.

One more dog walk and we're ready for bed. We'll check the weather tomorrow and decide if we stay or if we continue south.

## **Captain's Log, day four (September 17, 2020)**

Today dawned partly cloudy but with 15 knot winds. It's supposed to rain in the afternoon. Patti decided we should stay here another day and promised to wash the boat. The one side towards the dock at our marina was dirty but the other side that we can't easily get to was filthy. So filthy that the dockhand commented on it. Since that side is against the dock today, it's easy to wash it.

So anyway, Thunderbolt Marina provides free Krispy Kreme donuts so we found them on our boat this morning. They stopped making coffee though so Captain Ron had to make his own.

Patti gave away two donuts to a couple on another boat that didn't know to sign up for donuts. That left two for each of us (Kiki doesn't get donuts). They were fresh and good. (Kiki writes: *"I don't know what donuts are but I bet I would like them."*)

True to her word, Patti washed the boat. At least the side facing the dock and the bow and stern. HIGH COTTON really needs more than just a boat wash; it needs compound and waxing for about \$2,000 to look good. We'll deal with that when we get back or next spring. Actually, Captain Ron helped a bit, but gets little credit for the job. It was Patti who did most of the work. Once we got through, it rained.

Looking on the Internet, we discovered a restaurant that looked promising a little further up the road than Tubby's Tank House so we decided to go there when it opened at 3:00 PM for a combination of a late lunch and early dinner. It turned out to be a little further than it looked on the map, about a mile (each way, of course), but it was worth it. Patti got her favorite brisket dinner and Captain Ron had steamed shrimp. These were fresh local shrimp, not frozen from Indonesia.

We had to rest up from our meal and the walk so we did. Then we took the K-9 for a walk. Patti decided to do a load of laundry so she did. Kiki went along to help. We had a nice talk with the dockmaster while the machines were running.

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain Ron topped off the fresh water tanks and Patti went to take a shower. Captain Ron will go when she comes back.



Dinner for the humans

We plan to leave tomorrow morning after the donuts arrive and cruise at least halfway to Jekyll Island Marina where we have reservations for Saturday night. There's a pool and a nice restaurant there.



Kiki checking out a Ranger Tug that is for sale

## Captain's Log, day five (September 18, 2020)

The plan was to get underway this morning as soon as the donuts were delivered from the marina. We didn't make that but we did manage

to drop our lines and head out by 8:00 AM so that was not too bad.



## The reason we stay at Thunderbolt Marina

A few minutes before we left the marina, a sailing catamaran passed the marina heading south. As we were leaving, a trawler was pulling into the fuel dock. Later in the morning, we passed the catamaran and the other trawler passed us. We passed a few larger boats heading the opposite direction (north) as well.

The dolphins were out in force today and we saw dozens of them. Kiki was standing watch and she saw them as well, first on one side of the boat and then on the other. She enjoyed her day today. (Kiki writes: *I really like seeing the big fishies, especially when they swim alongside my boat.*)

Our route for today was through the winding creeks and rivers of coastal Georgia as well as some of the open sounds. Once we left the Savannah suburbs, we didn't pass through another populated area. We saw just a few isolated houses. Because of the tidal currents, we saw speeds as high as nine and a half knots and as low as four and a half knots. It all averages out in the end to seven knots though so that's the speed we use when planning our trips and stops.

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



## Moving right along here

The weather today was pretty good for cruising; mostly cloudy and in the mid-seventies. It began to drizzle a couple times but not hard or long enough for us to leave the flybridge.



## Captain Ron's next boat

We have reservations at Jekyll Harbor Marina tomorrow and it's about a fourteen hour voyage for HIGH COTTON so we have to break it up into two days and anchor somewhere for the night. We decided to travel a little extra today so we would have more time at the marina tomorrow. They have a pool, a hot tub and a loaner golf cart so if it's not raining, we'll put that extra time to good use. We ran just under nine hours today, then pulled off into the Darien River and anchored. (Patti writes: *"Captain Ron conveniently "forgets" to mention this, but every day he goes below to the V berth for a "power*

*nap", leaving me and Kiki to drive the boat for a half hour or so."*)

We have anchored here a few times in the past and it's a nice quiet anchorage (just as Captain Ron finished typing that last sentence, a shrimp boat came past us heading for Darien, GA).

Since we've been eating in restaurants the past few days and saving our leftovers, dinner tonight is quite a smorgasbord; steamed shrimp, two kinds of soup, fish, brisket, chicken and hamburger (Kiki got the hamburger), green beans and macaroni and cheese. Plus pudding cups for dessert!

Tomorrow we have about a five hour run to Jekyll Island so we'll get up and head out whenever we're ready. No rush.

## Captain's Log, day six (September 19, 2020)

Early this morning at about 3:00 AM, Captain Ron was sound asleep. Patti woke him up saying "Ron, get up, something is beeping." He got up, put on his glasses and heard nothing. He went up to the chart plotter to see if the boat was dragging anchor (drifting away) and it was the alarm sounding but it wasn't. He stepped out back to see if the boat was moving but it was pitch black so he couldn't see the shore. The current was moving fast, but the boat wasn't. He added some distance to the swing radius of the alarm and went back to bed.

We woke up a little after 7:00 AM when the sun came up. Patti went up to get dressed and said "Oh, it must have been my phone beeping, there's an Amber alert." Yep, the same time.

Anyway, we got dressed, Patti uncovered the flybridge while Captain Ron did the engine checks

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

and we pulled the anchor and headed back down the ICW. It was a cloudy and cool day and breezy. Enough so that Captain Ron put on his long sleeved shirt. Later he put on long pants as well.



**A bald eagle checking out HIGH COTTON**

We were motoring along when we heard a warning on the marine radio from the Coast Guard warning about strong winds from the tropical storm and suggesting that boats seek shelter inland for the next few days. We thought about this and the fact that Jekyll Harbor Marina is quite close to the ocean and decided to go to Brunswick Landing Marina instead. Brunswick Landing is a few miles inland and well protected from storms. A couple phone calls and we were all set.

Crossing St. Simons Sound, we passed by the ship, the Golden Ray, which ran aground and capsized

in September 2019. It still has over four thousand brand new cars on it. The plan is to cut it up and scrap it.



**The capsized Golden Ray in St. Simons Sound**

We arrived at Brunswick Landing Marina a little after noon and called on the radio for docking instructions. The dockmaster told us to go to dock number thirteen. We've been here before and were always put on dock one or dock two.

He met us there (with a golf cart) and caught our lines and tied us up. When we asked about being this far from the office he told us that it would be smoother here and less wind. Well, bless his heart, but it also adds a half a mile to the walk to town.

We got settled in and decided to walk to town for a late lunch. Many of the restaurants in town give a discount to marina guests so we went to the pizza place and had a pizza. On the way back, we stopped at the ice cream shop and got two cups of ice cream to take back to the boat. This meant the Sea Dog got ice cream today. *(Kiki writes: "I like it when my mawmaw and pawpaw bring me treats!")*

We took showers, ate some cheese and crackers and will soon hit the sack. We have nothing in particular to do tomorrow and most of the town is closed on Sundays.



# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

## Captain's Log, day seven (September 20, 2020)

Today is a day in port so not much to talk about. No alarms to wake us and we figured out how to turn off the Amber Alerts on Patti's phone.

We woke up to sixty four degree temperatures this morning so we had to break out our cool weather clothes. After walking the puppy, we had breakfast (bagel and cream cheese for Captain Ron and a protein shake for Patti) and then decided to walk to the market (one of the few businesses open on Sunday). It's an interesting place with many of the signs and product labels in Spanish. We could have bought chicken feet, pig ears or any of several other delicacies but we left with eggs, sausage, cheese and a few other things we normally find in Publix. It's a half mile walk each way so we're getting our exercise in.

We forgot to mention two notable events from yesterday. One is, there is another Camano Troll at the marina. We walked down to see it and the lady invited us in and we talked for a while. She has made several modifications to her boat that seemed a bit strange to us, but of course, when it's your boat you can do what you want to it. She lives on it with three small dogs.

The other thing of interest is, there was a shooting yesterday at about 5:00 PM. A couple we talked to at the marina was nearby when it happened. We had noticed a half dozen or so police cars speeding towards town past the marina.

Since we don't get any local TV stations here, we had to wait for reports on the Internet. Apparently, the police tried to stop a guy and he started shooting at them. They shot back and hit and killed him. No other details have been posted yet. Captain Ron has always been of the opinion that shooting at the police will not end well.



The other Camano

Lunch for Captain Ron was leftover pizza from yesterday. For Patti, it was leftover brisket from Thunderbolt.

By 3:30 PM, the temperature had risen to a sweltering sixty nine degrees and we are still in our cool weather clothes. We can hear the wind swirling in the trees and sailboat rigging, but this far up the river, HIGH COTTON is as steady as a motel room. The dockmaster was right about that.

We took the K-9 for a walk and since it was high tide, the river had risen onto the grass at several places creating a good place for puppies to play in the water. Kiki did of course and she got rinsed off with fresh water before she got back on the boat.



Kiki checks out the river

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

The temperature finally hit seventy degrees so Captain Ron decided to do some repairs. The foot switch to make the anchor go down hasn't been working reliably so Patti has to use the switch on the flybridge as well as work the throttle when anchoring. Captain Ron took it apart a couple days ago and was appalled to find that it consisted of a metal ring attached to the rubber button that simply contacted the heads of two small screws to make electrical contact. Today he took it apart and did his best to clean the corrosion off the surfaces and sprayed everything with electrical contact cleaner in the hopes of creating a temporary repair. These switches will have to be replaced at some point if he can find actual switches to fit the holes.

He also oiled a part of the windlass that needed it and replaced the broken plastic retaining ring on the windshield wiper switch with a metal one.

Since all the restaurants except the sushi place are closed on Sunday, dinner was microwaved meals.

Kiki went for an after dinner walk and we'll turn in soon. The weather forecast has us staying here through Tuesday and leaving Wednesday morning (we hope).

## **Captain's Log, day eight (September 21, 2020)**

Again, a day in port. The wind was howling in the trees again last night, but the boat was steady as a rock. Of the six stations we get on TV here, three are sales channels and one is children's programming. The other two don't have news or weather, just drama shows. It's probably time to look into getting a smart TV for the boat that's capable of getting TV over the Internet.

We decided to walk to town for breakfast at a restaurant we discovered on one of our previous

visits to Brunswick. This is the place where one of the choices for toast is raisin toast and one of the jelly choices is apple butter. Patti had pancakes and bacon with a side of hash browns and Captain Ron had eggs, sausage, grits and raisin toast with apple butter.

Nothing else in town was open yet so we stopped by the marina office and paid for two more nights. Since they are charging us \$2.25 per foot for a thirty five foot minimum, we are actually paying \$3.05 per foot plus electricity and a 4% surcharge for using a credit card. It's a nice marina but not that nice. It still looks good to head for Florida Wednesday morning so we'll be heading out.

On the way back to HIGH COTTON we stopped in the lounge and talked to some of the other boaters for a while and then turned on the TV to see about the weather. The TVs in the lounge are connected to cable but cable doesn't work on the docks.

The Sea Dog was happy to see us return and she wanted to go for a walk. Patti took her walking and the tide was over the banks again so she got her swimming (or wading) in. She likes the water. (Kiki writes: *"Yes, I love wading and swimming in the water as long as it's calm."*)

Patti rubbed some ointment on Captain Ron's calves and shoulders and he took a power nap while it dried. Eventually, it was time for dinner. We had decided earlier to get dinner at the Jamaican restaurant in town but Captain Ron was reluctant to walk that far again today so Patti volunteered to walk to town to get dinner and bring it back while Captain Ron walked the K-9.

Captain Ron was walking the pooch when another boater who was also walking a dog came by so he and the lady chatted about boating while the dogs sniffed each other.

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

They were still chatting when Patti came back with dinner so back to the boat we went. Patti had jerk pork while Captain Ron had curried goat. Yum, curried goat! We both had rice and peas, steamed cabbage and fried plantains. Captain Ron had ginger beer while Patti drank a real beer. One of the joys of cruising is finding things to eat that we don't find at home.

For each dinner they have three sizes, Express, Small and Large. We both got the Express and neither of us could finish so it looks like we have dinner for tomorrow.

It's time for showers, another dog walk and then to bed.

## **Captain's Log, day nine (September 22, 2020)**

We had a calm, quiet night again last night. We could hear the wind but we didn't feel a thing.

We got up and walked the dog, then Patti fixed breakfast for the crew. Scrambled eggs, sausage and grits. Kiki got to lick the plates. She also got dog food of course. (Kiki writes: *"The doctor says people food is not good for doggies but I think she is wrong. I love people food."*)

We left the K-9 to guard the boat and walked the half mile to the city park where the farmer's market is held. It's mostly on Saturdays but some vendors show up on Tuesday and Thursday. There were two vendors so we got tomatoes and cucumbers. We really wanted green beans for the puppy but neither had any. Captain Ron got some boiled peanuts, a southern delicacy.

We stopped in the office for a bag of ice and Patti told the dockmaster how much Captain Ron's legs were hurting so he took pity on us and drove us back to our dock in the golf cart.

We had farm fresh tomatoes and cucumbers with balsamic vinaigrette for lunch. They were good, much better than store bought.

Since the laundry here is free (it should be at these prices), Patti decided to strip the bed and wash all our dirty stuff. While she was doing that, Captain Ron made our plans and reservations for the next few days. We should be in Florida tomorrow.

The lady from the other Camano came by and we showed her around our boat and talked for a while.

Dinner was leftover Jamaican food. We'll be up and out of here early tomorrow.

## **Captain's Log, day ten (September 23, 2020)**

The goal was to get an early start today and we actually got underway at about 7:45 AM. The temperature was sixty four degrees so we had to wear our cool weather clothes. Patti forgot to put long pants on the boat so she was a bit chilly. It wasn't long before it warmed up and Captain Ron had to go below and change into shorts and a tee shirt.

Heading east, back towards the ICW, the sun was shining directly in our eyes. This made it difficult to see the markers and of course, after looking directly into the sun, it was nearly impossible to read the chart plotter screen. We did make it though, and turned south through Jekyll Creek towards St. Andrews Sound.

St. Andrews Sound is traditionally rough as the ICW path goes out nearly to the Atlantic Ocean. Even though winds were light this morning, waves were coming in from the ocean, making for a rough, but bearable ride.

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

Eventually, we made the turn and were soon in the shelter of Cumberland Island. We passed two boats near the beach and a dozen or so people running and playing on the beach and in the water. We were on a mission though so we waved and kept heading south. At the other end of Cumberland Island we did see some of the wild horses the island is known for.



**Fun on the beach**

We passed the Kings Bay nuclear submarine base but there didn't seem to be any submarines around. From the ICW at Kings Bay we could see a large yellow structure in the distance. This turned out to be the vessel that will cut up and remove the overturned ship (the Golden Ray) we mentioned a few days ago. It's at Fernandina Beach just a few hundred yards from the marina where we are staying tonight.

Speaking of Fernandina Harbor Marina, It recently reopened after extensive repairs and modifications due to hurricanes. It's nicer than it was, but for some reason, we are at the far end of the dock. Not as long a walk as we had the last four days, but still a quarter mile or so. Again, we are in the company of some very large boats. We had planned on getting fuel, but their pumps are not working yet. We'll fill our tanks in Jacksonville.

We (including Kiki) walked from the boat to land access so the K-9 could "do her business". There is a mask ordinance here and we had forgotten to bring our masks so Patti walked back to the boat to get our masks. We put them on and walked in to check in and pay. The dockmaster was not wearing a mask!

We walked back to the boat and got everything put away and tidied up. Then we walked back to town for a late lunch. After lunch, Captain Ron walked back to the boat while Patti checked out the shops. She brought back ice cream for the humans and a special cup for the pooch. Kiki writes: *"Yea, I get my own special cup of ice cream!"*)



**Patti checking out Florida's oldest bar**

Eventually, it was time to walk the puppy again. It's a very long walk for those short puppy legs.

Captain Ron is happy to be back in civilization with "real" TV to watch. Forty plus stations. Some are selling stuff, some are in Spanish and some are trying to save our souls, but we are getting the major networks and other stations.

We are skipping showers tonight because of the long walk. We will have showers and a pool tomorrow.

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---



The heavy lift vessel that will cut up the Golden Ray

## Captain's Log, day eleven (September 24, 2020)

We are in Jacksonville, FL. Six hours from home by car, eleven days by boat! Of course the car goes faster and you don't have to stop for bad weather.

Patti woke up about 6:45 AM this morning so we decided it wasn't worth going back to bed for a few more minutes. We got up, walked the Sea Dog and turned in our bathroom keys. Back at the boat, we checked the engine, uncovered the flybridge and headed out.

We forgot to mention that we saw a manatee in the marina fairway yesterday. By the time Captain Ron got his camera out and turned on, it had taken a dive and it didn't come back up where we could see it so there's no photo.

It took a little over three hours to get from Fernandina Beach to the St. Johns River. Captain Ron had to upload the St. Johns River routes to the chart plotter and when he tried to do this, it wouldn't work. He tried a few times and then copied them from his computer to a different SD card. This time it worked so it's probably a defective SD card. Anyway, we won't get lost on the river.

We had the current against us going up the river and were slowed by two knots or more most of the way. We passed all the shipping ports as well as a couple cargo ships and ocean going barges pushed by tugs. Some of these things are pretty impressive.



Sharing the river with these vessels can be a bit scary



The impressive Dames Point Bridge

Passing through downtown Jacksonville we saw where Jacksonville Landing used to be. We had stopped there on our previous trips but it was getting run down and the city bought out the lease and tore it down. No more free dock.

The railroad drawbridge was up as we approached the city but once we got within a quarter of a mile or so of it, it began to close. We were stuck. After about ten minutes a very short train travelling at a

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

snail's pace started across the bridge. Then it stopped. Captain Ron called the bridge tender on the radio and he said the bridge would open after the north bound train passed. Eventually, the train started back up and again, at a snail's pace, it crossed the bridge and was out of sight. After another five minutes or so, the bridge opened and we were able to pass on through.



## Waiting for the train to cross the river

We headed south and then west towards the Ortega River where we had reservations at the Ortega River Marina. This bridge tender was very responsive and opened the bridge for us right away.

We called the dockmaster and asked for a slip close to shore as Captain Ron has been having cramps in his left calf and was having difficulty walking. He gave us a space next to the office.

We asked him where the closest "walk in" medical facility was because of Captain Ron's ongoing cramps. He offered to drive us there so after promising the puppy that we would be right back, we hopped into his truck and were off.

The walk in clinic was crowded and after filling out the forms, we waited close to an hour. Eventually, Captain Ron was led to a room where he answered more questions.

When the doctor walked in, the first thing he said was that Captain Ron needed an ultrasound exam to rule out a blood clot and that they didn't have the equipment to do that there. He suggested an emergency room about two blocks away, but of course, we had to walk there.

Captain Ron was put in a room, the doctor and nurse came in and the doctor ordered an ultrasound.

To make a long story short, the ultrasound was done, there is no blood clot but he will need further testing that can't be done there.

We called for an Uber ride back to the marina and got there about 8:00 PM.

Patti took a shower but Captain Ron was too tired. He will take one tomorrow.

The dockmaster said we could stay as long as we wanted to. We will stay at least through tomorrow night. We can walk to the shopping mall for provisions (most likely, Patti will go and Captain Ron will not) and we can try out the swimming pool.

## Captain's Log, day twelve (September 25, 2020)

We slept a bit longer today but got up a little after 8:00 AM. Patti walked the K-9 while Captain Ron took a much needed shower. We returned to the boat where Patti fixed breakfast for all.

Since the emergency room doctor suggested that we call our family doctor, Patti did that. They arranged for a "virtual appointment" where the doctor and patient meet via computer. This was a first for us, but Captain Ron could see and hear the doctor and he could see and hear Captain Ron.

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

Our doctor recommended against a biopsy and explained what a hematoma is. He said to just stop taking the blood thinners for a week and not to go on any long hikes. He will see us when we return home. Captain Ron was relieved. Note: We eventually determined that Captain Ron had probably injured his leg by tripping over a raised curb in Brunswick, GA while walking back from the grocery store.

Once we got finished with the “virtual doctor visit”, Patti decided to walk to the shopping center and do some shopping. Captain Ron elected to stay behind and nurse his leg. Kiki stayed with Captain Ron.

Patti returned from shopping with a salad from Publix so she and Captain Ron split it for lunch. There was chopped up hardboiled egg in the salad so Kiki begged a few pieces of it. (Kiki writes: *“Yes, I deserve some of the good stuff.”*)

The humans decided to check out the pool. Unfortunately, dogs are not allowed in the pool area so the pooch had to stay and guard the boat.

After the pool, Patti and Captain Ron walked (hobbled in Captain Ron’s case) to the shopping center where we each got much needed haircuts. Captain Ron got the geezer discount. After the haircuts we walked around the corner for manicedis. Patti got color, Captain Ron did not. He didn’t get a geezer discount either.

It was time for dinner so we stopped in the Metropolitan Diner, a well-known restaurant chain in the Jacksonville area. The food was good and we ate it all.

Once we finished, it was time to hobble back to the marina. Patti took the Sea Dog for a walk while Captain Ron put a heating pad on his leg.

We are going to stay at least another day here and hopefully, Captain Ron’s brother and his wife will come to visit.

## **Captain’s Log, day thirteen (September 26, 2020)**

We got up about 8:00 AM or so this morning. We had no reason to get up any earlier. We walked the puppy (actually, Patti walked the puppy; Captain Ron is still nursing his leg).

We got a message that Captain Ron’s brother Dick and his wife Teresa were on their way so Patti walked to the CVS and Publix. Captain Ron eventually got a call saying they were outside the marina so he walked up to open the gate. They followed someone else in so he met them halfway. As everyone was walking back to the boat, Patti showed up with her shopping bags.



**Captain Ron and his brother Dick**

We visited for a couple hours (Kiki always likes company) and then decided to go for lunch. After much discussion and Internet searching, we decided to go to the Metro Diner where we had dinner last night. The advantage of the diner is that they serve a wide variety of food so everyone is sure to find something they like. We rode in their car to the restaurant; saving Captain Ron the three tenths of a mile walk each way.

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

After a nice lunch, Dick and Teresa dropped us off at the marina gate and headed back home to Palm Coast, FL, about an hour's drive away.



**Dick and his wife, Teresa**

There is a sign at the entrance to the picnic area saying ""No Dogs Allowed", but we talked to some of the liveaboards and they said they took their dogs there all the time. It's right on the edge of the river, like a beach but covered in grass.

We walked the Sea Dog to the picnic area and she went straight for the water. She ran in up to her belly and waded back and forth. After a while she got tired of this and began chasing lizards around the deck where the chairs and grill are.



**Kiki checks out another river**

There was another boater sitting there so we started a conversation with him. About this time, an older guy rode up on his bicycle, came and sat

down at the table and said "Guess what?" Well nobody answered so he said it again. Captain Ron said "What?" The guy said "I'm drunk!"

He went on and on about what he had to drink and where he drank it even though nobody asked. He kept butting into the conversation.

Having played music in bars for fifty years or so, this behavior wasn't new to Captain Ron but it was still annoying. Eventually he got on his bicycle and headed down the dock to his boat and Captain Ron, Patti and Kiki did the same (but on foot and sober). As we got to the dock, a large catamaran was having trouble docking so we stopped to help along with a few other boaters.

We changed into our swimsuits and got our shower supplies and headed for the pool where we ended up talking to two ladies from that same catamaran.

We left the pool and went to the heads and took our showers. Then it was back to HIGH COTTON for a late supper of leftovers.

It's nice here so we're going to spend at least one more day before we get underway again.

## **Captain's Log, day fourteen (September 27, 2020)**

Well, we are still in Jacksonville. After looking at the weather forecast and the fact that Captain Ron doesn't feel like walking around, we decided to stay here a couple more days. The weather for Wednesday looks good so that's when we are now planning on leaving.

Since we will be here a while, Patti went back to Publix for groceries so we won't have to eat out every night. Captain Ron needed to tighten the belts on the engine but he decided to wait until



# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

Patti returned. Patti brought back another salad so that was lunch for the humans.

After lunch, Captain Ron got out his tools and descended into the bilge to tighten up the belts. This is supposed to be a ten minute job and Captain Ron has done this before as well as replacing the belts. All it takes is loosening three bolts, moving the alternator until the belts are tight and retightening the bolts.

Because the alternator has been replaced, one of the bolts is an English size while the rest are metric. The first bolt loosened as expected with a wrench, but Captain Ron could not get a wrench on the second bolt. It was too big for a 7/16 wrench and too small for a 1/2" wrench. It was also too big for a 11 mm wrench and too small for a 12 mm wrench.

The only possibility Captain Ron can come up with is that there is enough rust on the bolt head to keep the wrench from going on. He tried tapping it with a hammer but that didn't work.

After fiddling with this for a half hour or so, he retightened the other bolt, gathered his tools and climbed out of the bilge. This project can wait for another day. Perhaps a file can be used to clean off the rust but he doesn't have one and there is no hardware store within walking distance.

There is a Mexican restaurant just outside the marina so we walked there (in the rain) for dinner. Captain Ron has given up on pro Football so there was no watching that today.

Time for bed.

## **Captain's Log, day fifteen (September 28, 2020)**

We were up this morning at the crack of nine (AM)! We took the Sea Dog for her morning walk

and ran into a couple boaters from the marina. The conversation turned to Captain Ron's difficulties with adjusting the engine belts. One of the boaters offered to loan Captain Ron a file so he could clean up the head of the bolt.

Captain Ron went to get the file and Patti went to the boat to cook breakfast. Thanks to the nearby Publix, we had waffles and sausage. Kiki had dog food. (Kiki writes: *"But I did get to lick the plates."*)

After breakfast, Captain Ron got his tools out and crawled into the bilge to work on the belt situation. He realized that he actually had his own file in the very bottom of his tool box, but there was no room on the engine for him to use it. He used the end of the borrowed file to clean up the bolt head but the 11 mm wrench still wouldn't fit. He again tried the 12 mm (socket, this time) and while it seemed loose, he was able to get the bolt loose. That bolt will get replaced when we get home.

He put his belt adjusting tool between the two pulleys and tightened the belts. He noticed at that point that one belt was still loose (they are a matched pair on the same pulleys). He decided it would be best to replace them both with the spare set so he had to loosen everything up, pull the old belts off and install the new ones. This required removing the bracket, but with the help of some penetrating oil and hammering on the wrench handle, he got it done. Captain Ron is thinking he should add a breaker bar to his tool box.

After running the engine to make sure everything was OK, Captain Ron put everything away and Patti broke out the vacuum cleaner to clean up the dirt that's been tracked in and the crumbs on the floor. She also vacuumed the V berth and changed the sheets on the bed.

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

After lunch, Captain Ron went to the V berth to put the heating pad on his leg. It wouldn't work. Patti volunteered to walk to CVS and get a new one.

She returned in about an hour and Captain Ron plugged the new heating pad in. It didn't work either. There was a "customer support" number on the instruction sheet so Captain Ron called it. He got a recording saying that because of Covid 19 they weren't taking support calls, everything had to be done by email.

Captain Ron shoved everything back into the box and Patti set off to return it. On the way, she stopped in Publix and bought a different brand of heating pad. This one works, at least for now.

Dinner was leftover tacos and beans from last night.

Captain Ron took a shower, followed by Patti. We had a really nice sunset this evening.



Sunset on the Ortega River, Jacksonville, FL

## Captain's Log, day sixteen (September 29, 2020)

No boating today. We got up and walked the puppy. Patti made breakfast for the crew; scrapple and grits for Captain Ron, scrambled eggs with cheese and bacon for Patti and the puppy.

(Kiki writes: "I love scrambled eggs, they are my favorite, next to ice cream.")



Kiki begs for scrambled eggs

Patti walked to Publix again to get green beans for the Sea Dog. That's one of her treats, uncooked green beans. She brought a salad back with her for lunch and Captain Ron ate the rest of his French dip sandwich from a few days ago. Captain Ron is missing the opportunity to walk because there are interesting places to walk to. He seems to be getting better, but slowly.

Captain Ron settled up with the marina. At the daily rate for six days, our bill would have been over \$300 but the dockmaster charged us for a week which was \$215. We could stay another day if we wanted to but we plan on getting out of here tomorrow.

The weather report called for rain and a cold front today. Up until 3:00 or so it was eighty two degrees and mostly sunny. All of a sudden the wind started blowing hard, it started raining and the temperature dropped. As of now, the thermometer reads sixty five degrees outside and according to the weather site, the wind is blowing at seventeen miles per hour. It looks like we will be wearing our cold weather gear tomorrow, at least in the morning.

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

We dined on HIGH COTTON this evening. Fish fillets, macaroni and cheese and baby lima beans. Yum!

We walked the K-9 and the wind almost blew us off the docks. We took showers because we won't have a place (except on the boat) to take showers tomorrow.

We will get underway tomorrow and stop at a marina about fifteen miles up the river for diesel fuel. It turns out our usual diesel stop in Georgetown doesn't have diesel anymore. Captain Ron just happened to come across that information or we might have been in trouble. Most of the marinas on the upper St. Johns River cater more to gasoline powered boats.

## Captain's Log, day seventeen (September 30, 2020)

We are in Florida but still in north Florida. Last night Captain Ron had to get up and switch on the heat. We have extra blankets but they are stored under the bed. The thermometer read sixty degrees this morning when we got up.

There was no big rush today but we didn't want to fool around so we woke up at 7:30 AM or so and got ready to head out. We said goodbye to the folks and the dockmaster and Kiki got petted by several of the boaters. (Kiki writes: *"One of my favorite things about boating is that wherever I go, the people pet me. I like it."*)

It was easy to get out of the slip and the marina and we headed towards the draw bridge. Captain Ron looked behind him and noticed another trawler following us, apparently from one of the other marinas.

Once we were through the bridge and out of the shallow water, the other boat turned north and we turned south and we went our separate ways.



Jacksonville, FL from the Ortega River



We don't have to wait for this bridge

Our plan was to pull into the Mandarin Holiday Marina a mile or so up the creek from the St. Johns River and about fifteen miles up the river from the Ortega River to fill up on diesel fuel since it's no longer available between there and Sanford. Captain Ron had confirmed that this marina had diesel fuel a couple days ago by phone.

We backed into the slip where the fuel docks are, tied up and the attendant handed Captain Ron the fuel nozzle. He placed it in the fuel fill and squeezed the nozzle. Nothing happened. The

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

attendant went back and flipped the lever again. Still nothing. He went and got the owner who checked the breakers but couldn't get the pump to come on. The owner called the mechanic and he couldn't get it to work.

Eventually the owner told us we might as well go somewhere else because they couldn't get the pump to work. We untied our lines and headed out of the creek towards the one other marina in the area that sells diesel fuel. It's on the other side of the St. Johns River, several miles away.

On a hunch, Captain Ron asked Patti to call them and make sure they had diesel fuel. Well they do, but their pump was broken also so we couldn't get diesel there either.

We stopped the boat and thought about our options. We could spend nearly two hours going back to Jacksonville for fuel and another two hours getting back to where we were and make it to Green Cove Springs late in the afternoon but that didn't sound attractive.

Patti called back to the Mandarin Holiday Marina to see if they knew of anywhere else we could get diesel. The owner told us that he had people on the way to fix the pump and we could just come back and wait or go to lunch. We decided to do that so we turned around headed back and again backed into the slip.

People were working on the pump so we went to lunch next door. We could see them working and they had everything apart.

To make a long story short, they had to call in an electrical crew and they had to run new temporary wires to the pump because the other wires were shorted. It was after 4:00 PM when we were finally able to fill our tanks.

After paying for our fuel and a bag of ice, Captain Ron asked if we could just stay here for the night. The owner said yes, but assigned us a slip so we pulled out of the fuel slip and into an empty slip for the night. After trying two dead electrical outlets, we found one that worked so we have power and air conditioning for the night. This might be described as a "bare bones" marina. There are two heads but no showers. It's also not in the best of condition but we'll be fine for one night.



**Waiting for repairs to the diesel pump at Mandarin Holiday Marina**

We walked across the street to a grocery store where we bought chicken wings for dinner. Captain Ron had leftover soup from lunch and Patti ate all the wings. We also bought blueberries and milk so Captain Ron had that for dessert.

We will skip Green Cove Springs and head for Palatka tomorrow. The trip should take a little over five hours. We can stop at Green Cove Springs on the way back.

## **Captain's Log, day eighteen (October 1, 2020)**

How do homeless people sleep under a bridge? Alcohol? Drugs? Or do they just get used to the noise?

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

We weren't actually under a bridge last night but we were pretty close. And it wasn't a high rise bridge; those four lanes of traffic were just about at boat level. The traffic diminished after 9:00 PM but in the morning it started up again so we just got up, got dressed and got underway.

After an hour and a half or so we passed Green Cove Springs and after about five and a half hours we were docked at the Boatyard Marina in Palatka, FL. When we called to make a reservation, the lady said to call her back about an hour before we were to arrive because they don't have any full time employees at the marina and they would have to send someone. We called a couple times and got a recording so we left a message.

As we were a hundred yards or so from the marina we got a call from a guy saying he would be there in twelve minutes. We docked ourselves and had the power hooked up by the time he got there. He checked us in, took our payment and gave us the codes to the gate and Wi-Fi.

This is another "budget" marina but it will be fine. One of the advantages of older marinas is that the showers haven't been updated to low flow shower heads. There is plenty of pressure here.



**HIGH COTTON** safely docked at the Boathouse Marina

We walked the Sea Dog and she found lots of lizards to chase. She also found a large sand pile to dig in.

Leaving the K-9 to guard the boat, the humans walked downtown. Palatka is doing a lot to revitalize the downtown area and they have built a lovely waterfront park and riverwalk, but there are few businesses actually operating on the main street. There is, however, Angel's Diner, billed as the oldest operating diner in Florida. Old folks like us remember diners from the "good old days". This one is authentic.



**Angels Diner, Palatka, FL**



**The interior**

We went in and sat down to eat. Patti was pleased to find a chicken gizzard dinner on the

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

menu. Captain Ron had the cheeseburger platter. Both were good as expected.



## **Yum! Fried chicken gizzards**

On the way back we checked out the park and walked the riverwalk towards our marina. Unfortunately, the riverwalk doesn't go quite that far so we had to walk back to the road for the last block or so. We did meet some of the local people who were walking their dogs and had a nice conversation.

We rested up a bit from dinner and the walk and then Patti took Kiki back to the sand pile and the lizards. Captain Ron got his shower supplies and took his long hot shower. When he finished, Kiki was still chasing lizards so we all three walked back to HIGH COTTON. Patti got her shower stuff and took her shower.

Tomorrow is a relatively short ride to a marina at the northern end of Lake George. This is the beginning of the really beautiful part of the river.

## **Captain's Log, day nineteen, (October 2, 2020)**

We were in no big hurry to leave this morning so Patti fixed breakfast. After breakfast, Captain Ron adjusted the belts he had installed a day or two ago. New belts always stretch and need to be adjusted. This time it took the fifteen minutes it

should have taken the other day. We also decided to top off the potable water tanks because they were only half full and we weren't sure about the water quality in Georgetown. We will need water the next night when we plan on anchoring.

We were cruising south on the river when Patti went below to make lunch. Captain Ron noticed that we were approaching the town of Welaka, FL. We have stopped there before and there is a free town dock and an interesting restaurant, "Shrimp R Us & More" within walking distance. It's really more of a bar but they have decent food as well.

We backed into a slip, got tied up, got the puppy off the boat and headed for shore. That's when we noticed the locked gate keeping us from getting off the dock.

There was an older guy sitting across from us on another dock and he said that the city had locked the gate because of vandalism. He suggested that we could walk on the outside of the dock, holding on to the railing to bypass the gate so that's what we did. Captain Ron should have gotten a photo but he didn't think of it at the time. It's a bit curious that the town installed the gate to keep teenage vandals off the dock, but two geezers and a puppy could so easily bypass it.

We walked to the restaurant. Captain Ron had steamed shrimp and they were delicious. Patti had a BLT and fries. Kiki found something smelly to roll in outside the restaurant and Patti had to take her in the restroom and try to wash her. She got a real bath when we got back to the boat.

The man at the dock had given us the number for the city to call and see if they would come and unlock the gate for us but when we called, we got a recording so we just headed for the dock. A city maintenance truck pulled up to the dock just as we got there with the intention of repairing the

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

vandalism so they unlocked the gate and let us in and we were on our way south again.



Shrimp R Us & More



The "inside" (it's really outside)

Captain Ron noticed that the GPS wasn't working so he had to go to the lower unit and reset it by unplugging it and plugging it in again.

We passed a few fish camps where people bring their boats, rent a room and fish for a week.

As we neared the Georgetown Marina, there was a small boat with two guys in it drifting in the middle of the channel. HIGH COTTON needs deeper water than most of the small fishing boats so we had to pass it in the channel. The two guys on board immediately started flailing their arms and cursing at us as loudly as they could. They

shouted something about being broken down but of course we had no way of knowing that. A couple minutes later they came zooming past us so that "broken down" story is a bit suspect.

We got to the marina and were assigned a slip. Usually when we come here they put us on the fuel dock but apparently someone else had already requested that space. It's probably for the best anyway. Right now there are two guys fishing and drinking on the fuel dock.

The Georgetown Marina is a bit "rustic" but it's a nice little place. They have boat slips, big and small (mostly small), RV spots and cabins to rent. They also have a fish cleaning station. The owners and the other people we met here are very friendly.



Georgetown Marina



HIGH COTTON waiting to cross Lake George in the morning

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

Tomorrow we'll hopefully get across the ten mile long Lake George and go another twenty five miles or so and find a nice anchorage. Another day and we should be in Sanford, FL.



Sunset in Georgetown, FL

## Captain's Log, day twenty, (October 3, 2020)

It turned out to be a good thing we weren't on the fuel dock last night because the guys fishing there also talked and carried on until midnight or so.

We got up a little after 7:00 AM. Patti walked the K-9 and bought some souvenir shirts from the marina office while Captain Ron got the boat ready. We headed out across Lake George, a trip that took about an hour and a half. We saw very few boats until a large houseboat appeared heading toward us. It veered off in front of us presumably heading for Silver Glen Springs, a crystal clear spring that's very popular with the locals. We visited there a few years ago and enjoyed it.

As we were nearing Astor, FL we heard some talk about a "parade" on the marine radio. We didn't think much of it until we heard a boat requesting an opening of the Astor drawbridge for the parade. As we passed through the bridge, we saw what they were talking about, a parade of

hundreds of boats, large and small, all flying American and (Donald) Trump flags. It was impressive to say the least. It also explained why we saw so many people sitting on their waterfront porches and decks in the town of Astor.



The Donald Trump boat parade, Astor, FL

We continued south searching the banks for the alligators and manatees we were expecting to see. Patti caught a glimpse of an alligator, Captain Ron missed it. The wildlife seems to be hiding from us today. We did see some eagles though.

We had picked out an anchorage about halfway between Georgetown and Sanford but checking the weather forecast, we decided it would be best to take advantage of the decent weather we had today because tomorrow was forecast to be rain for most of the day. Even though we passed through some long manatee no wake zones (and saw no manatees), we eventually realized that if we kept going, we could reach Sanford today and not anchor at all.

We called the marina and made arrangements to come in after closing time. They left the gate and restroom key in the dock box. We forgot to ask for the Internet password though; we'll have to get that tomorrow.

Approaching Lake Monroe and Sanford, the railroad bridge was partially open. We figured it



# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

was high enough for HIGH COTTON to pass under and fortunately it was. Trains are a big deal in Florida.



**The railroad bridge at the entrance to Lake Monroe**

We got ourselves docked just as it started to drizzle. Kiki was glad to be on solid ground and watered the grass profusely.

Captain Ron took his shower, we cleaned up all the leftovers for dinner and Patti took her shower. We'll check out the town in the rain tomorrow.



**HIGH COTTON in her slip at Monroe Harbor Marina**

## **Captain's Log, day twenty one, (October 4, 2020)**

We woke up to light rain. Actually, it rained most of the night. At least it was a bit warmer than it has been. Patti took Kiki for her morning walk and she came back wet. She never sees a puddle that she doesn't walk through so she had to get dried

off when she came back to the boat. (Kiki writes: *"Yes, I like my puddles. It's fun to play in the water."*)

Breakfast was scrapple and grits for Captain Ron, eggs and sausage for Patti and the pooch.

After breakfast, the humans walked to town, leaving the K-9 to guard the boat, and wandered around a bit. Being Sunday morning, most of the stores were not open. We did find the German deli that's owned by the same family as the German restaurant open and we bought sausages for lunch and several packets of German seasoning that we can use back home for German dishes. We were careful to choose ones with instructions in English.

We walked to the office to check in and buy ice but nobody was there. We called and left a message for them to call us back. Later, back at the boat, they called and brought us another bathroom and gate key and two bags of ice. They said we can settle and pay when we leave.

Captain Ron found about fifty TV stations that we can watch here, but as is often the case, many are in Spanish, many are trying to sell jewelry or clothing and many are trying to save our soul in various ways.

There's a small pizza restaurant just outside of the marina gate so we walked there for dinner. We had ravioli, not pizza. It was decent.

We came back to the boat, took showers and walked the pooch. Tomorrow Captain Ron's daughter Robyn and her husband Wally are coming to visit. They live not too far away in "The Villages". It makes Captain Ron feel old to know that his daughter has retired and moved to Florida!

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

## Captain's Log, day twenty two, (October 5, 2020)

Captain Ron woke early, looking forward to his breakfast in town, but by the time the K-9 got her walk and everything else, it was 9:00 AM by the time we got to the restaurant. It was fairly busy with most of the customers except us seeming to be regulars. Captain Ron had sausage gravy over biscuits and would have liked a bit more sausage in the gravy and one of Patti's pancakes was a bit burnt and had to be replaced, but all in all it was pretty good.

We considered walking to the local grocery store but decided to put it off until tomorrow so we walked back to the boat. Patti decided to wash a load of dirty clothes and towels so she gathered everything up and headed for the laundry room after calling the marina for the code to the lock. Everything else here uses a strange metal key that is inserted sideways into the doorknob while turning it. It's a bit awkward but it works. Everything here is a bit old and outdated, but it's cheap and more importantly, it's the only marina in town.

We are just a few slips from the gate so the people further down the dock pass our boat coming and going. Mostly, they seem friendly and wave as they go by. The folks in town are the same, friendly and pleasant.

We walked the Sea Dog again. There are a lot of lizards here and she remembers where they congregate. She heads right for that area and chases them into the bushes and under rocks. She saw the boat ramps and wanted to go swimming but there are alligators here so we wouldn't let her. She can just play in the puddles where it's safe.

Captain Ron's daughter Robyn and her husband Wally came to visit so we went to the nearby

German restaurant for a lovely dinner and conversation. With everyone living in different states it's not often that we get together so this was nice. Captain Ron took his camera and mentioned getting photos, but everyone forgot.

It was nearly dark by the time we got back to the boat so it was a quick walk for the puppy and then time for bed.

## Captain's Log, day twenty three, (October 6, 2020)

Patti and the puppy got up early today or Captain Ron slept late, however you look at it. They had finished their walk by the time Captain Ron got out of bed.

Patti fixed breakfast but the Eggo toaster waffles didn't quite turn out the way they do on TV. We ate them anyway along with sausage.



Captain and crew of HIGH COTTON in Sanford, FL

The humans decided to walk to the small independent grocery store a few blocks from the marina. Unlike the last few such stores, this one was somewhat of a disappointment. They had little produce and no green beans for the pooch. Like the other stores though, they did have a large selection of animal parts that don't show up in the meat case at our local Publix. Chicken feet, pig

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

ears and innards, cow hooves and some cow innards that we had never heard of before. They did not look appetizing. We did get some frozen green beans to try if we run out of fresh and got two bananas which we ate sitting on the city bench on the street on the way back from the store.

We stopped at the Family Dollar store but they had nothing that we needed so we left.

At this point, we split up, Captain Ron heading back to the boat with the beans and Patti heading for the shops in town and the German deli again.

After an hour or so, Patti returned with a salad for us to split for lunch and her goodies from the stores. We ate the salad.

We were hoping that Captain Ron's old band mate from the 1960s could come and visit from his retirement home an hour or so away, but he messaged saying he couldn't make it because of health issues. That's understandable at our age. Patti went to the office and settled our bill. Just \$106 for three days. Not bad. *(Patti writes: "It was actually four days, Captain Ron should have asked me before he wrote that.")*

Patti decided that she wanted a pizza for dinner and Captain Ron decided he wanted a bowl of gumbo (from a different restaurant) so Patti went and got them both and that was our dinner. Captain Ron is still nursing his leg and finds it painful to walk very far.

Patti went to walk the Sea Dog and saw the alligator swimming in the marina so she came back and called Captain Ron. We could only see its head but it was just a few feet from the dock.

We've decided to head out tomorrow morning and begin our journey home, attempting to dodge the rain that's predicted for the next few days.

Today was beautiful and would have been a great day to travel but we hadn't planned on it.



The Monroe Harbor alligator

## Captain's Log, day twenty four, (October 7, 2020)

Our time is up here so we got up, walked the puppy and got the boat ready to move on. We could have stayed longer of course; we could have stayed all winter if we didn't have obligations at home.

Captain Ron filled the water tanks and got the kinks out of our fresh water hose. It had been getting hard to coil neatly.

With everything disconnected and put away, we eased out of our slip and out of the marina into Lake Monroe and headed north. The railroad bridge at the top of the lake was closed and we saw a three car passenger train crossing the bridge but when we got near, we requested an opening and got it. We didn't even have to slow down (actually it's a no-wake zone so we were going slowly already).

From there on it was just a matter of staying in the middle with the red markers on the left and the green ones on the right (we are heading for the ocean at this point). We went through the long slow speed manatee zone near the Blue

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

Springs State Park, but of course, we saw no manatees. Later we did see one good sized alligator sunning on a log but when we came near, it slid off the log and into the water.

Other than the train bridges, there is one highway bridge that we have to get opened and it too was no problem. We requested an opening and the bridge tender acknowledged and opened the bridge right away.



**Heading north from Sanford on the St. Johns River**

After about five hours, we had to decide to either anchor or keep going for at least another hour and a half to cross Lake George so we anchored in Morrison Creek, just a couple hundred yards off the St. Johns River. We've anchored here before although it took a while to remember this.

For dinner we had warmed up ravioli and pizza from Sanford. After dinner we went to sit on the flybridge and saw an alligator swimming across the creek. There is some sort of resort on the other side of the river and a dog was barking. Kiki barked back. There is also an owl hooting and she finds that interesting.

Since there's nobody around to watch, we will take our showers on the back of the boat and turn in for the night. This is easier than taking showers inside and having to clean up afterwards.

Tomorrow we'll cross the lake and see how far we get.



**An alligator swimming near our anchored boat**

## **Captain's Log, day twenty five, (October 8, 2020)**

It was a bit warmer last night than we would have liked and the breeze died down to zero. Eventually it got more or less comfortable. We heard some sort of intermittent roaring noise in the distance that we couldn't identify.

Anyhow, we woke to the sun rising, did our engine checks, uncovered the flybridge, raised the anchor and were on our way. Soon we were crossing Lake George, an hour and a half trip.

The bagels are gone and we didn't feel like a hot, sit down breakfast so it was protein shakes for the humans and dog treats and green beans for the Sea Dog. We will restock the bagels in Jacksonville.

We passed through the rural and the populated areas along the St. Johns River. No mansions here, mostly moderately sized homes that appear to have been here for many years. One thing we noticed was that many of the homes were on land just a foot or so above the level of the river. Boat wakes could send water into the homes.

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

Patti thought she saw a manatee so we stopped but it never resurfaced. We did see several bald eagles in the treetops though.



**Another bald eagle watching the boats go by**

We had planned on stopping at the same marina in Palatka we stayed at on the way south and even called and left a message for them. Then we decided to try out another marina a few miles north of Palatka. It's not within walking distance of anything but we have leftover food from the German restaurant in Sanford and have already walked around downtown Palatka.

So we called the Crystal Cove Resort and asked for a reservation. The lady said "Fine, just pull into any empty slip." When we got to the marina, we saw that the end of the dock was vacant so we pulled in and tied up. Some marinas have

uniformed dockhands to guide you into your slip and catch your lines. Not this one though. The electrical pedestal had been knocked over but we used a long power cord and got our power from the next closest one.

This place is both a marina and a motel/resort so we had some trouble finding the office. We finally found it and checked in and paid our \$1.00 per foot plus tax. There's a pool and when we asked about it she said we were welcome to use it. She said Kiki could use it as well as long as nobody complained.

We walked back to the boat and changed into our swimsuits. Kiki, of course, has no swimsuit so she had to go as she was.

When we got to the pool, the gate was locked so we had to get the lady to unlock it. Kiki saw the pool and jumped right in (where the steps are) and began swimming. Patti got in and Kiki swam out to "mawmaw".



**The crew gets to swim together**

Since the pool was enclosed with a fence, we took her leash off. There were a lot of lizards running around so after her swim she spent the rest of the time chasing the lizards around the fence. She will sleep good tonight! (Kiki writes: "I know what a swimming pool is, my uncle Dick has one at his house. I really like to swim.")

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

We spent an hour or so at the pool and then walked back to the boat. The showers here are pretty “rustic” so we’ll skip showers tonight. The swim got us refreshed if not “clean”.

Dinner was leftover German food augmented by a box of spätzle bought from the German deli in Sanford.

Tomorrow we’ll head back to Jacksonville and spend the weekend because the weather doesn’t look good. Monday we’ll begin our northward journey again.

## **Captain’s Log, day twenty six, (October 9, 2020)**

*It rained all night and we got soaked getting underway. We had to drive from inside all the way to Jacksonville!*

That’s what we would have written if the weather forecast had been accurate. Actually, it didn’t rain all night and we woke up to a beautiful sunrise and sunny morning. We did our engine checks, walked the Sea Dog and slipped away from the marina a bit before 8:00 AM.

The St. Johns River at this point is wide; perhaps a mile or so wide so boating is just a matter of staying between the widely spaced channel markers. There are crab pot floats though, crabbing seems to be a popular occupation here, so it’s important not to get too close and get the submerged line tangled in the boat’s prop.

We had planned on stopping for diesel fuel at a marina about an hour and a half south of Jacksonville, but as we neared it, the predicted rain came with a vengeance. We had to rush below from the flybridge and drive from the lower helm. The windows kept fogging up and we had to wipe them with a towel every few minutes.

One of the windshield wipers is stuck and trips the circuit breaker. Fortunately, it’s the one on the other side from the wheel and it’s not too important. We can deal with it when we get the chance.

Not only did we not want to stand in the rain while filling our tanks, but there would be an almost certainty of getting water in the fuel so we decided to postpone fueling and continue to our destination, the Ortega River Marina where we stayed on our way south. We can get fuel at a nearby marina when we leave.

The rain let up by the time we approached our destination. Patti called and they said to just go into the same slip we had previously so that was pretty simple.

It had been a relatively long day but it was time to change the oil in the engine and transmission so Captain Ron got to work. He has gotten this procedure down to under an hour and doesn’t spill much anymore, but of course the engine is hot and it’s an uncomfortable and sweaty job. Once he was finished, he headed straight for the showers and got himself cooled off and de-oiled. His clothes went into the dirty clothes hamper.

After Captain Ron’s shower, Patti took a shower. One of the ladies we met when we were here a few days ago was going to drive to the nearby Publix grocery store and offered to take Patti along so she went and got what we needed to restock the boat’s pantry and freezer. All but the bagels, she will get them Sunday.

We decided to walk to the shopping center and have dinner at the Metro Diner. Even though it was Friday fish fry night, Captain Ron couldn’t resist the turkey plate with all the trimmings including cornbread stuffing and cranberry sauce. Patti had a steak.

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

After dinner, we walked back to the boat. Captain Ron was tired and started to watch TV but drifted off to sleep. Patti washed a load of towels and eventually joined Captain Ron in the V berth.

## Captain's Log, day twenty seven, (October 10, 2020)

We had a quiet night's sleep with the air conditioning running. We were in no rush to get up but the light comes into the V berth so we were up at 8:00 AM or so. We walked the pooch and then Patti stripped the bed and took a load of clothes to the laundry room. Then she returned and fixed breakfast for the crew.

Patti called CVS and arranged for one of Captain Ron's prescriptions to be transferred to the nearby CVS. We shouldn't need it, but it's better to have it and not need it than the reverse.

Our American flag is getting a bit ragged so Captain Ron wanted to walk to West Marine and buy a replacement. (Patti writes: *"Captain Ron uses any excuse he can think of to visit West Marine."*)



**Captain Ron goes to West Marine**

We got the flag and walked to Longhorn Steakhouse for lunch. (Captain Ron writes: *Patti uses any excuse she can think of to visit Longhorn*

*Steakhouse.*) We both ordered burgers "medium". When they arrived, they were nearly raw in the center. The waitress took them back but instead of cooking us new ones, they just cooked ours some more and put them on new rolls. The manager took the price of one burger off our check.

Speaking of the manager, he noticed Captain Ron's shirt so he came over to talk to us (this is before the burgers arrived). It turns out he used to live in Charleston, SC and was the manager of the Longhorn Steakhouse in North Charleston that we dine at when we are home. Small world!

After lunch, we crossed the street to the CVS and picked up Captain Ron's prescription and a replacement battery for the kitchen timer which had stopped working.

Back at the boat, the predicted thunderstorms haven't arrived yet. Captain Ron considered the swimming pool but Patti stuck her foot in it and determined that it was pretty cold. Patti put the clean clothes away and made up the V berth while Captain Ron installed the new American flag. Kiki napped. (Kiki writes: *Yes, I get to take my naps too. This boating is hard work.*)



**The new American Flag flying proudly on HIGH COTTON**

We walked the puppy (after her nap), helped a slip neighbor dock his boat and talked to some of the

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

folks at the marina. People seem very friendly here.

The rain finally arrived so there will be no showers tonight. It's off to bed.

## **Captain's Log, day twenty eight, (October 11, 2020)**

There is little to write about today. We got up and walked the K-9 of course and Patti fixed breakfast. The marina had only one bag of ice left so Patti bought it. She said something to the assistant dockmaster about going to Publix for more and he told her to call when she was done at Publix and he would come pick her up.

She went and he picked her up and brought her back with more ice and a few groceries. It's a really friendly and helpful staff here.

Captain Ron paid for our three days so we could leave early in the morning.

There's a covered area near the pool with tables and chairs so we sat and talked to some of the other boaters for a while. Kiki chased lizards.

Lunch was a sub that Patti brought back from Publix and dinner was leftovers from a couple days ago.

Tomorrow we'll head upstream through the railroad bridge for fuel and then back to the St. Johns River through downtown Jacksonville to Fernandina Beach.

## **Captain's Log, day twenty nine, (October 12, 2020)**

We expected a rather long day today and we needed fuel before we left the Ortega River so we

were up a little before 7:00 AM. Since Captain Ron had changed the oil and checked the level afterwards, that didn't need to be done, but the pooch needed her walk.

Diesel fuel was available further up the river about a half mile or so and the fuel dock opened at 8:00 AM so we headed out of the marina at about 7:45 AM. One problem: We had to go through a railroad bridge and it was closed. We called the bridge tender and were told that the bridge would open after an oncoming train went through. Unlike highway bridges, railroad bridges are often left in the open (for vessel traffic) position unless a train is coming. The problem is, they typically close railroad bridges ten to fifteen minutes before the train is expected. Perhaps this is so they have time to stop the train if the bridge malfunctions. In any case, we waited about fifteen minutes for a freight train to arrive and cross in front of us. Once it passed, the bridge opened and we passed through and tied up at the fuel dock.



Yep, waiting for another train

We took on sixty seven gallons of diesel fuel and they were kind enough to take our used oil and filters from the recent oil change.

From there, it was back through the open railroad bridge to the highway bridge that we had to have opened. Later in the day, we heard a warning on



# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

the marine radio that this bridge was broken in the closed (to vessels) position and the estimated time until repairs would be completed was between noon and 1:00 PM. It's a good thing it broke down after we got through or we would have had to change our plans.

As we passed the Jacksonville railroad bridge (with no trains coming this time), we passed a large private yacht. When we say "large", we are talking about three hundred feet or so in length. This boat had a "garage" for its dinghy (they actually call them "tenders" on the large boats). The tender was longer than HIGH COTTON.



Passing by the "big boys"



The "garage"

Then we passed through downtown Jacksonville and its many tall bridges. Each one is painted a different color and they are an impressive sight.

Travelling down (north) the St. Johns River, we encountered lots of dolphins. Some even swam alongside HIGH COTTON for several minutes. The Sea Dog really enjoyed this and barked to encourage them. We were also travelling with the current which at times gave us a 3.5 knot boost in speed. For a seven knot boat, that was 10.5 knots and a fifty percent increase.



10.6 knots speed, 50 feet deep



A "big fishie" swimming alongside HIGH COTTON

We passed the various Jacksonville ports where they load vehicles and shipping containers. We also passed the passenger ship terminal but there were no ships there when we passed.

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

Eventually, we reached Sisters Creek and the junction with the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW). We turned north into the creek and Captain Ron loaded the routes for the chart plotter to lead us home. A lone guy on a jet ski was cruising up and down the creek for the next several miles but we saw just a few boats. Probably because Monday is typically a workday.

We called the Fernandina Harbor Marina in Fernandina Beach and negotiated a slip close to the office and the town citing Captain Ron's difficulty walking. He says it is slowly getting better and he may be back to normal in a couple more weeks. We have doctor's appointments about that time so he will have the doctor look at it.

We walked to the office and checked in and paid. Since we were already there (with the K-9) we walked to town ("town" is just across the street from the marina here). We walked to the ice cream store and got two cups, mint chocolate chip for Captain Ron and vanilla for Patti and the Sea Dog. Kiki met a lot of people and got petted by several. She also chased some lizards. (Kiki writes: *"I like going on boat trips with my mawmaw and pawpaw. We go to interesting places and meet nice people and other puppies."*)



**Captain Ron discussing politics with one of the locals**



**Kiki gets her ice cream fix**

We walked back to the boat where Captain Ron and the pooch rested. Patti walked to the seafood place and got a bag of ice (the marina was out). Once she refilled the coolers, she walked back to town to visit the shops and enhance the local economy.

We had planned on eating dinner at the restaurant next to the marina but it turns out it is not open on Mondays. We looked up several other nearby restaurants and they were also closed on Mondays. We found a restaurant that was open on Mondays and it was crowded. Being only two of us, we were seated right away and had a nice meal. We got finished just in time to miss the "trivia" contest (what a shame) and headed back to the boat.

It turns out that the people on the boat in front of us on the dock are from the same marina we keep our boat at, St. Johns Yacht Harbor, and are headed for the same place, Monroe Harbor Marina in Sanford, FL that we just left a few days ago. We had a nice talk.

Patti took the K-9 for her evening walk. She (Kiki) met lots of people and got petted. Patti just talked to the people, nobody petted her. Captain Ron headed for the showers. By the time he was

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

done, it was dark out and Patti decided to skip her shower. Darkness is coming earlier and earlier.

Tomorrow we head for Jekyll Island Marina.

## **Captain's Log, day thirty, (October 13, 2020)**

As is our custom, we got up and walked the puppy. We did our engine checks, unplugged and untied HIGH COTTON and backed away from the dock. We turned around and headed north. We again had the current going our way and were making good time for about a half hour until we left Florida and entered Georgia. Then we slowed way down. The explanation is, the tide was going out and the border between Florida and Georgia is the St. Marys River. The water from northern Florida was flowing north to the river and out to sea while the water from southern Georgia was flowing south and out to sea.

After a while we passed the Kings Bay submarine base. At first we didn't see anything, but then Patti noticed a submarine docked with a fence around it. Captain Ron jokingly suggested that we go over for a closer look but there was a small grey speedboat with a gun mounted on the bow cruising back and forth in front of it so we didn't.

Eventually we got far enough that the current reversed because it was going out to sea in St. Andrews Sound. We were now travelling with the current and making up for lost time. We saw some of the wild horses on Cumberland Island but they were way far in the distance. St. Andrews Sound is a well-known trouble spot on the ICW because the channel goes out nearly to the ocean and there are several miles of unprotected water. Today though, it was calm and peaceful. We saw some shrimp boats dragging their nets for shrimp. We also saw a guy riding a bicycle on the beach with a large "Trump" flag on the back.



**A Trump flag on a bicycle on the beach**

A few more miles and we arrived at the Jekyll Harbor Marina. We called on the radio and a dockhand showed up on the dock to catch our lines. They now have a mobile device to register guests and accept payment but he had to go back and get that. It saved us a trip, though.

There is a pool and a hot tub for boaters to use. Patti decided against the pool but Captain Ron thought the hot tub would do wonders for his aches and pains. It helped while he was in it but the effect was temporary.



**Captain Ron soothes away his aches and pains**

This marina also has a golf cart for boaters to use to get around the island and since we've been here before, we know about it and know where to go in it. The first stop was the Dairy Queen for ice cream. For some reason, this particular Dairy

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

Queen never has chocolate ice cream only vanilla, so that makes the choice pretty simple. Kiki got her share. She likes to ride in a golf cart and remembers how to jump in and onto the seat.



**The crew gets their ice cream treat.**

After the ice cream stop, we headed for the historic district and the gift shops. Patti once again had the urge to help the local economy. She made it to the last one without opening her purse, but came out of that shop with a bag.

We headed back to the marina where Patti arranged for a bag of ice while Kiki and the marina's guard cat eyed each other suspiciously.

Back at the boat, Patti refreshed the coolers with the new ice while Captain Ron and Kiki rested up.

Patti went for a shower. Once she returned, the humans walked to the restaurant for dinner while the K-9 dined on dog food on the boat. After dinner, Captain Ron took his shower. One of the odd things about this marina is, to get to the heads and showers, you have to walk through the restaurant's outside dining area. It feels a bit odd, but there's really no other choice. The restaurant was pretty busy for a Tuesday.

We planned on anchoring between here and Thunderbolt, GA (a suburb of Savannah) but we

may just continue to Thunderbolt. We'll see how it goes.



**Sunset in Southern Georgia**

## **Captain's Log, day thirty one, (October 14, 2020)**

We had a cool and quiet sleep last night until the Sea Dog heard people walking on the dock a little before 7:00 AM. Apparently she thought they shouldn't be there and started barking to warn them away. It was almost time to get up anyway so we did.

We got dressed and walked the wide awake dog. Knowing that we would be anchoring tonight, Captain Ron topped off the potable water tanks so we could take showers and not run out of water. He checked the oil and coolant and the bilge for leaks and found everything to be OK.

We unplugged the power cord, untied the dock lines and headed north. Today was a good example of the tidal currents in southern Georgia. For most of the day we were either traveling a knot and a half slower than our seven knot cruising speed or a knot and a half faster. We don't change the engine speed to try to keep a steady speed; we just set it at what would normally be seven knots and take what we get.

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

We saw several shrimp boats today. When you buy Georgia shrimp in the store or restaurant, this is where they come from. When you buy generic shrimp at the grocery store they come from a shrimp farm in Indonesia. Captain Ron had Georgia shrimp a couple weeks ago in Florida and they were delicious.



**A shrimp boat in GA**



**A southbound trawler on the ICW**

We saw several dolphins today (Kiki saw them also) and just before we turned into the creek where we anchored, we stopped and watched a dozen or so dolphins diving and swimming in one area. We wished we could have stayed longer, but one of the two larger recreational boats we saw today was approaching at high speed and we wanted to get out of its way. Surprisingly, this

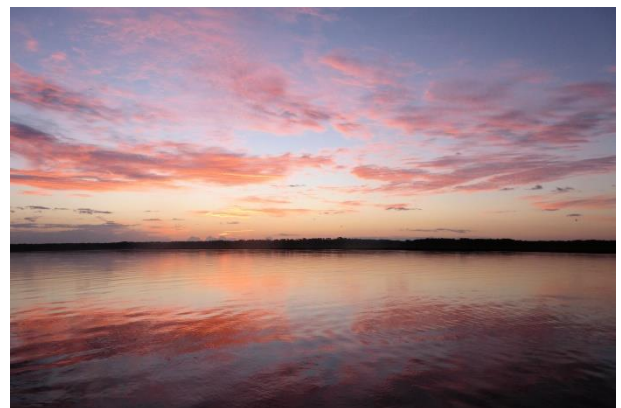
captain did what he was supposed to do, he called us on the radio and said that if we would slow down, he would also slow down to pass us with a minimum wake. Among experienced boaters, this is called a “slow pass”. That’s the courteous thing to do and we appreciated it.



**Every once in a while we see a sailboat sailing on the ICW**

We anchored in Walburg Creek a few hundred yards off the ICW. We warmed up the remains of a couple different restaurant meals for dinner and have only a couple servings of spätzle left.

It looks like it will be pretty cool tonight so we should sleep well. We should make it back to Thunderbolt, GA tomorrow.



**Sunset on Walburg Creek**

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

## Captain's Log, day thirty two, (October 15, 2020)

We woke this morning to dolphins swimming around the boat. Actually, what woke us up was the no-see-ums (gnats) that are apparently small enough to get through our window screens. They started biting and we couldn't sleep any more. We sprayed the screens a while back in the hopes of repelling them, but perhaps the treatment has worn off. Anyway, we saw a rare sight for us, the sunrise.

We took Kiki out into the cockpit to see the dolphins and then we prepared to get underway. We raised the anchor and headed back to the ICW.

The Georgia ICW at this point is miles and miles of miles and miles. We could sometimes see buildings far in the distance to the west, but mostly it was marsh grass and trees. Several times we were headed down sounds, towards the ocean, only to turn back inland just before we got there. And of course, the currents reversed at each inlet, raising or lowering our speed.

We saw several groups of dolphins and stopped to let the Sea Dog watch them while they dove and did dolphin stuff. *(Kiki writes: "I love to watch the big fishies when they play in the water. I really like when they swim alongside the boat.")*



The Sea Dog on dolphin watch



A bald eagle at red marker 208

As we neared Thunderbolt (a Suburb of Savannah), we encountered several seemingly unnecessary no-wake zones. Our suspicion is that if you own a home on the ICW and know the right people, a no-wake zone will appear in front of your house to protect your dock and boat.

We got within sight of the marina and called them on the radio. The dockmaster said they had no record of our reservation (Patti had called and made one two days ago) but they had room anyway. We expected him to come to the dock and grab our lines but he didn't, we had to dock ourselves.

We took on a little over forty gallons of diesel fuel and then walked the boat from the fuel location back to where we will spend the night.

We checked in and paid. Captain Ron took a shower, followed by Patti. Kiki explored the grounds and did her business. *(Kiki writes: "I love boating but I like to get my feet on solid ground from time to time and explore the area.")*

The K-9 was left behind to guard the boat while the humans walked to Tubby's Tank House for dinner. Who would name their kid "Tubby"?

After dinner, Patti and the pooch took a load of clothes to the laundry while Captain Ron scanned

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

with the TV for useable stations. It's good to keep up with the news and weather while travelling.

Tomorrow, we leave Georgia and enter South Carolina, heading for Beaufort. We should be home Saturday.

## Captain's Log, day thirty three, (October 16, 2020)

We woke to a half dozen Krispy Kreme donuts on the back of our boat. We put the donuts inside for the time being and walked the K-9. Then we did our usual engine checks, unplugged the power cord, untied the lines and headed north. We broke out the donuts once we got under way. Yum, donuts!



Sunrise on the ICW in Thunderbolt, GA



Our complimentary Krispy Kreme donuts

Just a few miles north of Thunderbolt we encountered a dolphin who decided to swim along with us for several minutes. The Sea Dog was impressed and barked at the dolphin. The dolphin finally turned away, but the pooch was now wide awake and spent the next several minutes going from side to side on the boat looking for more.



The K-9 watching for the big fishies

From a distance, we could see a large container ship heading up the Savannah River but by the time we were ready to cross the river, it was long gone. We had a safe and simple crossing and were back in our home state of South Carolina.

We encountered a few larger cruising boats headed south, probably for the winter. Mostly power boats, but a couple sailboats. There were also a lot of smaller boats out and about. It was a beautiful day for boating.

We stopped for a pod of dolphins just north of Hilton Head Island. Kiki watched and barked as they swam around in circles and dove into the water. Eventually they swam away and we continued north on the ICW.

Captain Ron left Patti at the wheel and went below for his "power nap". He woke up as we were nearing Beaufort and took the wheel again.

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---



**Patti at the helm**

As we neared Lady's Island Marina where Patti had made reservations, we tried to contact them on the radio. We tried several times without success so Patti called on the phone. The guy said he would call us back on the radio. We waited but he didn't. Finally we heard him calling on the radio but he didn't seem to hear our answer.

At this point, we were adjacent to an empty T-head dock and one of the resident boaters suggested that we tie up there so we did. At this point, the marina guy showed up and plugged in our electric power cord. He had us pull HIGH COTTON forward to the end of the dock because he was expecting another boat later today.



**HIGH COTTON safely docked at Lady's Island Marina**

We took the hound up the dock and to the grass to do her business. There were liveboard

boaters hanging around with their own dogs so the humans talked and the dogs sniffed each other's butts.

We went to the office to pay and by this time the other boat had docked behind us. This is a couple from New Jersey, headed to Florida for the winter. They have homes in both places. We talked a bit about places we have both been and our experiences.

Back at the boat, Captain Ron and the K-9 rested while Patti walked up to the marina store to see if they had anything she couldn't live without. Well, they did so she came back with a bag of goodies and a little less money in her purse.

There is a very nice seafood restaurant just steps from the marina so we walked over to it and had dinner. It was very good and we have leftovers for tomorrow night. We even had chocolate cake and ice cream for dessert.

Speaking of walking, Captain Ron happened to look at the bottom of his boat shoes and realized that they were well past worn out. The tops are fine but the tread is worn through. It seems it's time for a new pair.



**Captain Ron's worn out shoes**

We decided to skip showers tonight and get to bed early for an early start tomorrow. If all goes



# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

as planned (knock on wood), we should get to our home base, (St. Johns Yacht Harbor) at about 5:00 PM when the current will be slack and it will be easiest to back into our slip.

## **Captain's Log, day thirty four, (October 17, 2020)**

We awoke to a balmy outdoor temperature of sixty degrees Fahrenheit. We dressed in our best winter boating clothes, hats and gloves. It was about 6:45 AM. Patti walked the pooch while Captain Ron made the boat ready. Since the temperature was forecast to remain cool and the winds were forecast to be about 15 knots, we considered staying where we were and leaving tomorrow. Checking tomorrow's forecast, it was no better so we decided to get underway anyway.

Our journey today had several long, wide open stretches of water and we had waves and wind to deal with. It was a bit uncomfortable but not unsafe. We have dealt with much worse in our travels. The temperature soared to sixty eight by noon. We kept our winter clothes on because of the wind.

We did see several dolphins, but none worth stopping for so Kiki didn't get to see any "big fishies" today. Besides, we didn't want her hanging over the edge of the boat looking in the rough seas even though she is restrained by a leash.

Today we finally saw several cruising boats heading south on the ICW, presumably to winter in Florida or the Bahamas. There were probably more than a dozen, ranging from sailboats to trawlers and motor yachts. They must have thought we were lost and headed in the wrong direction. We even saw a shrimp boat on the Stono River. It may have been heading to the repair facility further south.

Because of the varying currents between Beaufort and Charleston, it's pretty hard to predict exactly when we will arrive at St. Johns Yacht Harbor. We were planning on slack current (to make docking easier) at 4:30 PM but we arrived a little after 4:00 PM. The current was still pretty strong and it may be that the 4:30 PM prediction was inaccurate anyway. In any event we decided to go to our slip despite the current. It took Captain Ron a few tries, but he got the boat docked and no other boats were harmed. The dockhands complimented him but that might have had something to do with the tip.



**Back home to Charleston (John F. Limehouse Bridge)**



**Cruisers headed south to warmer weather**

## The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

We got tied up and plugged in and began the process of sorting things out and packing what needs to go home. Patti put the towels and some other things in the washing machine (at the marina) so we wouldn't have to take them home, wash them and bring them back. Other stuff (and food) will go home.

Our friends, Patti and Bruce were on their boat waiting for us to arrive, but somehow we slipped right past them. Captain Ron took a shower while Patti and the pooch walked down to their boat to visit. We had loaned our car to one of the other boaters who has no car here so we got the key back. Patti took a shower and got the clothes out of the dryer.

We decided to just spend the night on the boat, have breakfast and drive home Sunday morning. We are all pretty tired.

# The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

---

## Epilogue

Duration	34 Days
Distance	826 NM
Time underway	118 hours
Fuel used (diesel)	219.5 gallons
Fuel consumption	1.86 GPH
Fuel mileage	3.76 NMPG
Fuel cost	\$ 548
Nights anchored	4
Nights on free docks	0
Nights in boatyard	0
Nights in marinas	30
Marina cost	\$ 1592.85

Are we idiots? Are we insane? We just spent thirty four days on a boat traveling to and from an obscure town in central Florida that we could have driven to in five and a half hours!

Well, insane or not, we enjoyed our cruise south on the AICW and up the St. Johns River past Jacksonville and to the head of navigation in Sanford, FL. Some scientists believe that all life (including eventually humans) evolved from the sea so maybe we have a hidden desire to return to it. Or maybe not. It doesn't really matter, we enjoy our boat cruises.

We had a great time, saw lots of interesting sights and wildlife, including alligators, dolphins, manatees, turtles and many birds of all kinds, and met some nice and interesting people along the way. Many of these people cruise for months at a time. Some live on their boats and have no land based residence at all.

Having a portable wireless hotspot and a laptop PC on board allowed us to pay our bills online and keep in touch with friends and family. We also posted daily updates to our friends on Facebook. Internet access also allowed us to find anchorages,

fuel stops and marinas and read reviews of these places by other cruisers.

An interesting update on this voyage was the use of the Navionics boating app on an Android tablet. We were able to enter our destination for the day and get a continually updated ETA. Some folks actually use this "app" for navigation, but Captain Ron prefers his trusty Garmin chart plotters for that.

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  
Boating and Cruising Guide to the St. Johns River  
(Tom Kranz)

Our neighbor kept our lawn mowed, brought in the mail and packages, and kept an eye on the house for us. For anyone else considering an extended boat cruise, we have to say "Go for it!" For us, it's time to start planning the next trip.