

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

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

The following is an account of a cruise north on the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) from Charleston, SC to the top of the Chesapeake Bay and back.

Captain's Log, day one (May 1, 2021)

Well, the Widmans are on the move again, this time heading north towards Maryland and the Chesapeake Bay with its many interesting large and small towns and secluded anchorages. It's a place we have been before and love to explore.

As we have been accustomed to doing, we drove to the marina the afternoon before our departure date, loaded the boat with last minute supplies and parked the vehicle in the marina's auxiliary parking lot so it wouldn't take up a valuable space for other marina tenants. Since we planned to anchor the first night or two, we decided to take showers at the marina before going to bed. We also topped off HIGH COTTON's potable water tanks.

We had planned to leave first thing in the morning and Patti was up and getting dressed at first light. Of course this woke Captain Ron and Kiki the Sea Dog. Captain Ron got up and got dressed, but the Sea Dog, being unaware of the plans for the day, thought it would be best to sleep a while longer.

Eventually, we got her up and dressed and Patti took her for her morning walk while Captain Ron checked the engine, stowed the power cord and made the lines ready for casting off. Patti and the hound returned and we left the slip and headed for the Stono River.

We hadn't even made it out of the marina when

Captain Ron noticed that the GPS was not showing HIGH COTTON's position or speed. Not Good.

AS soon as we got out into the river, Captain Ron turned the system off and back on ("rebooted" it in computer terms) and everything started working as it should. We'll have more on this later.



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

It was pretty windy today, windier than we would have liked, but not so windy as to be unsafe. As we were crossing the Charleston Harbor, two motor yachts, nearly identical and apparently travelling together overtook us. They were going just a bit faster than us but in the wide open harbor, neither of us had to slow down for the passing. We also saw a tugboat pulling a large barge headed out to sea, but we crossed his path well ahead of him so there were no issues.

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As we headed up the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) we saw a few dolphins swimming and stopped to let Kiki watch the “big fishies”. Being it was a Saturday, there was a lot of boat traffic on the water, especially small boats. We were passed by a half dozen or so motor yachts and we managed to pass a sailboat or two. We could hear the faster motor yachts on the radio as they contacted the slower boats to arrange for a “slow pass” (the boat being passed slows down so the boat passing can do so with a minimum wake and rocking of the slower boat).

After a couple hours, Patti took the wheel to give Captain Ron a break. As he was sitting in the seat next to the helm seat, he noticed a stain on the fiberglass of the helm about the size of a quarter. He decided to clean it up so he went below, got some spray cleaner and paper towels, went back up and tried to clean it. No dice, the spray cleaner wouldn't touch it.

He went down again and returned with boat cleaner/wax. Same result, the stain remained. He went down and returned with “hull cleaner”, an acid based product used primarily to remove stains at the boat's waterline from dirty water.

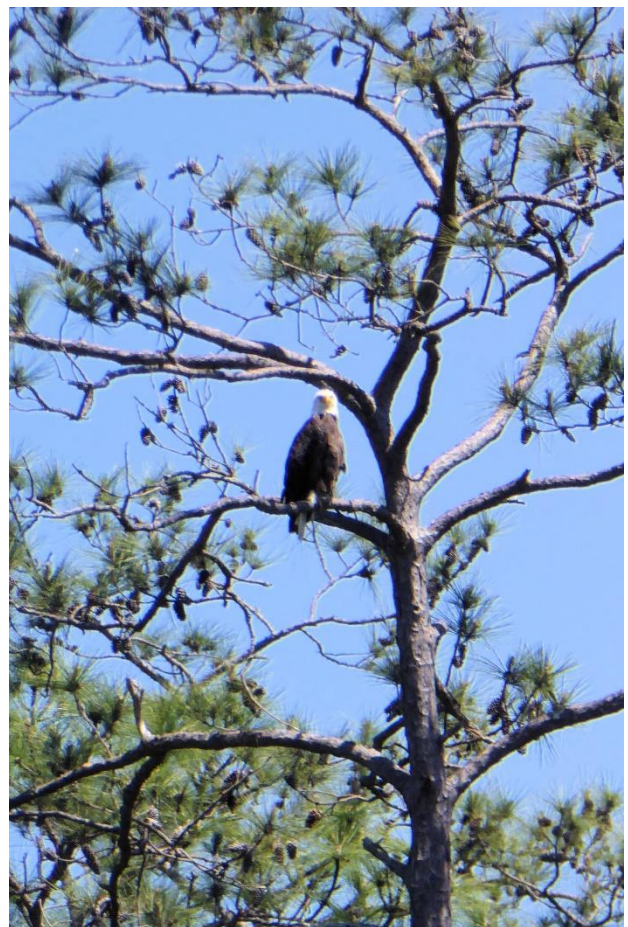
This eliminated the stain and he neutralized the acid with water and the spray cleaner, but now he had the spray cleaner, the cleaner/wax and the hull cleaner on the flybridge and needed to put them away.

He picked them all up and headed for the flybridge ladder, but the cleaner/wax bottle slipped from his hand and hit the deck.

Most of us have at one time dropped a bottle of water or soda onto the floor and the worst that happens is the bottle dents. Boat cleaning

products, on the other hand, are sold in plastic bottles that are guaranteed to shatter when this happens.

So, as Captain Ron picked the bottle up, not knowing that there were holes in both ends, the cleaner/wax ran out all over the vinyl seat cushion, Kiki's beach towel and Captain Ron's pants! This took a while to clean up and the remaining cleaner/wax was funneled into an empty soda bottle where it should be safe.



A bald eagle south of Winyah Bay on the ICW

Our plan for today was an unusually long distance leg, from our marina just south of Charleston, SC to a well-known anchorage behind Butler Island on the ICW a few miles north of Georgetown, SC. It took us almost ten hours underway to get here.

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As we pulled into the anchorage, we could see the two motor yachts that passed us in Charleston Harbor already anchored. They probably beat us here by an hour or more. We anchored HIGH COTTON, shut off the electronics and engine and covered the flybridge helm. Then Captain Ron noticed that the wind was blowing us into some vegetation near the shore. He turned on the chart plotter but it again wouldn't show the boat's position or the depth. He used a boat pole and determined that we had blown into shallow water. He used the anchor rode to pull us out of the weeds and then the engine to move the boat to deeper water. Checking on the chart plotter he found that the plug on the power cord was loose so he reinserted it and locked it in place with the locking ring. This caused it to start working again and hopefully that was the problem this morning as well. We shall see.



Our fist night anchorage

Dinner was fried chicken, mashed potatoes and cole slaw, left over from last night. Our microwave oven makes short work of leftovers. As we were eating dinner, a good sized sailboat came into the anchorage and anchored across from us.

We will read, surf the net, watch TV and hit the sack early. Tomorrow is another day.

Captain's Log, day two (May 2, 2021)

We forgot to mention yesterday about the sailboat that came into the anchorage after us. We were eating dinner and heard music. Not the typical music we often hear coming from other boats, it sounded like the music from an ice cream truck.

There are no houses or neighborhoods visible from the anchorage or nearby so Captain Ron went outside to investigate. It turned out that the guy on the sailboat was sitting on his deck playing a flute! That's something we have never seen or heard before while boating.

So back to the present; we woke at about the break of day and got ourselves dressed and ready to go. Captain Ron topped off the coolant tank on the engine, something he had been expecting to do since he replaced the coolant a couple of weeks ago. He noticed a bit of water or coolant in the bilge that shouldn't be there so he will have to keep an eye on that.

We got underway just a few minutes before the two motor yachts did and they passed us shortly after they exited the anchorage. We spoke with them on the radio and they are heading for Kent Island, MD so we may see them once we get to MD ourselves.

There was a lot of boat traffic today but it wasn't an issue on the Waccamaw River. We pulled into the Osprey Marina south of Socastee, SC and took on sixty eight gallons of diesel fuel and ten pounds of ice for the cooler. Osprey Marina is well known to cruisers as having below average fuel prices. While we were fueling, three small boats came in for gasoline.

Back on the ICW, boat traffic increased as we got nearer to Myrtle Beach, SC. Traffic is not a big

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issue, but it's bad when many of the people operating boats have no experience or no knowledge of boating rules and customs. In some cases, boaters display very poor judgement like passing at high speed between two other slower moving boats or boats moving in opposite directions. Sometimes, of course, alcohol is involved.

We decided that if there was space available at the free dock at Barefoot Landing (which used to be a "real" marina for overnight stays), we would stop for lunch and ice cream. When we got there, it looked full, but there was one vacant slip and Captain Ron shoehorned High Cotton into the empty slip.

We covered the flybridge, locked the door and walked up the ramp to Lulu's Restaurant. Although it's pretty much an open air restaurant, they only allow dogs at three tables out front and they were full. Patti walked to a Mexican restaurant to see if dogs were allowed there but in the meantime, one of the tables at Lulu's opened up so that's where we ate. Apparently, Lulu is related to Jimmy Buffett (the singer). The food was OK.



HIGH COTTON docked at Barefoot Landing, SC



The crew stops for lunch at Barefoot Landing, SC

After lunch (which was about 1:30 PM), we walked around a little bit and then got Ice cream.

Captain Ron had mint chocolate chip, Patti and the Ship's Puppy had vanilla.

We returned to the boat, backed out of the slip and began the last hour and a half of today's journey to a well-known anchorage on Calabash Creek, right at the SC/NC line. Boat traffic for this last part of the trip was especially heavy and the effects of alcohol consumption were apparent as people were yelling and dancing on their boats.

We made it through without incident though and pulled off the ICW into Calabash Creek and anchored HIGH COTTON for the night. A half hour or so after we anchored, a large sailboat came in and anchored uncomfortably close to us. Hopefully, we will not swing into each other during the night. On board the sailboat is a man, a woman and a barking dog. Kiki and the dog had a conversation for a while and then they apparently got tired of each other and the barking stopped.

Tomorrow, we plan on stopping at a marina and the trip is only about four and a half hours so maybe we can sleep in until 8:00 AM or so.

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Our Calabash Creek anchorage

Captain's Log, day three (May 3, 2021)

Last night, after we went to bed, a large shrimp boat entered the creek and either anchored or grounded itself and kept all its lights on and its engines running until about 10:30 PM or so. Our best guess is that it was waiting for high tide so it could continue up the creek to its home base. Whatever its reason, the noise made it difficult to get to sleep, but things like this happen when cruising and there's no choice but to deal with it. The sailboat did not swing close to us.

We didn't make it to 8:00 AM; we were up at 7:00 AM and underway about forty minutes later. Just after we got underway it started to drizzle but it stopped after a few minutes. It was mostly cloudy for the first few hours and then the clouds parted and the sun came shining through.

A couple hours into our trip, a US Coast Guard small boat passed us going the opposite direction. They all waved and Captain Ron figured they would turn around, board us and do another "safety Inspection". They didn't, they kept going. Several minutes later, they came up behind us but stopped a boat that was about to overtake us. After a few more minutes, the same Coast Guard boat

overtook us and sped away. Apparently, this wasn't the day for the Coast Guard to stop two geezers and a puppy in a slow boat!

We would have liked to have stopped in Southport, NC for the night and visit the charming town, but the marina suffered heavy damage in a hurricane last year and is not fully rebuilt yet so they are not taking transients. We called and got a slip at Deep Point Marina just past Southport on the Cape Fear River. This is also where the ferry to Bald Head Island takes on and discharges passengers.

We have been here before and it's a nice marina with free laundry and a nice pool, but it's not within walking distance of anything except a small beach.

So, we arrived about 12:30 PM, swung around for a port side tie so Captain Ron could apply his inspection sticker to the window and got tied up. The pooch wanted to get off the boat so Captain Ron carried her down the ladder and set her on the dock. She took off running at top speed with Captain Ron following along as fast as a geezer can run. Somehow, she seems to instinctively know which dock and which ramp to take to get to shore. She stopped underneath the doggie bag dispenser and did her business. That was convenient. (Kiki writes: "*When you gotta go, you gotta go!*")

About that time Patti showed up so she walked Kiki around the grounds and to the office while Captain Ron connected the shorepower cord so we could cool the boat down.

Captain Ron recently installed a Wi-Fi enabled programmable thermostat to control the boat's heating and cooling and while this saves a lot of money when the boat is at home in the slip, it is intended for residential use and doesn't account

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for being without power while the boat is anchored or underway. The batteries were dead and had to be replaced before the air conditioner would work. Captain Ron is going to have to do some engineering on this problem.

Once the air conditioner was running, Captain Ron went to the office and paid for our stay while Patti returned to the boat and got the clothes and towel that the boat wax had been spilled on and put them in the marina's free washer.

Lunch was sliced tomatoes and cucumbers with scallions, mozzarella cheese and balsamic vinegar dressing.

We asked the Sea Dog if she would like to go to the beach and her tail started wagging so we walked to the beach. She saw the water and immediately ran for the shoreline and jumped in. Then she came out and dug in the sand. This was repeated several times and she ran on the beach. There were waves of six to eight inches so she didn't swim, she just ran out to get her feet and belly wet. (Kiki writes: *"I love going to the beach. I get to swim in the water and dig in the sand!"*)



Kiki plays at the beach

On the way back to HIGH COTTON, we met one of the regulars at the marina and her dog. Kiki got petted and fussed over and we had a nice

conversation. All the people we have met here seem very nice.

Back at the boat, the hound got a bath before she was allowed inside to get rid of the sand she had been rolling in. Captain Ron rinsed most of the salt and grime off of the boat but didn't actually wash it.

Patti and Captain Ron took much needed long, hot showers in the marina facilities. Sure, we can shower on the boat, but one of the perks of staying at a marina (most marinas) is the long, hot and relaxing showers.

We still have a bit of chicken left so Patti pulled it off the bones and mixed it with cream of chicken soup to be served over rice with side of green beans. This is one of our "go to" solutions to left over chicken and is actually very good.

The next leg of our journey takes us about eight miles up the Cape Fear River and then into Snows Cut and then behind the barrier islands to Wrightsville Beach, NC.

Unfortunately, tomorrow morning, the tidal current will be going out while we are travelling upstream and this will make for a slow trip. Also, the winds are predicted to be the opposite direction of the current which makes for rough seas. In retrospect, we should have continued up the river today since it was afternoon and the current was going the same way we would have been. No big deal, we will handle it.

So after dinner, it was top off the water tanks, walk the puppy and hit the sack. We just saw a bit of lightning and heard some thunder. Hopefully, it will be done by morning. If not, we will probably change our plans.

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Captain's Log, day four (May 4, 2021)

When boating, it pays to be flexible. Today would be a great example of that. We thought about staying at Deep Point Marina until noon or so to get a favorable current up the Cape Fear River, but winds were predicted to pick up in the afternoon so we decided to head out early and miss the worst of the current. We were actually up and underway about 6:30 AM. The current did slow us down but not as much as we had feared and we were off the river in an hour and a half. We called a marina in Wrightsville Beach but they were full and couldn't accommodate us. We called another which is really a restaurant with docks and the phone message said they opened at 11:30 AM. Well, we would be well past Wrightsville Beach by then so we decided to head for an anchorage in Mile Hammock Bay on the Camp Lejeune Marine base.

We were talking to another boater on the radio and he informed us that he had called the Marine base and had been informed that the Marines would be practicing shooting tomorrow and would be closing the ICW, at least for part of the day.

Based on this information, we did some calculations and decided that we could make it to Swansboro, NC by about 4:30 PM or a little later. We called Casper's Marina, a place we had stayed before and they told us that if we couldn't get there by 5:00 PM, we should go to the town dock. They declined our offer of paying over the phone for a slip and docking without assistance.

Captain Ron looked up the town dock and decided that it would do just as well as Casper's so he called and made a reservation and paid over the phone.



Seen on the ICW north of Wrightsville Beach

We got to Swansboro about 4:45 PM. By then the winds had become pretty strong and the current is a factor at these docks, but Captain Ron went past the docks, made a U turn and slipped HIGH COTTON between the piling and the dock just like he knew what he was doing. Patti got off and tied the boat up and took the pooch for a walk while Captain Ron connected the shore power cord.

About this time, a sailboat that we had passed earlier on the ICW showed up. The captain did just what Captain Ron had done except his boat was too wide for the slip and he couldn't fit into it. Captain Ron and some other boaters helped him get back out and turned around so he could dock on the "T-Head" (the end of the dock). By this time the winds were really strong and operating a boat in close quarters was really difficult, but he made it in just fine with the help available.

The wind made it seem cold so we (the humans) changed clothes and went to a nearby restaurant for dinner. The town closes at 5:00 PM except for the bigger restaurants.

After dinner, the K-9 got another walk and we had a nice talk with the people from the sailboat.

The weather forecast is calling for high winds

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tomorrow so we may spend another day here. Even though it's only a three and a half hour trip to Beaufort, NC, it's mostly open water and high winds would make it difficult and uncomfortable.



HIGH COTTON docked at the Swansboro, NC town dock



One of the local wild ducks

Captain's Log, day five (May 5, 2021)

The wind blew hard last night, but it was parallel to the docks so we didn't rock much. We could hear it rattling the bimini top frame though. Some of the connectors are a bit worn so there's a lot of motion when the wind blows. Captain Ron will fix that someday. Because of the predicted winds, we decided to stay put here and head out tomorrow. The rest of the boats decided to leave but they were bigger boats than ours.

We walked the Ship's Puppy, brought her back to the boat and went to a restaurant for breakfast. After that, we went back for the Sea Dog and walked back to the main street and checked out the shops. We called and reserved another night at the town dock.



Patti meets Elvis

We returned to the dock where Captain Ron visited with the people on a boat that was built in 1945 and is still cruising. Patti decided to go back to the shops with her credit card and without the distraction of the K-9. She is doing her part to rebuild the local economy!

Captain Ron was on the Internet and saw a post from someone who mentioned being in Swansboro and on the dock at Casper's Marina. He responded by saying where we were docked. We could see their boat and they could see ours. A few minutes later, a couple walked down the dock and knocked on HIGH COTTON. It was the people from the other boat.

We invited them in and we had a pleasant conversation about our boats and places we have been or are heading for.

After they left, Patti warmed up leftovers for dinner along with a can of tomatoes, corn and okra.

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The wind is still blowing pretty hard but it's supposed to slow down tomorrow and we will head out for Beaufort, NC.

Captain's Log, day six (May 6, 2021)

We got up, got dressed, walked the hound and departed our slip at about 8:00AM. We were awake and had no reason to stay, nothing was open yet.

It was a bit windy but nothing we couldn't handle. The wind kept blowing us out of the channel so we had to compensate for that. It was a bit colder than we would have liked so we broke out our gloves and knit hats. We were already layered up in shirts and sweat shirts.



On our way north this fine morning

Captain Ron had predicted about a three and a half hour voyage and sure enough, it was about eleven thirty when we pulled into the town docks at Beaufort, NC.

As usual, Patti took Kiki for a quick walk while Captain Ron connected the shore power cord and got the power on to everything. Then the entire crew went to the office to check in and pay for our stay.



The crew of HIGH COTTON on the town docks, Beaufort, NC

The K-9 got some treats from the dockmaster and even "sat" for him (her only trick). Then we walked back to the boat and left the pooch to guard HIGH COTTON while the humans went to the restaurant that advertises "The Best Burger in Beaufort". We had hot dogs, onion rings, French fries, a soda and a bottle of water for \$10.00.

We came back to the boat, sat a while and then took the hound with us to check out the shops. Each one we went in, Kiki immediately went behind the checkout counter where the sales people would pet her and give her treats. She has these people figured out. In one of the shops, we ran into a couple we had met at Swansboro who are on a sailboat so we talked with them for a while. We also stopped for ice cream and of course, the puppy and Patti shared a cup of vanilla ice cream. Captain Ron had mint chocolate chip. (Kiki writes: "Yes, I like my ice cream.")

Back at the boat, Captain Ron did a scan on the TV and found only four channels that were watchable. These are the local PBS channels and three of them are children's programming, leaving just one to actually watch. Captain Ron took a "power nap".

We each (the humans) took a shower, and then it was off to dinner at a restaurant we remembered

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from previous visits. They specialize in steak and are very good at it.

We came back, walked the puppy and it's time for bed. We will be here another day (it's supposed to rain) and then head out. Our plan is to head for New Bern, NC, but we have to call the marina first and see if they have a slip for us.

Captain's Log, day seven (May 7, 2021)

Today was a day in port so we slept in. We got up and dressed about 8:00 AM and walked the Sea Dog. Patti cooked a homemade breakfast; a poached egg on corned beef hash for Captain Ron and scrambled eggs and bacon for the rest of the crew.

Once it warmed up a bit, we took the pooch and walked down past the end of the boardwalk to the dinghy dock and kayak launching area. Kiki saw where the land sloped down to the water so she ran right in and waded in the water. She did this a couple times and then came back up to the street level in the park. There were people walking by and they all had to stop and pet the puppy. Of course, she loved every minute of it.



Kiki makes some new friends



Kiki gets her ice cream fix in Beaufort, NC

We called the marina in New Bern, NC to see about staying there Saturday and Sunday nights and were told the dockmaster would call us back in a few minutes. After about an hour, Captain Ron called again but couldn't get an answer. Another hour or so went by and Patti called and got the dockmaster. The end result is, we have a slip but we have to pay for a larger slip than we need. Some marinas are like that.

We got back to the boat a little before noon and it started raining (as predicted). Captain Ron started watching his one TV station but they were running re-runs of yesterday's shows so he fell asleep. The K-9 took a nap as well.

Later, after the rain stopped, Captain Ron walked to the North Carolina Maritime Museum and looked through it. When he finished and left, he was surprised to be met by Patti and the Ship's Puppy who were out for a walk.

The marina here gives incoming boaters each a "wooden nickel" that can be exchanged for a beer at their restaurant and since we will be leaving tomorrow, we decided to go there for dinner and cash in the wooden nickels.

We got to the restaurant and Patti realized that she had not brought her mask so she walked back to the boat to get it. When she got back, we asked

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for a table inside (it was in the mid-sixties and windy) and were told that they had no inside seating, only outdoors.

Patti sat down while Captain Ron went back to the boat for his sweatshirt. Kiki was on the boat and getting confused by this.

Captain Ron returned a bit miffed at this point and decided to order a salad since anything hot would cool off before he could finish eating it.

By the time the food came, we decided to just carry it back to the boat where we could eat it in the comfort of a heated indoor room like civilized people so that's what we did.

After dinner, the winds picked up to the point where we decided to go up on the flybridge and fold up the bimini top to stop the rattling. The fittings on the tubing are worn and will have to be replaced at a cost of a couple hundred dollars. Boating is not cheap.

The showers here are a bit "rustic" and it's a bit cold to be running around outside so we decided to skip showers and wait until tomorrow where the marina has much nicer showers. It will still be cold though. And our ride tomorrow is predicted to be pretty cold as well.

Captain's Log, day eight (May 8, 2021)

Yes, Captain Ron is late. He had a busy day and fell asleep early. You have a problem with that?

We decided it would be best to leave Beaufort early to beat the projected strong winds this afternoon. We woke up at 5:30 AM to a balmy 53 degrees outside. The heat was on inside the boat but of course there would be no heat once we left the dock and certainly no heat on the flybridge.

So, we bundled up in several layers of clothes, walked the K-9, unhooked HIGH COTTON from the dock and slipped out of the marina, headed north. We put on our gloves and knitted caps for added comfort.

Captain Ron had rolled the bimini top up and put it in its cover to stop the rattling from the wind and this actually had us sitting in the sun which helped us to feel warmer.

About an hour into our cruise, a boat behind us sounded a long horn blast. Back in the days when boats were powered by steam engines, a system of "whistle signals" was developed to allow boats to communicate with each other. There are several different whistle signals meaning different things, but "one whistle" means the captain will be staying or moving to starboard. Two boats travelling in opposite directions and passing like two vehicles on the road (in the USA) would be a "one whistle" pass. Likewise, a boat overtaking another boat on the right or starboard side would be a "one whistle" pass.

As boats were converted to diesel or gasoline power, they were equipped with horns and the horns were used in place of the whistle.

In modern times, it's far more common to make passing arrangements using the two way VHF radio. Commercial captains will still use the whistle terminology by saying something like "I'll see you on one whistle". Recreational boats usually simplify this by saying something like "I would like to pass you on your port (or starboard) side.

Anyway, this is probably the first time in our cruising experiences that a boat has actually used a horn signal to indicate that it wanted to pass us. So, we slowed, it slowed, went on by and then

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speeded up. The next boat made no signal at all; we saw it coming, slowed down and let it go by.

We had heard from some people in Beaufort that the marina in Oriental, NC was fully booked with a “flotilla” (a bunch of boats travelling together) and as we approached Oriental, they were passing us and calling the marina on the radio.

We got to the Neuse River and while Oriental is across the river and the ICW turns to the right, we turned left and headed for New Bern, NC. This is about a three hour detour from the ICW, but New Bern is a pretty neat town.

North Carolina has several ferry boats that allow motorists to cross the wide rivers where there are no bridges. The ferries are crossing the rivers while we are travelling either up or down them so we have to avoid colliding with them or getting in their way. Fortunately, they transmit AIS (Automatic Identification Signal) signals and the electronics on our boat identifies them and notifies us if they are a danger to us and if we need to slow down or change course to avoid a collision. Travelling up the Neuse River, we did encounter one of the ferries and did have to change course slightly to avoid such a collision.



North Carolina ferry boat on the Neuse River

Boats have to go through a rather low bridge to get into the New Bern Grand Marina and the bridge is now on a restricted schedule. We called the bridge tender and learned that there was about seventeen feet of clearance from the water to the bridge. HIGH COTTON could probably have made it through, but just to be safe, we decided to lower the bimini top and the VHF antenna.

When Captain Ron tried to remove the pins that hold the frame in place, they wouldn't budge. He had to hand the wheel over to Patti and run down the ladder for tools. Apparently, the people who replaced the bimini top canvas a few months ago had made some adjustments to the frame and didn't put it back together correctly.

Anyway, he got the top down and we made it through the bridge but he couldn't put the pins back in so he had to run down the ladder and get two screwdrivers to use in place of the pins temporarily. Something else to work on!

We called the marina and they sent a guy to help us dock. As usual, Kiki and Patti headed for shore leaving Captain Ron to hook up the power.

Once he had everything situated, we walked to the marina office to check in but found it gone and the doors padlocked. We walked around and couldn't find the office so we called on the phone. It turns out the building the office had been in is going to be renovated so the office is now in the yacht club building a block away.

When we went to pay, there was a discrepancy between what we were about to be charged and the price quoted over the phone. It was more than a hundred dollars, something related to the size of the slip, not the size of our boat. The guy said he would check with the boss and we could settle up later.

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Today was the day of the farmer's market and we didn't want to miss that so we took the mutt back to the boat and headed for the farmer's market. We got fresh green beans for the puppy and other produce for ourselves.

They had closed the main streets in town for an antique car show so we dropped the stuff from the farmer's market off on the boat and walked back to see the cars. It makes Captain Ron feel old when he sees the cars he drove as a teenager shown as "antiques"!



Imagine riding around town in this beauty

After checking out the cars, we walked to a little pizza restaurant we have enjoyed every time we visit New Bern and shared a pizza.

We walked to the "old time" hardware store where nails are still sold by the pound in a paper sack and all the items have price tags, not bar codes. We couldn't find anything we needed and they didn't have laundry detergent pods so we walked back to the boat and took the Sea Dog for a walk. We passed by the new marina office and found that our price had been reduced to what we had been quoted so we paid. Kiki got some dog treats and entertained the staff by playing with them before eating them.

Many of the towns and cities we visit on our trips have some sort of symbol to help people

remember their visits. In New Bern it is bears. There are a couple dozen life size replicas of bears in the downtown area, dressed in different costumes. We saw several of these in our walks around town.



Kiki and one of the New Bern bears

Back aboard HIGH COTTON, it was time to walk back to the yacht club building and take showers (the humans, that is). These are nice, fairly new showers with plenty of hot water so we enjoyed them. They are a bit further away from the docks than we would have liked though. Patti also did a load of laundry.

Captain Ron returned from his shower and lay down on the V berth and turned on the TV. He got engrossed in a documentary on the history of baseball and couldn't tear himself away until it was over and time for bed. He was too tired to write.

Tomorrow we can sleep in.

Captain's Log, day nine (May 9, 2021)

We did sleep in until about 8:00 AM. We got up and walked the hound, and then Patti fixed a "boat cooked" breakfast again. Same menu; a poached egg on corned beef hash for Captain Ron and scrambled eggs and bacon for Patti and the pooch.

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Patti decided to strip the bed and wash the sheets and towels and then vacuum the boat and mop the floor while Captain Ron worked to adjust the bimini top frame so it could be put up or down properly.

Once the bed was made and the floor was dry, the entire crew walked to town to visit the shops and get ice cream. If anyone hasn't noticed, going for ice cream on out boat trips is a ritual.

We came back to the boat for a while and then decided to walk along the river walk to the park and the small sandy beach. It's only perhaps fifty feet wide and not for swimming although it works well for dogs. Kiki saw the water and ran right in. Ducks congregate there and she chased the ducks. This is a beautiful waterfront park and since it was a warm, sunny (but windy) day, lots of people were walking, sitting, exercising and just enjoying the park.

Eventually, of course, we walked back to the marina, left the K-9 to guard the boat and walked back to town for a light meal of burgers. (Kiki writes: *"I know they are going out for food but they didn't bring me back any of it."*)



Kiki gets her ice cream in New Bern, NC

By this time, it had become really windy and we had to walk back to the boat and then take turns walking to the yacht club building for showers. Our

plan is to leave in the morning and either anchor or spend the night at a commercial shrimp boat dock that also accepts transient recreational boaters.

Captain's Log, day ten (May 10, 2021)

Our plan for today was to cruise for five or six hours and then either anchor or spend the night at the R.E. Mayo dock which is really a commercial shrimp boat dock that accepts transients. There's nothing to do there and it's reported to be really "rustic" but it's the only dock in the area and it's only forty cents per foot. That would be \$11.20 for HIGH COTTON.

There was really no rush, but we woke up early so we decided to head out. The hound got her customary morning walk while Captain Ron checked the engine oil level and disconnected the shore power cable. Patti untied the lines and hopped aboard and Captain Ron eased HIGH COTTON out of her slip. We put the bimini top down so we could clear the bridge and slid right under. Captain Ron swears he will eventually actually measure the boat's height but so far he hasn't. Again, we would probably have cleared the bridge with the top up but didn't want to take the chance.

Patti steered the boat while Captain Ron put the top back up. It was easy now that it has been adjusted.

Our first hour was "smooth sailing" as they say, but after the first hour the winds picked up and eventually it became uncomfortable and difficult to keep the boat on course.

After another hour, we decided that we should check into a third option (plan "C") and called the marina in Oriental, NC which would end our day on the angry river at three hours.

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After a bit of confusion, they determined that they had a slip for us so arrangements were made. We were in need of diesel fuel anyway so we headed first to the fuel dock and took on sixty two gallons of diesel fuel. Then it was time to head for our slip.

That is where the “fun” began. As we were heading between the docks and a boat at a dock across the way, a boat already in the marina decided to back out of its slip. Captain Ron stopped HIGH COTTON but the wind was blowing us toward the other boats so he had to use the bow thruster to steer in reverse. To add to the fun, a small boat was approaching us from behind and apparently didn’t have the sense to get out of the way.

In the end, Captain Ron was able to avoid the other boats and the docks and get past the backing boat to the location of our slip.

So backing into the slip required heading towards a concrete sea wall, then swinging the bow around to the left but avoiding a large boat docked at the free dock and then backing into the slip between two wooden pilings. This would have been fine except that the bow thruster was barely capable of moving the bow against the wind and then it became intermittent. Eventually, we did make it into the slip without damage to HIGH COTTON, the other boats or the pilings.

As usual, Kiki was the first one off the boat, followed by Patti and then Captain Ron. Kiki had a short walk and christened the grass and then we went to the office to check in. The office has a couple of cats and one was sitting in a chair napping. The Sea Dog was intrigued with the cat, but the cat completely ignored her. (Kiki writes: “*I love to chase cats. It’s great fun, at least for me. I don’t know about the cats.*”)

A few days ago, Patti reported to Captain Ron that the hinge on HIGH COTTON’s toilet seat was broken. Now this hinge is not an ordinary toilet seat hinge from the home center, it’s a special proprietary hinge only available as a marine part. It’s available mail order and from amazon.com, but when you’re on the move it’s very difficult to buy things this way. West Marine carries the part but only in their larger stores and not the one in Oriental, NC.

There is a store close to the marina that carries a rather haphazard selection of boat parts so Captain Ron walked over to it, not expecting much. Low and behold, there was the needed toilet hinge hanging on the wall!

He scooped it up along with a couple other things he figured he could use, paid for his purchases and walked back to the marina.

We decided to walk to the West Marine store and the Piggly Wiggly store just past it to check on some other boat parts and buy a few needed groceries and laundry “pods” so we did. This is about a one mile walk. We saw a sandwich shop along the way and stopped in for a light lunch.

West Marine didn’t have the main parts that Captain Ron needed but he did get two small set screws. When we went to pay, the counter guy said to just take them, he wasn’t going to ring up a dollar and a few cents. We thanked him and walked to Piggly Wiggly and loaded up a small grocery cart.

This Piggly Wiggly is well known in boating circles for having a shuttle van that takes boaters and their groceries back to whatever marina in town they are staying at so we got a ride back. Now that’s the way to do business!

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The "Piglet Shuttle", Oriental, NC

Patti put the groceries away and we got the hound and sat in the chairs on the marina lawn looking at the boats coming and going. The couple we met in Swansboro is here at this marina and we talked to them and other people. As usual, the Sea Dog got petted.

Patti decided to walk across the street and get ice cream so Captain Ron dog sat while she ran the errand. She came back with ice cream for the entire crew. Then the rains came so we went back to the boat. Captain Ron fell asleep on the bed.

Dinner was left over steak and a baked potato from the restaurant in Beaufort and fresh broccoli from the farmer's market in New Bern. We could have gotten a nice dinner at the marina's restaurant, but we didn't want our leftovers to go bad.

Captain Ron took a shower, Patti and Kiki did not. Tomorrow it will be cold, but with light winds and we plan to run about six hours to Belhaven, NC., a town we visited a few years ago but a marina that's new to us.

Captain's Log, day eleven (May 11, 2021)

If the river was angry yesterday, it was furious today! Yesterday, the wind and waves were

coming from behind us ("following seas") which made it a bit uncomfortable and difficult to keep the boat on course.

Today the wind and waves were coming towards us ("head seas") and the boat would ride up a wave and then the bow would drop down into the trough between the waves. The next wave would then crash over the bow of the boat sending spray as high as the flybridge. It was like a ride at a water park except it was cold and it lasted for two and a half hours until we got off the Neuse River and into protected waters. We were wet and the puppy had to sit in her mawmaw's lap the entire time because she could not stand up on the deck.

But, we digress. We got up about 6:30 AM, walked the K-9, did our engine checks and slipped out of the marina at about 7:20 AM. We seem to have gotten ourselves in the company of some seasoned cruisers because some left before us and others were getting ready to leave.

The winds were predicted to be calm until 10:00 AM or so but as you can tell from our opening paragraph, somebody was woefully mistaken. This is not unusual.

Because the seas were so rough, Captain Ron could not go below and get his phone to reserve a slip at Belhaven Marina. When he was finally able to call, there was only one spot left for us so we took it.

We had predicted a six hour cruise and we arrived at the marina in pretty close to six hours, 1:30 PM.

It turns out the marina doesn't have traditional slips, just side ties along a dock. There was a nice spot at the end of the dock, but that was not for us. We were directed to a spot between two other boats and only a few feet longer than HIGH COTTON. Captain Ron would have liked to make a "U" turn into the slip to avoid the large, wide boat but we were directed to come in beside the wide

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boat. That made docking a bit more difficult, but in the end, no boats were harmed and HIGH COTTON ended up securely tied between the other boats. The owner of the big boat came out to help the dockmaster get us in (and to protect his own boat).



HIGH COTTON safely docked at Belhaven Marina, NC

We got ourselves situated and walked the hound while the dockmaster helped another boat into its spot and then we went to the office and paid for two nights. It's supposed to be nasty tomorrow, but considering how today's conditions did not match their predictions, who knows what tomorrow will bring.

We walked to the one restaurant that is open on Tuesday and ordered Barbeque plates. We said "restaurant" but it's more of a "take out" or eat at the picnic tables sort of place. We decided to bring our meals back to the boat because it looked like it was about to rain. (Patti writes: *"It wasn't very good."*)

After our meal, we walked back to town. There's a decent hardware store near the marina (the entire business district is near the marina although there is a shopping center and grocery store a couple miles away). Captain Ron got a one foot long piece of 1/8" rope (some folks would think of it as "string") to repair the pin that holds the bimini top up. He felt bad because the rope was seventeen

cents per foot and he only needed one foot. The lady told him to just take it but he did find a battery operated work light that he could use for checking things around the engine so in all, he left \$15 at the hardware store.

There are only a couple of other shops besides the hardware store in downtown Belhaven so we checked them out. On the way to the second one, the Sea Dog found a puddle to wade in. Then she found a place where the grass leads down to the river so of course she had to jump in and get herself wet and muddy.

Being wet and muddy, she couldn't go into the shop so Captain Ron volunteered to sit in a chair outside and keep her there.

A little girl, perhaps five or six years old came out of the shop and fussed over the pooch. It turns out she is the owner's daughter and stays with her mother at the shop when she is not in school. She petted Kiki, hugged her, led her around on the leash and showed Captain Ron how she could do cartwheels in the grass. It occurred to Captain Ron that she might get a little bored sitting in a gift shop every day. She picked some flowers from the lawn (weeds, actually), purple ones for Kiki and a white one for Captain Ron. She said it matched his hair!

We returned to the boat and Captain Ron watched TV while Patti took a shower at the marina office. Then Captain Ron took one. This is our second marina in a row that provides soap, shampoo and towels, just bring your own washcloth.

We took pictures of the sunset, walked the puppy and talked to some of the other boaters. We're staying through tomorrow night so hopefully we can catch up on our sleep.

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Sunset from our dock at Belhaven, NC

Captain's Log, day twelve (May 12, 2021)

Today is a day in port. Cold and with predicted rain, we decided travelling would not be pleasant. The outside temperature when we woke up was about 60 degrees and forecast to drop through the day.

The Sea Dog got her morning walk of course and then Patti fixed breakfast for the crew. Captain Ron had scrapple and grits, Patti had a sausage sandwich and the Ship's Puppy had dog food for a change. Patti did a load of laundry.

Captain Ron walked over to the hardware store to buy a new plastic bucket to replace the one on the boat that is beginning to crack. They had no buckets. Mops, rags and sponges they had, but no buckets. He came back to the boat and got busy pumping about a quart of water out of the bilge that had accumulated over the past week. He is trying to figure out where it is coming from because it's not supposed to be there. One of the most important rules of boating is that the water is supposed to stay on the outside of the boat!

After that and arranging for the marina to dispose of it (there was some oil in it as well), he adjusted

the belts on the engine that drive the alternator and coolant circulating pump.

By this time he was getting into the "fix it" mode so he removed the toilet seat and replaced the broken hinges with the new set he found in Oriental, NC. The potty is safe to use now. (Patti writes: *"It's about time the toilet seat got fixed!"*)

By this time it started to rain so he had to put his tools away. Lunch was sliced tomatoes, scallions and mozzarella cheese with balsamic dressing. After lunch, Patti made tuna salad for us to eat tomorrow while underway.

It was raining and getting colder but we walked to the marina office and discussed everything from boating to politics with the other boaters who also had nothing better to do on a cold and rainy day. Most of the folks we meet in marinas are friendly and discussions like this are pretty common.

Our plan was to eat dinner in a "real" restaurant in town so a little after 5:00 PM we called to make sure they were open. They were so we bundled up, put on our rain jackets, got out our umbrellas and braved the rain and the 48 degree weather to walk the three blocks to the restaurant. The food and service were very good. Captain Ron ate almost all of his seafood platter (a small piece of fish came back to the boat for the puppy) and Patti brought half of her ravioli back for another day. (Kiki writes: *"My vet says I should not eat people food but it tastes so good! I think it's OK if I have just a little bit."*)

We decided not to walk to and from the showers in the cold so we will do without tonight. Our plan is to head out and make it to the Alligator River Marina tomorrow, but plans are subject to change and if it is this cold tomorrow, that plan may well change. We shall see.

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Captain's Log, day thirteen (May 13, 2021)

(Note to self: The next time we decide to cruise north, postpone the start date at least a couple of weeks!)

It was a balmy 47 degrees this morning when we got up and got dressed. The boat behind us that was supposed to leave at 5:00 AM was still there and the guys were up and moving about but not getting the boat ready. Then they walked somewhere for breakfast.

Because of the cold, we were in no real hurry to get on the water so we had a light breakfast and Captain Ron put the rest of his tools away.

The two guys on the boat behind us returned and pulled out so while the dockmaster was there, we asked him to help us as well. Apparently, there is shallow water next to the dock so it's not possible to swing out and make a U turn like one would normally do. Captain Ron used the bow thruster while the dockmaster walked the stern of the boat the other way. Anyway, we were out of there a bit before 8:00 AM. By that time the sun was shining brightly and the temperature had risen to 49 degrees.

The other boat must have been in a hurry because by the time we exited the Belhaven channel, their boat was out of sight.

The first hour and a half was on the Pungo River and we weren't uncomfortable although we were layered up and wearing our knit caps and gloves. Several larger, faster boats passed us, some slowing down to minimize their wake and some not.

The Pungo River leads to the Alligator River-Pungo River Canal, a man made canal of about twenty one miles connecting the two rivers. It takes us three hours to transit this canal. There is almost no civilization on this canal and the guide books suggest watching for wildlife and especially bears. This was our seventh time transiting this canal and the most exciting wildlife we have seen was a deer a few years ago. We see deer when driving on the highway so this was nothing special. Today we saw five turtles and a couple birds. Kiki was on the lookout though.



Aqua Dog on the lookout for wildlife on the canal

As was the case earlier today, several faster boats passed us. We did eventually pass a sailboat.



This guy is in a hurry

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After the canal, we had about two and a half hours on the Alligator River. The winds picked up and as the river got wider, we began to feel their effects, but it was not nearly as bad as our time on the Neuse River a couple days ago.

A large motor yacht that had been following and slowly gaining on us caught up with us a couple miles before the Alligator River drawbridge and to avoid having the bridge open twice within a few minutes or ask us to wait, we sped HIGH COTTON up to match its speed. That was about a half a knot.

We had a reservation at the Alligator River marina so as soon as we cleared the bridge, we made a turn to port into the marina channel. The dockmaster had told us to turn around and pull in behind a sailboat but when we got there, the sailboat was moving. We pulled in behind where the sailboat had been and the dockmaster walked us up to the space where the sailboat had been. It turns out, the sailboat didn't like that spot and asked to be moved to a slip. This is a great spot, pulling out in the morning will be easy as pie.



HIGH COTTON at the Alligator River Marina, NC

We walked to the office to check in and pay but because the office is also a gas station, convenience store and restaurant, the K-9 and Patti had to wait outside.

After paying, we walked back to the boat where Captain Ron got busy changing the oil in the engine and transmission and the filters. This is required every one hundred hours which equates to about seven hundred miles.

The dockmaster said we could leave the used oil next to the dumpster so we carried the jugs to the dumpster and walked to the restaurant. This restaurant (food counter really, but they do have tables for diners) serves just about anything you would want as long as it can be fried. Good for the cholesterol.

We both ordered fried chicken which came with French fries and cole slaw. Cole slaw is possibly their one exception to frying.

After dinner, we took showers, walked the puppy and it's time for bed. There's no need to get up early tomorrow.

Captain's Log, day fourteen (May 14, 2021)

Greetings from downtown Camden, NC, population 809 (plus two transient boaters). But we digress.

We got ourselves up early enough to walk the hound, buy breakfast sandwiches from the marina/gas station/restaurant and cast off at 7:40 AM. We were third in a line of three boats heading north from the Alligator River Marina. After a few minutes we actually passed one that was cruising a little slower than us.

There are two routes for the ICW here, one slightly shorter route, the Virginia Cut and the Dismal Swamp route. We chose the Dismal Swamp route and the other two boats chose the Virginia Cut so after about a half an hour, we went our separate ways. We like the Dismal Swamp route because it is more rural and scenic.

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It takes about two hours to cross Albemarle Sound and it is often a very rough two hours, but today the winds were light and the trip was not bad.

It's another hour up the Pasquotank River to where it narrows at Elizabeth City, NC. One small trawler passed us on the way to Elizabeth City and ended up in the same marina we are staying in.

We usually stop in Elizabeth City, but there is some racial unrest and protesting going on currently so we decided to continue a bit further to Lamb's Marina in Camden, NC. It's a half hour or so further up the river from Elizabeth City and a place we have never been before.

New (to us) marinas are always a surprise and this one was no exception. We came down a narrow channel into a very narrow fairway (the space between the slips) to the fuel dock at the end of the fairway. Surprise, there was another boat on the fuel dock! Fortunately, it had already fueled and was moving to a transient space so we were able to dock, tie up and take on forty one gallons of diesel fuel. After that, we moved to a transient space near the fuel dock. Captain Ron went to the office and paid while Patti and Kiki met the staff and local boaters. It's a flat rate of \$35 per night here, about half of what we often pay.



HIGH COTTON docked at Lamb's Marina, Camden, NC

This marina seems to be mostly full of permanently docked boats and people living aboard. It's also a trailer park with permanent residents.

There is an attached Mexican restaurant, but it closed down a few months ago. The locals recommended a restaurant across the highway so we walked to the Dollar General store and picked up some needed supplies and then went to the restaurant for an early dinner. It was good and inexpensive. We shared a chocolate brownie with four scoops of ice cream, whipped cream, chocolate syrup and cherries for dessert.



Our dessert in Camden, NC

Back at the marina, we freed the K-9 from guard duty and walked around and met the folks. It's a "rag tag" bunch, but very friendly. There's a cat that lives here and Kiki wanted to chase it, but the cat wanted no part of it. (Kiki writes: *"I think it's fun to chase cats."*)

Our plan is to head out of here at 6:00 AM to make the 8:30 AM locking at the south end of the Dismal Swamp. That will allow us to make the 1:30 PM locking at the north end and get to the Tidewater Yacht Marina in Portsmouth, VA by mid afternoon. These locks open only four times each day to conserve water so boaters have to plan for their schedule.

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The showers here are a bit “rustic” and a long walk from where we are tied up so we’ll just skip them and clean up in Portsmouth. It’s supposed to be a chilly morning again tomorrow so we’ll be bundled up.

Captain’s Log, day fifteen (May 15, 2021)

Why did the beaver cross the river? Probably for the same reason the chicken crossed the road; to get to the other side!

Anyway, we finally saw “wildlife” on the Pasquotank River. A beaver swam across the river in front of us. Later, another beaver did the same thing. Beavers swimming across the river are not really a spectacular sight, all you see is the head and an outline of the body and tail beneath the water, but it’s better than nothing.

So, to make the 8:30 AM Great Mills Lock opening (one of only four each day), we had to leave the marina at about 6:00 AM. That meant getting out of bed at 5:30 AM, not something we often do, but we did it.

We may sound like a broken record complaining about the temperature, but the thermometer showed 43 degrees. (Kiki writes: *“I don’t care about the cold, my mawmaw will wrap me in a blanket and keep me warm.”*) (Patti writes: *“Yea, but nobody wraps me in a blanket! It’s supposed to be spring and we shouldn’t be needing our winter clothes!”*)

We got out of the marina and back onto the river at about 6:00 AM. The sun was just rising but since the river runs through a forest, the trees blocked the sun. We encountered some fog at first which made it a little hard to see, but we managed. A few minutes after entering the river, a fast bass boat sped past us, waved and was soon out of

sight. The river’s fish population will be down by a few by tonight.



Leaving Lamb's marina at 6:00 AM, temperature 43 degrees

Surprisingly, our AIS showed another boat ahead of us on the river, but travelling slower than us. Eventually, we caught up with it and passed it. Of course, this only made our wait at the lock longer, but it’s better to be early than to wait an hour and a half for the next opening.

There were just the two boats in the lock and we were the first. The opening at the northern lock was supposed to be at 1:30 PM but there’s a place to tie up and walk to the grocery store so we wanted to allow time to do this. We got there about 12:30 PM so we had an hour to stock up, roll the grocery cart to the boat, unload it and roll it back to the store.



What the sign says

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Tied up for a run to the grocery store

In the meantime, the other boat had called the lockmaster and he said he would be delayed because there were two boats heading in the other direction. In the end, it was 2:00 PM by the time he opened the lock and let us in.

We got to the Tidewater Yacht Marina about 3:45 PM and got into our slip and tied up with the help of one of the dockhands. Entering the slip was easy, but finding your assigned slip in a large marina like this can be a problem when you've never been there before. We started down the wrong fairway and had to back out and make a turn into another one.



Entering Norfolk, VA from the south

As we said, this is a large marina and for the Ship's Puppy, it was a very long walk to grass. Actually, she didn't make it to the grass but she did get off

the docks and onto some gravel beside the parking lot. (Kiki writes: *"I think there should be a law that marinas have to have grassy places for puppies to pee and poop close to the boat slips."*)



HIGH COTTON docked at the Tidewater Yacht Marina

We walked back to the office and checked in and paid for two nights. Kiki got a dog biscuit and played with it before eating it. The staff was amused.

A guy from a boat a few slips down from us came over and mentioned to us that their boat had been on our dock at our home marina, St. Johns Yacht Harbor, up until a few months ago. They had gone to Florida from there and are now doing the Great Loop. We mentioned to him that we usually stay at the Waterside Marina across the river and he said it's a good thing that we didn't stay there this time because there's a big festival going on in the park this weekend and he could hear the live bands from here. We can hear them now from our slip and inside the closed up boat. Sometime, things work out for the best.

One of the things we judge marinas by is the heads and showers. The heads and showers here are sub-par at best. The water doesn't get hot enough, there is not much pressure and no privacy. The men's and women's are separate of course, but there's no privacy. One room to change in and

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then three shower stalls in each. It's like being back in junior high school.

We each showered, heated up leftovers and a microwave meal and then took the Sea Dog for the long walk to shore.

Back on HIGH COTTON, it's time for bed after a very long day on the water. We will explore the town tomorrow.

Captain's Log, day sixteen (May 16, 2021)

Well, we didn't explore the town today but we decided to stay another day and explore it tomorrow.

By the time Captain Ron got up and out of bed, Patti and Kiki had already walked the quarter mile to land and the quarter mile back. Patti fixed breakfast for everyone and then Captain Ron decided to tackle some boat repairs. He is of the opinion that boat builders install things on a boat and then build the rest of the boat around them. As the one hour job turned to three hours, several rest breaks were required and the puppy was exposed to several new words.



Captain Ron working up a sweat

In the end though, the mission was accomplished, things were reinstalled, the work area was cleaned

up and the tools were put away for another day. It's been said that the definition of "cruising" is fixing your boat in exotic places. Portsmouth, VA isn't really "exotic" but it's not home.

So it was time for Captain Ron to get ointment rubbed on his back and to lie down for a while and watch TV. At least, being in a large metropolitan area, there are many stations to choose from and we aren't limited to four Public TV stations.

Since we weren't going to make it to town, we decided to eat in the marina's restaurant "Fish and Slips". It seems to be very popular with the locals and the food was good and the prices were reasonable.



Captain Ron got his favorite, raw oysters on the half shell

As we were heading for the restaurant, a sailboat came in and docked next to us. It was the sailboat that had shared the docks with us in Swansboro and of course they remembered Kiki so we had to bring her out and let them pet her. Kiki seemed to remember them.

When we finished dinner and returned to HIGH COTTON, Captain Ron took a short nap. Then he decided to take a shower. We wrote about the heads and showers and of course, Captain Ron would have liked to run the hot shower water over his aching back. Alas, it was not to be. These showers are lukewarm at best. Maybe we'll say

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something to the marina staff and see if they can turn the heat up a bit.

Captain Ron got on the Internet and paid bills while Patti and the hound walked another half mile to land and back.

So tomorrow we will walk to town and see the sights. Then we'll decide where to go next. That is still up in the air.



Looking across the marina and Elizabeth River at Norfolk, VA

Captain's Log, day seventeen (May 17, 2021)

Captain Ron has often said that one should try to learn something new every day. Well, today he learned that if you are ordering a meal in a Thai restaurant and the waiter asks if you want it "spicy", "medium spice" is not the correct answer!

A few bites had his nose running and a few more had his eyes watering. The waiter brought extra napkins when he noticed Captain Ron wiping his eyes. The food was actually delicious, but a bit too spicy for this old American guy. We learned later that it's best to ask for "American spicy".

The sun had been shining for some time by the time Captain Ron rolled out of the sack. Patti and the pooch had already had their walk and returned to the boat. Patti had a protein shake for breakfast

and Captain Ron had a piece of coffee cake from a farmer's market a few days ago.

We went to the office and paid for an extra night. Kiki got a dog biscuit. Captain Ron asked the dockmaster if there was a chance of turning up the water temperature in the showers. Apparently, he did because in the evening when we took showers, the water got as hot as we wanted it to be.

Leaving the K-9 to guard the boat, we walked along the riverwalk to High Street where the shops and restaurants are in downtown Portsmouth. We passed the High Street Landing where boats can spend the night for free (but with no power or restrooms) and saw a Camano like ours tied up there. We spoke to the couple on board but they were heading for the ferry to Norfolk and couldn't talk.

Once we got on High Street, Patti found some mouthwash she needed at the drug store and some vitamins at the Dollar General. Captain Ron is looking for a plastic bucket and they had one there, but he decided to wait until we will be in a town with a hardware store and spend a little more on a better quality bucket.

After considering the options, we decided to eat at the Thai restaurant. As we mentioned above, the food was delicious but Captain Ron's dish was very spicy. Patti's was not. We stopped in the visitor center and Patti got a souvenir.

Walking back along the riverwalk it was apparent that Portsmouth is a very noisy city, at least the part along the river. There are shipyards working day and night making loud noises and boats blowing their horns to signal their intentions as they leave their docks. We could see large aircraft carriers and other military ships being worked on. These ships are immense.

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Back aboard HIGH COTTON, Captain Ron worked on the routes we will be taking for the next few days. He had called earlier and made reservations for tomorrow and the next day. He also filled the water tanks so we will have water for the next few days.

After our big Thai meal, we didn't feel like eating dinner so we took turns showering (the humans, that is) and ate a snack of cheese and apple slices. And as we mentioned above, the showers were hot this time.

Tomorrow will be a leisurely exit, no getting up at 5:30AM and no 43 degrees temperature. We are heading for Yorktown, VA, a place we have never been before.

Captain's Log, day eighteen (May 18, 2021)

We didn't need to get up early this morning, but it's starting to get light at 5:30 AM now so we ended up getting up and dressed, walking the hound and pulling out of our slip at 7:20 AM. Our slip neighbors who we first met in Swansboro were just minutes behind us. (Kiki writes: *"I will be glad to get out of this place. It's too long of a walk just to go pee pee."*)

Heading down the Elizabeth River from Norfolk and Portsmouth, we were third in a parade of four boats. We passed several warships in their slips with smaller Navy gunboats milling around, protecting them from terrorists or careless boaters.

As we neared the mouth of the river where it empties into the Chesapeake Bay, we could see the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel to our right. The parade of boats had spread out by this time with the lead boat nearly out of sight and the last boat

(our slip neighbors) falling further behind. It's a sailboat so that is to be expected.

We saw a cargo ship entering the harbor and another leaving. We also encountered several tugs pushing barges. The Norfolk/Portsmouth area is a busy place.



A tug boat rushing to its next assignment



An aircraft carrier waiting for orders

The other boats headed east, probably towards the Eastern Shore of VA but we turned north towards the York River. It was a bit chilly once we got onto the Bay and we had to add an additional layer of clothing. We had put the bimini top up while waiting for the lock opening on the Dismal Swamp Canal and we were shaded from the sun. We decided to roll it back up and let the sun shine on us. That made it seem warmer.

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As we were cruising north up the Bay, Captain Ron saw a brown object which he assumed was a piece of cardboard trash in the water. He altered course to avoid it but when we passed it, it turned out to be a turtle, perhaps eighteen inches in diameter. Unfortunately, before he could get his camera ready, we had passed it and it dove out of sight as our wake rocked it.

We turned west up the York River and a few minutes after Noon, Yorktown and the marina came into view. There were close to a dozen small Coast Guard boats milling around the dock, pulling in and out and we had to avoid them to get into our slip. Perhaps they were doing some sort of training.

The dockmaster met us at our assigned slip and got us tied up for our stay. These are some very long, wide and sturdy docks and would be suitable for a boat twice the size of HIGH COTTON.

We went to the office to check in and pay, but there were no doggie treats. Kiki was disappointed. (Kiki writes: *“Every marina is supposed to have doggie treats. I think it’s a rule.”*)

Yorktown has a Riverwalk with shops and restaurants and a fairly large beach next to the marina. The Riverwalk and beach were surprisingly crowded for a Tuesday. Unfortunately, pets aren’t permitted on the main beach but the dockmaster told us where there was a small section of beach where dogs were allowed.

We walked to the “dog beach” and of course, the hound ran straight for the water. She alternated between running into the water and rolling and digging in the sand.

Eventually she tired of this so we walked to the other end of the Riverwalk. People were sitting on the benches and Kiki would walk right over to them expecting to be petted. Most of them did, of

course, and we talked to several of them. Surprisingly, many were tourists from out of town. There is a lot of history in Yorktown, but staying here for just one night, we will miss it.



Kiki gets all the attention wherever she goes

We returned to the boat where the pooch got a shower before being allowed inside. We left her to guard the boat and walked to one of the restaurants for a late lunch. Even though we only got sandwiches with a side, we had more than we could eat so we brought the rest back to be consumed another day. Captain Ron entertained himself by using an app on his phone to identify the songs and artists of the music that was playing as we ate. Times have certainly changed since he was a working musician!

Captain Ron had big plans to put on his swimsuit and hit the beach for a swim in the river, but by the time we finished our meal it was getting windy and probably too cold to play in the water.

Instead, we walked along the Riverwalk and checked out the shops but didn’t buy anything.

We returned to the boat and rested up. Captain Ron took a short nap.

It was time to walk the hound again. She seems to like Yorktown a lot better than the marina in Portsmouth. There is plenty of nice grass, lots of

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mulch around the trees, sand and the river, of course and people to pet her. She did her business and got petted some more. We found the marina showers but they are a long walk from the boat so we are skipping showers tonight. Tomorrow's destination has really nice facilities.



Patti poses with the Founding Fathers

So it's time to hit the sack. The sun will be up early tomorrow.

Captain's Log, day nineteen (May 19, 2021)

It happened again! The Birthday Bunny somehow found his way into a locked boat and left birthday cards for Captain Ron. There was no sign of forced entry, he must have had a key or somebody let him in.

The daylight woke us up again so after walking the hound, we did our engine checks, unhooked the power and the lines and backed out of our slip.

Captain Ron has determined where the leak is coming from that is letting water accumulate in the bilge. He taped a paper towel under the raw water pump and sure enough, it was wet after a few hours of running the engine. Now he has to decide what to do about it. He does have a spare pump that he could install in a half hour or so, but on the

other hand, spraying the bilge down with dawn dishwashing detergent and letting the water slosh around in the bilge and then pumping it out is getting rid of oily residue. He will probably install the spare pump at some point.

Our trip down the York River today was uneventful except that we saw some dolphins. Unfortunately, they don't seem as social as the ones in South Carolina and further south and they didn't stick around. Kiki was disappointed but she will get over it. (Kiki writes: *"I like seeing the big fishies swimming and jumping out of the water."*)

It was a beautiful day on the water today with just a few small clouds but mostly sun. We started the day with long pants and two shirts but by the time we approached the Rappahannock River, we were down to shorts and T shirts. Captain Ron took his shirt off for a while to work on his tan. Patti did not.

We pulled into Dozier's Regatta Point Yachting Center and everything was the same as when we were here three years ago. The staff remembered us and we remembered them. They have a "self-serve" bowl of dog treats so Kiki got some and entertained the staff by throwing them around before eating them.



HIGH COTTON at Dozier's Regatta Point Yachting Center

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The hardware store here closes from Noon to 1:00 PM every day for lunch so we waited until 1:00 PM, got the loaner van and headed out. They didn't have exactly what we needed at the hardware store so we went to West Marine. Captain Ron left there empty handed as well but he likes to look around for things he might need someday.

The next stop was the Dollar General. Patti bought eggs, vitamins and sodas. Captain Ron bought a belt to hold his britches up. Belts were \$40 at the hardware store, \$30 at West Marine and \$10 at Dollar General. He has lost some weight lately and was having trouble keeping his britches up around his waist.

Next door to the Dollar General is the grocery store where we got bacon and other necessities. We also got some of their "famous" fried chicken, homemade pasta salad and apple cobbler.

Back at the boat, we took the pooch for a walk and she chased lizards. Then Patti gathered up the dirty clothes and put them in the marina's washing machine. They have a beautiful swimming pool here and Captain Ron wanted to take a dip, but when he tested the water, it was way too cold. Instead, he went back to the boat and figured out our itinerary through the Memorial Day weekend. Our experience has taught us that it's best to reserve a slip in advance of holiday weekends and that it's best to be in a slip when so many people are out on the water in their boats, often for the first time in months.

Dinner was leftover Thai food for Captain Ron and fried chicken (from the store) for Patti. Dessert was apple cobbler.

This marina has luxurious heads and showers so we took advantage of the opportunity to take long, hot showers. Patti put another load of clothes in the washing machine. We walked the puppy again

and Patti retrieved the last load of clothes from the dryer and put them away.



The crew relaxes in the rockers on the marina's front porch

We are heading to Washington, DC so tomorrow we will be fueling up and spending the night at a marina near the mouth of the Potomac River.

Captain's Log, day twenty (May 20, 2021)

We hated to leave Regatta Point, but we have places to go and things to see. It's a beautiful marina with beautiful facilities and we always enjoy our stays there.

As has happened for the past few days, we were up shortly after daylight so after the Sea Dog's walk, we got ourselves and HIGH COTTON ready and headed out about 7:15 AM. It wasn't cold but it was a bit chilly so we had long pants and doubled up shirts. The first half hour or so was directly east and into the rising sun. This makes it hard to see the screen on the chart plotter. It's also a narrow channel leading out from the creek where the marina is so it's important to follow the channel markers precisely.

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After leaving the Rappahannock River, we turned north on the Chesapeake Bay and the sun was no longer a problem.

The Potomac River is the next major river off the Chesapeake Bay on the western shore north of the Rappahannock so after a couple hours, we veered off to the west into the mouth of the Potomac River. We also crossed the border into Maryland. We saw a couple of sea turtles, but they were under water so we didn't get a good view. We also saw a ray, probably a cow nosed ray swimming by. All of these sightings were brief and the puppy missed them. Along the way, we stripped off our extra shirts and changed into shorts. It got warm.

As we approached the Point Lookout Marina, we began dodging crab pots. They were everywhere including in the channel into the marina. It turns out that many of the local crabbers keep their boats at this marina and Patti talked to some once we were fueled and tied up. They said that so far, crabbing has been poor this year.

We called the marina for instructions and were directed to the fuel dock where we took on about forty three gallons of diesel at \$3.15 per gallon. There was MD state tax on top of that. Prices are getting higher.



Point Lookout Marina, Ridge, MD



Patti waits in the marina lounge for the boat to cool off

The marina's restaurant is closed so the dockmaster (dockmistress?) recommended one of two restaurants about three quarters of a mile walk away.

Leaving the K-9 to guard the boat, we put on our walking shoes and set out for the restaurant. To make a long story short, the food was OK but overpriced, the portions were small, the waiter (he may have been the owner) got Captain Ron's order wrong and the place was filthy. Other than that, the salad bar and Maryland Crab Soup were pretty good. There are just two restaurants in town so one has to hope the other one is better.

Back at the marina, we talked to a boater who was planning on retiring soon and moving to South Carolina. Then we got the Sea Dog off the boat

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and took her to the marina's boat ramp for a swim. She ran right in of course and then came out and rolled over in the sand. She repeated this a few times and then it was back to the boat for a shower with dog shampoo before she was allowed inside the boat.

There is a nice swimming pool at Point Lookout Marina as well as an extensive boat yard and shop. The dockmistress said they had a boat just like ours in their shop getting the engine replaced. We didn't bother walking to the pool; it was surely too cold for comfort.

The heads and showers here don't look like much but they are clean and functional. The water was hot and we both got squeaky clean. We will be anchored tomorrow and if we shower it will be on the back of HIGH COTTON.

It's time to hit the sack; daylight will come early tomorrow again. Maybe extra early if the crabbers fire up their engines and head out to work their pots.

Captain's Log, day twenty one (May 21, 2021)

We have said it before and we will say it again, if you are going to be cruising by boat, you have to be flexible. More on that later.

The crabbers did go out early and with their diesel powered boats just a few feet from us, we couldn't help but wake up and notice. So despite our intentions, we were up at 6:00 AM. We walked the K-9, checked the oil and coolant levels, unplugged the power cord and cast off at about 6:50 AM. After about forty minutes, one of the warning lights on the helm came on. No buzzer, just the light. Like most modern cars, these lights have no labels, just pictures. Captain Ron went to the lower helm and the light was lit there too. He got

out the book and discovered that this was the light that showed when the glow plugs are on. Glow plugs are installed on some diesel engines to help them start in cold weather. HIGH COTTON has no glow plugs.

He went back to the upper helm thinking that this was just some fluke, perhaps caused by moisture in a connector somewhere. Then he noticed that the alternator was not charging the batteries. The volt meter that is supposed to show nearly fourteen volts was showing fewer than twelve volts.

Since the marina we had just left was also a working boatyard, we decided to return and see if they could figure out the problem so we made a U turn and headed back. Patti called the marina when they opened at 8:00 AM and they said to bring it in and a mechanic would take a look at it.

We got back to the marina at about 9:00 AM. Captain Ron turned the engine off and then started it back up. Everything returned to normal and the voltage was correct. He did this a couple more times and each time, everything showed normal.

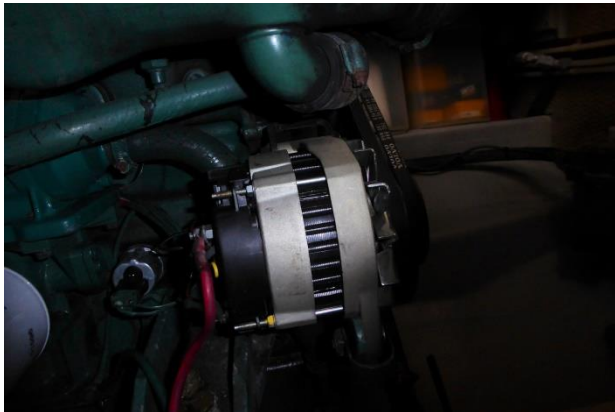
The mechanic showed up with his test equipment and we decided to have him check the charging system anyway. Everything checked out normal but the alternator was a bit hotter than it's supposed to be. The choices were to head back out and hope that what had happened had been a fluke, to have them order a new alternator (and for us to spend the weekend and perhaps a few more days in a town with two restaurants and nothing else) or for him to see if they had an alternator in stock.

We mentioned earlier that they were in the process of replacing a blown engine in a boat just like ours. It turns out that the alternator on the engine being replaced was almost new and it would fit our engine. Captain Ron asked about the

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price and the mechanic said “How about \$200?” (New, they are about \$800). Captain Ron said “And you will install it?” The mechanic said “Sure.” The deal was made and he installed the replacement alternator and left the original for a spare. It has a lot of corrosion on it anyway. Captain Ron will eventually clean it up and package it as a spare in case we need one and there are no others available.

For some reason that Captain Ron didn’t care about, the replacement alternator and installation was \$200 cash and the labor for the original diagnosis was the standard \$85 for the one hour minimum (payable by credit card). There were a couple tips, but for a bit over \$300, we were on our way with a replacement alternator and a checked out electrical system.



Our nearly new \$200 alternator installed and ready to go

It was now Noon and we had travelled two hours today and we are back where we started from. It was supposed to be a six and a half hour trip to our planned anchorage.

We cast off again, dodging crab pots for much of the way. After about five and a half hours, we decided it wasn’t worth the time to continue to our planned anchorage because we would get there too late to take the dinghy to the beach.



Two GFBL (Go Fast, Be Loud) boats on the Potomac River

There are two restaurants on Popes Creek on the Maryland side of the Potomac and there’s a suitable place to anchor in fair weather near the shore past the restaurants so we decided to anchor there.

As the anchor line was coming out of the anchor locker and through the windlass, it pulled a loop of line up through the windlass and it got stuck. Fortunately, there was enough line out to hold us while Captain Ron went below, opened the door to the anchor locker and got things straightened out. We were able to let out more line and set the anchor properly.

It turns out we didn’t go far enough from the restaurants. One has a live band playing and even though we are a half a mile away, we can sing along with the music. It’s “Country Rock”. “Country Rock” is country music played by a band that is more accustomed to, and would prefer to play Rock and Roll! That’s Captain Ron’s opinion and he is sticking to it!

Dinner was left over restaurant food. Between starting out before 7:00 AM and ending up about 5:30 PM, it has been a long day.

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Captain's Log, day twenty two (May 22, 2021)

Compared to yesterday, today was calm and almost boring. The band at the restaurant stopped at a reasonable time, probably 10:00 PM. We could hear them from the V berth but not as loud as before. The temperature was good for sleeping and we slept well. Daylight did wake us though so we were up around 7:00 AM. We couldn't walk the dog of course, but she did go in the cockpit and pee.

Patti rinsed it off with the transom shower and then fixed waffles and sausage for the crew. Now before anyone starts thinking that we have a waffle iron on the boat, we don't; these were store bought frozen waffles. And not quite like the real homemade ones.

We did our daily engine checks, pulled up the anchor and headed back to the channel in the Potomac River. Boat traffic was light early in the morning but as the day progressed, it picked up. And the GFBL (Go Fast, Be Loud) boats started racing down the river. These are the "Cigarette Boats" meant to do nothing but go fast and make a lot of noise. They are mostly owned by middle aged or older men who are trying to attract younger, large bosomed women. (Patti writes: "*I have no comment on that statement.*")

It was close to 1:00 PM when we pulled into Mattawoman Creek and then the Sweden Point Marina which is part of Maryland's Smallwood State Park. The park office had given us our slip assignment but not directions to the actual slip. There are no dockhands; it's entirely "do it yourself". So, we had a fifty percent chance of turning into the correct fairway. We guessed wrong and had to make a U turn and go around to the other side. A boater in one of the other slips showed us which slip was ours and helped us dock. Many boaters are helpful like that.

We went to use the heads and the code we had been given for the locks was wrong. Patti called the office and got the correct code.



Patti & the puppy on HIGH COTTON at Sweden Point Marina

The last time we were here, several years ago, there was a big fishing tournament going on with prizes, an MC, TV coverage, etc. This time there were three much smaller tournaments going on. We watched for a while, returned to the boat and ate some vegetables and dip. We rested a bit and then returned to where they were weighing the fish. The little general store is closed because of Covid so we couldn't buy ice. The lady said it should open soon but of course, we will be somewhere else by then.

We each took our shower and then had dinner of leftover chicken stripped from the bone in cream of chicken soup over rice and some broccoli that we had picked up somewhere along the way.

Tomorrow we head for the Nation's Capital, Washington, DC. The marina is within walking distance of the Washington Monument and the Smithsonian Museum. And of course, the famous fish market.

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Captain's Log, day twenty three (May 23, 2021)

No sleeping in today! At first light the bass boats launched and started buzzing up and down the creek. These boats apparently have only two speeds, stop and full throttle.

So, we went through our usual "get ready" routine and pulled out of the marina about 7:00 AM. Motoring up the Potomac River we were constantly impressed with how big this river is. It's not the Mississippi or the Hudson River, of course, but it makes the Ashley and Cooper Rivers back in Charleston look like creeks.

We passed George Washington's former home, Mount Vernon on the Virginia side and the location of the former Marshal Hall amusement park on the Maryland side. Captain Ron remembered playing music at Marshal Hall a few times and going on the rides. It's been gone now for many years.



George Washington slept here

As we approached the Wilson Bridge which is part of the Washington DC beltway, we passed the National Harbor complex with its marina, Ferris wheel hotels and such. Captain Ron remembers when this whole area was a swamp on the banks of the river. (Patti writes: "*Captain Ron is a walking, talking history book at times.*")



Not many marinas have their own Ferris wheel



Approaching Washington's Woodrow Wilson Bridge

We passed under the Wilson Bridge and were confronted with a half dozen or more sailboats going every which way. Normally in our travels, sailboats are like our boat, travelling from one place to another in a more or less direct route.

Not so on a Sunday in Washington, DC on the Potomac River. These were sailboats just out for a sail up and down the river and apparently manned by people just learning to sail. They would be going in one direction and suddenly turn and go in a different direction. As sailboats under sail, they have the right of way over power boats, but it makes it difficult for the power boater when the sailboat has the track of a squirrel.

The Potomac River in this area is also the flight path for airplanes heading into Ronald Reagan

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Washington National Airport so we had airliners flying overhead. There were also a few helicopters.



Out for a Sunday cruise on the yacht

As we were nearing our marina, a very long and ugly tour boat pulled out in front of us and we had to stop and wait for it to make a turn and get out of the way.



No need to watch for traffic if you have the biggest boat

We got our docking instructions and were soon tied up at the Capital Yacht Club's new facility. We were here several years ago but since then, the city leveled the entire area and rebuilt it as an attraction for locals and tourists. The marinas have been moved and rebuilt but there is now a walkway along the entire waterfront that is wall to wall restaurants. There are places to sit, shade trees, benches and tables. (Kiki writes: "Well,

that's great for the humans, but there is not a speck of grass. I was on the boat for four hours and now I have to pee in the gravel around the trees.")



HIGH COTTON at the Capital Yacht Club docks

It was close to ninety degrees by the time we got off the boat and started walking. We got almost to the seafood market (Washington, DC is known for its Maine Avenue Seafood Market where fishermen (and ladies) sell fresh seafood from barges moored to the docks), when we were looking at a restaurant menu and Patti asked the hostess for a glass of water for the hound. She brought one (with ice) and Kiki got her fill.

We started walking through the seafood market but it's so immense that we decided to come back later without the puppy. They sell fresh seafood and also some cooked seafood so we will probably pick up something for one or two of our meals here.

With the K-9 guarding the boat, we set off to find a late lunch/ early dinner. One block off the wharf on Maine Avenue, we found a Cuban restaurant. We got a "sampler" platter with empanadas, croquetas, plantain chips and brownies along with several dipping sauces. It was delicious. We ate the whole thing, no leftovers.

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Our Cuban "sampler" lunch today

For some reason, the yacht club no longer sells ice, but it is available at the CVS a short distance from the docks so we stopped in and bought a bag and returned to the boat.

A word about the Wharf; this place is big, crowded and almost intimidating. There were hundreds of people walking one way or the other, sitting on the benches and walls, and going in and out of the restaurants. Besides traditional restaurants, there are food stands where one can buy food to eat while sitting on the walls or benches. There are also a few other stores and shops. Being a nice spring Sunday, it was very crowded. A lot of the people seemed to be tourists from other countries. Many were wearing face masks even outdoors.



Crowds at the Wharf, Washington, DC

We had seen an ice cream shop so we asked Kiki if she wanted to go for ice cream. Of course she did so we set out towards the other end of the Wharf. When we got there, the line was very long so Captain Ron and the pooch sat in the shade while Patti got in line and got our cool refreshing ice cream. We enjoyed it, sitting on a bench in the shade and then it was time to walk back to the yacht club.

Kiki met some other puppies along the way, but it was a long walk back for someone with legs as short as hers and she ended up being carried part of the way.

Being a legitimate "yacht club" and being in an almost new facility, everything here is first class. We took turns taking showers and of course, they were first class as well.

It was a long day with a couple long walks and it's time for bed.

Captain's Log, day twenty four (May 24, 2021)

Our slip is near what they call a "recreation pier". Not part of the yacht club, it's part of the Wharf and open to the public. It's not a pier for boating but it does have a kayak rental concession. There are benches for sitting and some artwork.

There were people sitting on the benches, talking and giggling until the wee hours of the morning. We finally drifted off to sleep in spite of them. Also, a couple times during the night, we heard what must have been a large fish splashing in the water next to HIGH COTTON.

Anyhow, we managed to sleep in although Patti and the pooch had completed their morning walk and business by the time Captain Ron rolled out of the bed.

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Patti fixed scrambled eggs and sausage for herself and the puppy and a fried egg and grits for Captain Ron. She found a nail salon that she could walk to, called and made an appointment and set out to have a mani-pedi.

Captain Ron took the hound for a walk along the wharf. She found people to pet her and made a lot of new friends.



The Ship's Puppy making friends in Washington, DC

Back at the boat, Captain Ron tried to get tickets to visit the Washington Monument but found it was closed due to Covid 19. This seems odd since all the restaurants and businesses are open, but it's the government and they do what they want to do.



This is as close as we got to the Washington Monument

Patti returned with all twenty nails freshly manicured so we walked to a restaurant for a hot

dog and fries and then to the seafood market to see what is available. On the way back, Patti detoured to the CVS for ice and to refill a couple prescriptions.

Once she returned to the boat and got the cooler straightened out, she gathered up a load of dirty clothes and took them to the yacht club's laundry. The temperature has dropped to sixty three degrees and it has begun to rain.

Once the clothes were washed, dried and put away, we walked back to the seafood market and bought a pound of steamed shrimp and four ears of corn and brought them back to the boat. Our high expectations were not met; the shrimp were mushy and two of the ears of corn tasted like they had been cooked in vinegar. We should have bought uncooked and cooked it all on the boat. Or just gone to a restaurant. On our last visit here, several years ago we got really good seafood here. Maybe we just went to the wrong stand or they were having a bad day.



The seafood market at the Wharf (before the crowds came)

We walked the hound again. We went out through the yacht club gate and Kiki walked over to a tree with gravel mulch around it. Then she spied a drain running the length of the walk, much like a street gutter. She walked over, squatted and peed down the drain, much to the amusement of a guy

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who had been watching. (Kiki writes: *“What is wrong with this town? There is no place for puppies to pee and poop! Changes need to be made.”*)

We finished our walk and went back to the boat. The pooch wanted to see what was at the end of the dock so we walked out, she looked and sniffed around and we went back to HIGH COTTON.

It’s cold and raining so we are skipping showers tonight. We have another day in port tomorrow.

Captain’s Log, day twenty five (May 25, 2021)

We had no place to be today and no set time to be there, yet we were up and dressed by 8:00 AM. Patti walked the Ship’s Puppy and then we discussed breakfast. We made the decision to go for donuts. We walked to the donut shop and for thirteen dollars and change, we came away with four donuts. Prices are a bit higher here than in Charleston. (Patti writes: *“But they were very good.”*)

Captain Ron carried the donuts back to the boat while Patti detoured to the CVS to see if the prescriptions she dropped off yesterday were ready. They were not.

We decided to walk to the Safeway grocery store, a little less than a mile away, so we got out our folding “granny cart” from the bilge, put on our walking shoes and set out down the street.

This “Wharf” project is complete from just past where we are to the end of the channel but it appears it’s still under construction to where the Washington Channel meets the Anacostia River. We passed a half dozen or more large high rise buildings being built along the river.

For as big and fancy as this urban Safeway is, the food didn’t look that good. The fresh green beans were within a day or so of being unusable and we had to buy the pre-packaged green beans for the pooch. (Kiki writes: *“I love my fresh green beans. They are my special treat.”*)

Anyway, we filled our cart and pushed it back to the marina and Patti put the groceries away. Then she decided to walk up to Maine Avenue and do some shopping. She stopped on the way back at CVS and finally got the prescriptions. In the meantime, Captain Ron filled the potable water tanks so we’ll have plenty of fresh water for the next couple of days. We will be anchored tomorrow night.



The galley wench with the cart in Safeway, Washington, DC



Construction along the Wharf area

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We took the K-9 for a walk on the recreation pier and she met some new friends and got petted. Captain Ron walked out to the end of the pier to view the enormity of this “Wharf” development.



Looking north from the Recreation Pier



Looking south from the Recreation Pier

After our walk, we debated going to dinner at an expensive Irish restaurant near the boat or a less expensive Mexican restaurant a couple blocks away. The Mexican restaurant won out (Patti isn't a big fan of Irish food) so we walked over to it. The restaurant is called the “Surfside Restaurant” even though there's no surf for at least a hundred miles. The “Sidewalkside Restaurant” would have been a more descriptive name. There was no inside seating, it was either eat outside or take your food to go. Anyway, the food was good and since it was “Taco Tuesday” the meals included three tacos instead of two. The food was delicious and of

course, there were leftovers. We should have split one meal.

One thing we have noticed; many of the restaurants and stands here are “cashless”. They will only accept payment by credit or debit card, not actual cash. This is fine with us, but it could leave some folks in a bind. They still take cash tips though.

After dinner, it was time for showers. In case we forgot to mention it, this “yacht club” is fairly new (the building is new; the club has been in existence since the 1890s). Everything here is first class and heavy duty. And very clean.

We will tour the rest of the Washington, DC waterfront tomorrow and see the monuments, and then we will turn around and head down the Potomac River to our anchorage. For now, it's time for bed.

Captain's Log, day twenty six (May 26, 2021)

It may be time for the unemployment and stimulus checks to stop. There were folks on the recreation pier at 2:00 AM laughing and giggling. Obviously these folks don't have to get up and go to work in the morning and they were way too young to be retired.

Anyway, we were up early as has become our habit, the K-9 was walked, the engine checked, the power cable and lines stowed and we quietly slipped out of the marina and down the channel towards the Potomac River. There is a six mile per hour speed limit on this section of the channel and two police boats were drifting in the channel so Captain Ron did his best to convert knots to MPH in his head to avoid any issues.

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Rather than continuing south on the Potomac River towards our destination, we decided to turn north and cruise past the monuments, the Lincoln, Jefferson and the Washington Monument. This route also took us past the Regan National Airport where it seemed planes were landing and taking off about once per minute. We also had another police boat pass us a couple of times and crisscross the river in front of us. We thought he might have been watching us to make sure we weren't terrorists but we learned later that the DC water police were having maneuvers later today in that area.



The Lincoln Memorial as seen from the water



The Washington Monument as seen from the water

We eventually turned around without going as far as Georgetown, partly because there wouldn't have been anything to do there that early in the

morning and partly because we wanted to get to our anchorage before the predicted rain.

We passed the airport again and the planes were still taking off and landing. Apparently, a lot of people wanted to get to or leave Washington, DC this morning.



We had fast company on the river today

Boat traffic on the river was light this morning. We saw a couple bass boats and a couple sailboats. There was also a tug pushing a barge filled with sand heading up the river.

The normal down-stream current of the river plus the outgoing tide gave us a nice boost to our speed and we reached our anchorage about 1:00 PM.

We got our anchor set (without difficulty this time). Wades Bay isn't really a "bay", it's a slight indentation in the shore on the Maryland side of the river. There is a long, but narrow beach and it's a place where locals take their boats to hang out, swim and party. There is also pedestrian access (we assume from a parking lot). On this Wednesday afternoon, there were no other boats and just a couple families who had walked onto the beach.

When Kiki saw Captain Ron go to the bow and uncover the dinghy, she went ballistic. She was barking, whining and pacing in the cabin. She tried to get on it before Captain Ron got the new electric outboard motor attached.

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Finally, everything was loaded and ready. Kiki got on first, followed by Captain Ron and Patti and we cast off for shore with the pooch barking the entire time.

As soon as we hit the beach, the puppy was in the water swimming around the boat. Patti took her life jacket off but she was still on her leash. (Kiki writes: *“I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again, I love the beach. And I love riding in the dinghy, so close to the water.”*)

She swam and swam, then ran up on the beach and dug holes and tried to pull small branches off the fallen trees. Captain Ron tried to take videos of her but with a still camera that “also” takes videos; he missed the best moments but got some good shots of his feet (since deleted). We will probably be at a beach tomorrow and the next day so maybe he can do a better job. He had considered buying an actual video camera (“Go Pro”) before this trip, but never got around to it.



The Ship’s Puppy goes for a swim

Patti was trying to find shark’s teeth and did find a small partial one. We talked to one of the families on the beach and one of the girls gave here a few that she had found. It’s not easy finding small shark’s teeth among the pebbles and shells.

We found a shady spot (the sun was out and it was in the nineties) and sat on a log for a while. Then

we walked back to the dinghy and rode parallel to the shore for a while. The electric outboard works well and is much quieter than the air cooled Honda gasoline outboard that it replaced. At the speed we were going, the display said it would have run for another hour and a half. Going slower, it will last longer before needing a recharge.



The dinghy (Q-Tip) with HIGH COTTON in the background

We returned to HIGH COTTON and decided to leave the dinghy in the water overnight so we could get a breeze through the forward hatch which is covered when the dinghy is on the bow.

About 5:00 PM, the winds started to pick up. Patti checked the weather forecast and there was a severe thunderstorm warning for the area. We heard some distant thunder, but all we had was some wind and a lot of rocking of the boat. We were wondering if we would be able to eat dinner.

Eventually, the wind and waves calmed down and we reheated the remains of our Mexican food for our dinner.

We did rinse ourselves off after our trip to the beach so we will probably not take actual showers tonight, just go to bed.

BTW: There are no watchable TV channels here. None!

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Captain's Log, day twenty seven (May 27, 2021)

After we posted last night, Captain Ron went to bed and did another scan of the TV channels. This time, he came up with several and was able to watch the last half of one of his favorite "who done it?" shows. That's the good news.

The bad news is, about 9:30 PM, the winds picked up, the waves picked up and we could see lightning in the distance. We never got any rain or close lightning but the boat was rocking enough to make sleeping unlikely. Fortunately, this all stopped in about a half an hour and we were able to sleep comfortably.

We woke up fairly early, got dressed and pulled the dinghy back onto the bow. Then we retrieved the anchor and were on our way south.

We had a pleasant couple of hours and then got the dreaded call from the "range boat". There is a weapons testing facility a few miles north of Colonial Beach and they test fire large weapons on the Potomac River. We've run into this in the past. We were directed towards the Maryland shore, outside of the Potomac River channel.

They must have been test firing short range weapons this time because we were able to cross the river to Colonial Beach. Some of their weapons travel further than that.

The marinas at Colonial Beach are all in Monroe Bay, a shallow bay behind the peninsula where the town is located. We had been told by the owner to dock ourselves on the "T head" of "B" dock and that he would not be there.

We found the marina and figured out where we were supposed to dock. We had to make a U turn and bring the side of the boat up against a dock with the prevailing wind and current pushing us away from the dock.

None of that mattered, as we approached the dock, HIGH COTTON stopped dead in its tracks. We were grounded! We couldn't go forward and we couldn't go backward. Our propeller was churning up mud and some sort of black oily substance.

Fortunately, only the stern was grounded, the bow was still floating and Captain Ron was able to use the bow thruster to move the bow to the dock where Patti was able to tie it to a piling.

We took the stern line and walked it to the dock and attempted to pull the stern over. No dice, it was going nowhere. Captain Ron looked up the tide predictions and found that it was just an hour or so after low tide and that the tide would eventually rise and float our boat.



HIGH COTTON grounded, waiting for the tide to come in

Patti and the pooch went for a walk and to look for the marina owner. Of course, they had to walk to the bow to step off onto the dock. Captain Ron tied the boat up as best he could and connected the shore power cable so we could have air conditioning.

We got back on HIGH COTTON and put things away. About an hour later we noticed that the boat was rocking as we moved about so we knew it was floating again. We got off and pulled it alongside the dock like it's supposed to be. Once

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the tide got higher, Captain Ron started the engine and shifted into forward and reverse gear to make sure there was no damage to the running gear. HIGH COTTON has a stainless steel “skeg” (a heavy metal bar) that holds the bottom of the rudder and protects the propeller so we expected none.

We walked over to the beach (without the pooch) and walked along the boardwalk a bit, stopped for ice cream and walked back. We rested a bit and then took showers before going to dinner.

The last time we were here, about seven years ago, the marina restaurant was a combination Thai and French restaurant and very good. The Internet showed the Thai and French menus but when we got there, we found that it had changed ownership and was now a pretty run of the mill “American” restaurant. They did have two Italian specials tonight but we decided against them.

Patti ordered a BLT with extra bacon. It came out looking like a club sandwich with three pieces of bread. Captain Ron ordered a cheeseburger cooked “medium”. It came out very rare and Captain Ron likes his steaks medium rare, but his burgers “medium”.

Instead of just cooking the burger a bit more when he pointed this out, they made him a new plate with a new burger and more fries. Of course, by the time he got his burger, Patti was done eating.

Captain Ron cut his burger in two, ate half and brought the rest back to the boat. Patti brought half her sandwich also. We were given a free dessert because of the mistake so we brought that back to the boat as well.

We made our third schedule change for tomorrow based on the latest weather forecast so we have an eight hour trip to Calvert Marina in Solomons, MD. We will leave as early as possible to insure enough

water depth to get out of the marina and Monroe Bay.

It’s time for bed.



The crew on the dock at Bayside Marina, Colonial Beach, VA

Captain’s Log, day twenty eight (May 28, 2021)

Well, the alarm went off at 0-dark-thirty! Patti got out of bed, got herself dressed and dressed the pooch. Captain Ron was a bit slower, but he eventually got himself up and dressed. High tide was at about 5:00 AM and we wanted to get out of the marina while we still had enough water to do so. Also, the weather forecast was for rain beginning in the afternoon and we hoped to get settled in at our next stop before that happened.

Patti walked the K-9 while Captain Ron checked the engine fluids and gave the bilge a once over. He unplugged the shorepower cord, started the engine and Patti untied the dock lines. It was just getting light and we had our navigation lights on.

Leaving Monroe Bay, we saw something we rarely see; a beautiful sunrise.

We headed south on the ever widening Potomac River for about four hours, seeing a few boats apparently fishing and one tug pushing a barge and headed for the Governor Nice Bridge that we

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passed under yesterday. It appears they are building a parallel span to relieve traffic congestion.



Sunrise on the Potomac River

As we neared the point where the Potomac River meets the Chesapeake Bay, the winds picked up and so did the waves. It became quite uncomfortable and also difficult to hold a straight course. This is a known problem in this area because of how the intersecting currents interact with each other

The Maryland side of the junction of the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay is called "Point Lookout" and there is a lighthouse there. We had been asked by Patti's sister to get a picture of it, but as we made the turn, the boat was rocking, we were pretty far away, it was hazy and we were trying to avoid crab pots. Taking a picture under these conditions was hit or miss. We tried, but Patti said she would just buy her sister a picture of the lighthouse.

Captain Ron finally slowed the boat and turned it into the waves so Patti could take Kiki down the ladder. She did not look happy. (Kiki writes: *"I do not like it when the boat rocks back and forth like that. It's much more comfortable in the cabin down below."*)



Point Lookout Lighthouse



Crabbers on the Chesapeake Bay

We finally got to where we turned off the Chesapeake Bay and into the Patuxent River and the wind and waves calmed down. We still had a half hour or so before we got to the Calvert Marina.

Once we neared the marina we called them on the radio and they sent a guy to the fuel dock where we took on sixty six gallons of diesel fuel. The skies were darkening and it looked like it would rain any minute.

After fueling and paying, we headed for our slip. Our assigned slip was a bit difficult because it is a fixed slip with a short finger pier and pilings to tie the bow to. The slip is a bit long for our boat, but we managed with the help of the dockhand and another boater.

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Patti began covering the flybridge while Captain Ron put the hound on the dock and walked her to land. After about a minute on land, the skies opened up and it began to pour. Kiki ran straight down the dock to the boat with Captain Ron trying to keep up and getting soaked in the process. (Kiki writes: *"I could have run much faster if pawpaw wasn't holding me back. He is slow!"*)

It stopped raining as quickly as it started and he was able to connect the shore power so the air conditioner would operate.



HIGH COTTON at Calvert Marina, Dowell, MD

We walked to the office and realized that we were expected to wear masks so Captain Ron walked back to the boat for the masks.

We went inside and paid for our four day stay. We were wearing our masks like the sign said but the employee who checked us in was not wearing a mask. We also learned that they no longer have a courtesy car. Now this place is in the boondocks, there is one dinky restaurant within walking distance and that is it. The only other options are Uber or delivery.

Captain Ron did a scan for TV stations and found none. Zero! The swimming pool opens tomorrow but with a forecast of highs in the sixties, we probably won't take advantage of that.

Dinner was leftovers along with food we had on the boat. We have food for several meals or we might get restaurant delivery.

As for the next three days, Captain Ron has some boat projects to attend to, there's laundry to do and the boat could use a good cleaning.

Captain's Log, day twenty nine (May 29, 2021)

Here we are in scenic Dowell Maryland in the mid-fifties with rain. Back home in South Carolina, it's sunny and in the eighties. There are no stations on the TV and the marina no longer has a courtesy car for transients to run errands.

We got up and walked the Ship's Puppy, of course. Captain Ron made his morning coffee before Patti suggested walking to the on-site restaurant for breakfast. This is the same restaurant that deep fried Captain Ron's scrapple to an incredible crisp the last time we were here.

We walked (in the rain) to the restaurant. It only seats about a dozen people but there were two empty tables and we got one. A couple followed us in and got the last table.

Captain Ron knew better than to order scrapple again so he got creamed chip beef on toast. It was pretty good but not as good as Patti makes at home. Patti ordered pancakes with syrup and Spam. Spam is something you don't often see on restaurant menus. She also ordered a scrambled egg to go for the Sea Dog.

We walked back to the boat where Captain Ron spent about three pleasant hours in the bilge replacing the leaking pump. It should have taken less than an hour but it was difficult to get the hoses off the pump without damaging them, the pump or the hard plastic strainer that keeps sand

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and shells and such from circulating in the cooling system. He wondered several times out loud why he hadn't just paid the mechanic who replaced the alternator a week ago to do it while he was already working on the boat. Replacing the pump isn't so hard but the filter housing had to be removed and replaced and the bolts were extremely hard to get to for removal and even harder to replace. One had to be wedged into a socket with a piece of paper towel so he could reach to get it started (some folks will understand this, the rest will have to just understand that it was difficult).

The engine was started and tested for cooling water flow and leaks. The water flowed and there were no leaks. Captain Ron will test it again before we leave the marina just to be sure.

After all this, the bilge had to be pumped out and cleaned and the tools put away. It was raining when Captain Ron lifted the lazarette hatch to put the tools away and he found that the drains were blocked and water was collecting in the lazarette. We will dry this up when it stops raining. And clear the drains.

Patti took this opportunity to get out the vacuum cleaner and vacuum the boat. Kiki and Captain Ron decided to get out of her way in the V berth. (Patti writes: *"Yes, somebody has to clean this boat every now and then and we didn't bring a maid with us!"*)

Captain Ron scanned for TV stations again and even checked the antenna connections on the TV to make sure it was still connected. No dice.

He then had the brilliant idea of watching a DVD on the built in DVD player. He inserted a DVD and nothing happened. He tried all the buttons on the remote and on the TV itself. The disc would go in and he could eject it but it wouldn't play and he could not hear it turning. We haven't used the DVD function lately and may have never used it. It

may be time for a new boat TV but we will wait until we get home for that. Walmart and Best Buy don't carry 12 volt TV sets.

Captain Ron plotted our journey for the next few days after we leave here. With cool (cold) weather and cloudy skies, swimming pools and such don't really matter but we will stop at a marina with a nearby grocery store so we can stock up on necessities.

Patti whipped up bratwursts, sauerkraut and baked beans for dinner. It was good.

Out of about a dozen attempts to get a photo of the Point Lookout Lighthouse, there was one that Captain Ron was able to salvage with his photo editing software. It's not postcard quality, but it should do.

So, the puppy is already in bed and Patti and Captain Ron will follow soon.

Captain's Log, day thirty (May 30, 2021)

It's still in the fifties and still raining. We got up and walked the puppy, of course, and then the humans walked again to the on-site restaurant, this time for sausage gravy over biscuits. Even the restaurant was cold and when Captain Ron asked about the restroom, he was directed across the gravel road to the swimming pool bath house. He declined.

The food was fine, but again, no better than we can easily make at home.

Other than occasional dog walks, we mostly sat on the boat and surfed the Internet. Now we have a message from Verizon saying that we have used up most of our "unlimited" high speed data allowance and our speed will be reduced. We know from

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experience that the slower speed data is nearly useless.

It appears that Verizon's definition of "unlimited" differs from what the dictionary and most people would understand it to be. We are going to have to research this and hopefully find a better carrier, one that provides actual "unlimited" data.

We have been using the marina's Wi-Fi when available to limit our Verizon data use, but the marina's Wi-Fi service here is slow and unreliable.

We did walk to the floating docks to see what boats are there and why we weren't put there. They were supposed to have been reserved for other boats. We did see some good sized boats tied up there and there might possibly be others coming in.



Walking the Ship's Puppy

We checked out the laundry facility while we were there and Patti decided to do some laundry so once we got back to the boat, she gathered all the dirty clothes (including the ones Captain Ron was wearing) and headed back to the laundry room with them. Captain Ron took a nap. After that, we discussed where we should go next and Captain Ron contacted the marinas and made reservations and plotted the routes we will take.

We thought it might be nice to have Thai food delivered to the boat so we found a local Thai restaurant on the Internet that promised delivery and studied their menus and made our selections.

Captain Ron called and when he asked if they delivered to Calvert Marina, he was told (in an Asian accent) "We no delivery."

We decided instead to cook the frozen ravioli we bought at the grocery store a few days ago. We each braved the fifty five degree temperature to walk to the bath house and back for showers since we hadn't taken any yesterday.

Calvert Marina, where we are staying and have stayed before was formerly a World War II Navy training base and it appears much of the infrastructure is original. Unlike most marinas, it is huge with lots of open land and gravel roads. There are perhaps five hundred slips, mostly fixed slips, not floating and mostly in less than pristine condition. They seem to be occupied by local boats whose owners keep them here for weekend or occasional use.

The bath houses are concrete block construction and not climate controlled. The showers, however, have been redone with fiberglass inserts and are modern and clean. One advantage of older bath houses is, the plumbing hasn't been redone with low-flow shower heads so there's plenty of pressure and volume.

After our showers, Patti boiled the ravioli, heated the sauce and a can of Italian green beans and we ate our dinner.

Hopefully, it will warm up tomorrow and we can walk to the "doggie beach" and let Aqua Dog play in the river. The pool will certainly be too cold for the humans.

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Captain's Log, day thirty one (May 31, 2021)

We woke up to the sun shining this morning. It was still cold, but mostly sunny. The Sea Dog got her morning walk and did her business. Patti fixed breakfast for the crew, and then she went to the office and bought ice.

We met our slip neighbors who are on a sailboat. The lady (girl) had washed their clothes in the marina's washing machine, but instead of drying them in the dryer, she brought them back to the boat and hung them out to dry on the boat's rigging with clothespins. They are young "free spirits".



Sailboat, AKA mobile clothesline

Captain Ron worked on our routes for the next few days and then uploaded them to the chart plotter. Then he decided to tackle mopping up the water in the lazarette. He got most of the "stuff" out, pumped and sponged out the water and left the hatch open so everything could air dry.

Calvert Marina has a small "dog beach" which doubles as a kayak launch. We asked the Sea Dog if she would like to go swimming and of course she did so we walked past the pool to the beach. By this time it was seventy degrees and sunny and we had shed our sweatshirts. There were a couple of people in the pool area but not in the water.

Kiki found several puddles to walk through on the way to the beach but once she saw the beach, she ran into the water and waded around. We found some sticks and threw them in for her to fetch. She also dug several holes in the sand. (Kiki writes: *"I've said it before and I'll say it again, I love when I get to go to the beach!"*)

We eventually returned to HIGH COTTON where we had to put everything back in the lazarette and close the cover so the pooch could get a bath. She knows that after the beach she gets a bath before she can come inside the boat.

Patti gathered up all the remaining dirty clothes and the towels and took them to the laundry room. Captain Ron did some photo editing since he had to limit his Internet time. The Sea Dog rested.

Patti returned after an unexpectedly long time, explaining that there was a line for the washers and driers. Apparently, several other boaters decided to do their laundry today.

Today turned out to be a pretty nice day, eventually warming into the mid-seventies. A lot of boats passed up and down the creek past our dock. Unfortunately, between the large boat at the T head and the laundry hanging on the sailboat next to us, we don't have a clear view of all this.

Patti went back to the laundry facility to finish the laundry. After talking a bit with some new arrivals in a slip across from ours, Captain Ron and Kiki walked to shore to meet her and help bring the clean clothes back. The puppy, of course, had to stop and smell things every twenty feet or so.

Patti fired up the microwave and warmed up the bratwursts, sauerkraut, leftover corn and a can of baked beans. It's hard to remember life before microwave ovens.

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We each took a shower and we'll head out in the morning for Chesapeake Beach, MD.

Captain's Log, day thirty two (June 1, 2021)

We were sleeping soundly (the humans), when the four legged one decided it was time to get up. The sun comes up earlier and earlier each day and she knows when it's light outside, but not what time it is. Usually she likes to sleep in but today it was the other way around.

So, we all got up, got dressed and took the pooch for her morning constitutional. That finished, Patti uncovered the seat and helm while Captain Ron unhooked and stowed the power cord and checked the engine fluids. Patti untied the stern lines, climbed on the boat and untied the bow lines and we slowly and quietly left Calvert Marina behind.

Several boats had already left the various marinas in Solomons and we were trailing four sailboats. We turned from The Patuxent River into the Chesapeake Bay and soon passed the Cove Point Lighthouse.



The Cove Point Lighthouse on the Chesapeake Bay

Next we passed the Cove Point LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) terminal where liquefied natural gas is loaded onto special ships for export. There were

no ships there today, but it is a restricted area and boaters must stay clear of it.



The Cove Point LNG Terminal

Next, we passed the Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Generating Plant where electricity is generated for much of the area. It too is restricted and boaters must stay well clear.



The Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Generating Plant

A couple of hours into our trip, we saw on the chart plotter, a target rapidly gaining on us. Marking the target on the screen revealed that this was a fifty meter long (yes, AIS is metric) "pleasure boat" travelling at a bit less than three times the speed of HIGH COTTON. Fifty meters is about one hundred and sixty feet. By comparison, HIGH COTTON is twenty eight feet long.

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The boat veered off towards shore and passed us with little trace of a wake. Unfortunately, about a half hour later, a similar sized boat passed us going in the opposite direction and at a relatively close distance and did give us a very uncomfortable wake. Some captains are considerate of other boaters, some are not.



One hundred, sixty feet long and moving on

We got to our destination the Rod and Reel Docks in Chesapeake Beach, MD and were met and “assisted” by a very nice lady who really didn’t know anything about tying up boats. We managed anyway and corrected things after she went back to her office.



If you can't tie a knot, tie a lot!

Captain Ron remembers Chesapeake Beach from his youth (before cell phones and video games) when he and his friends would drive the fifty miles

or so on two lane roads from their homes in Silver Spring, MD to swim at the public beach and explore the area. The public beach is gone now, replaced by condos and the dumpy little restaurant is now a large hotel/casino complex. They are enlarging it as we write this.

We walked the puppy, found the dock lady in her trailer amid the construction tipped her and paid for our dockage, then we walked the puppy some more until she was ready to get back on the boat. During our walk, she met several new friends and got petted by all of them.



The Casino

Leaving the K-9 to guard the boat, we walked, first to the CVS to get a couple prescriptions filled, then to the grocery store (for groceries, of course) and then to the Chinese restaurant for lunch to take back to the boat. Because of the pandemic, they were not allowing customers to eat in the restaurant.

Patti went into the CVS to pick up the filled prescriptions while Captain Ron headed back to HIGH COTTON with the meals and half the groceries. Even though we got the lunch specials, we had more food than we could eat so now we have leftovers again.

After our late lunch, we took the hound for another walk. Apparently, there’s no smoking

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allowed in the casino so smokers have to take a break from the slot machines and sit outside on benches to smoke. Kiki got more petting and we had a nice conversation with some of the gamblers while they were on their smoke breaks.

We thought about swimming in the indoor pool but decided that it was a bit cold to be walking back to the boat after swimming. With the same reasoning, we talked ourselves out of taking showers. The pool and showers are part of the hotel complex and luxurious, but because the showers are more intended for hotel guests who are using the pool, there is no place to change clothes or even sit down. We can wait until tomorrow for showers.

We decided to go to the restaurant for a light meal, not so much because we were hungry, but for the experience. It was simply "OK", nothing special.

Captain Ron did get his TV stations back, but has been too busy to watch TV. That's probably a good thing.

We cross the Bay tomorrow to St. Michaels, MD.

Captain's Log, day thirty three (June 2, 2021)

Rollin', rollin' rollin' on the river! The Miles River, that is. We are headed for St. Michaels, MD. But first:

Again, it was the Sea Dog who was the first one out of the sack. She woke the humans so we decided to get up and get going. There was no need; it was only a three and a half hour trip in good weather.

We got up, got dressed and walked the hound. Captain Ron had done the engine check yesterday so we unhooked and stored the shore power cord, undid the web of lines securing HIGH COTTON in her oversized slip and eased out of the marina.

We followed a larger boat that turned south at the end of the channel and a smaller crab boat followed us out and turned north. Our course took us north east across the Chesapeake Bay to the Miles River and to St. Michaels. We passed between the southern tip of Kent Island and Poplar Island which is being restored with fill from dredging in parts of the Bay.

We encountered a lot of tug and barge traffic at this point but our AIS display helped by identifying the vessels and their speed and plotting their courses to see if they were a danger to us.



We stay out of the way of these guys

Once we got to the Miles River, we encountered several sailboats as well as a few fishing boats. It's a big river at this point and everyone stayed out of each other's way.

We called our usual marina, Higgins Yacht Yard and were directed to a different dock than where we have been put in the past. It's actually easier to get into and in a better location.

We got ourselves settled in and went upstairs to the office to check in and pay. No dog biscuits though. We came back down the stairs and walked the Sea Dog to the park where they have a small playground. There is a low bridge over the water and the water was up over the seawall a bit. Kiki saw this and ran back and forth through the water.

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It wasn't enough to swim in but she liked it. We continued to the playground where she explored the fake pirate ship and slid down the slide a couple of times. Walking back to the marina, she got in the water again and had to get rinsed off before she could go inside the boat.



Kiki tries the sliding board



The pooch finds a swimming hole

Leaving the hound to rest up from her walk, the rest of the crew walked the two blocks to the main street and had lunch in one of the restaurants.

After lunch, we walked down the street and checked out the little shops. We bought some dog treats at the pet store and some candy at the candy store.

Captain Ron returned to the boat while Patti walked to the other end of town checking the rest of the shops. He did a scan on the TV and found the five public broadcasting stations and then fell asleep watching a cooking show with the puppy by his side.

On our shopping tour, we discovered an ice cream shop so after Patti returned, we asked Kiki if she would like to go for a walk and get ice cream. She indicated that she would so off we went again.

This ice cream shop sells the usual cones and cups but it also sells a "pup cup", a small cup of ice cream with a dog biscuit on top. This time, Kiki had her own cup of ice cream; she didn't have to share it with her mawmaw. On the way back, we had a nice conversation with the boatyard owner and one of the workers. Kiki got petted.



Kiki gets her ice cream

Back at the boat, the humans took turns taking showers. Unlike yesterday when we were in a luxury hotel with tiled showers, this is primarily a boat yard and the bathrooms are pretty basic. Also, the door on one of them would not lock.

We got wet and clean though and it's back to the boat for a good night's sleep.

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Captain's Log, day thirty four (June 3, 2021)

Today was a day in port so there's not much to report. We got up and walked the hound as usual, then Patti fixed breakfast for the crew. We decided to walk to the little "market" a few blocks from the marina. This market has a nice deli counter and some nice beef. There is a large selection of wine and some gourmet items like pickled asparagus in a jar, but not a lot of what one would call "staples". They did have a package of nice green beans for the puppy. Patti got some country ham and Captain Ron got some blueberries and milk.

We brought our bounty back to the boat and put it away and then took Kiki back to where she played in the water yesterday and to the playground with the slide. The water was higher today and she walked right in. There were little fish in the water and she chased them back and forth along the seawall. She again explored the pirate ship at the playground and went down the slide. We walked a little further and Patti checked out the gift shop at the museum but since she hadn't brought her purse, nothing was purchased. (Kiki writes: *"I like playing in the water and I like going down the sliding board."*)

Back at the boat, we ate leftover Chinese food for lunch. In China, they just call it "food".

A boat came in next to us so now we have slip neighbors. It's a 48' Sea Ray from across the Bay near Baltimore and we met and talked to the people on board. They cruise around the Chesapeake Bay but have never gone any further than that.

Captain Ron spent much of the afternoon planning the rest of our Chesapeake Bay trip. Only the next couple of days are actually booked and we will have to make sure the weather cooperates.

We thought about going out for dinner, but since we had a relatively big and late lunch, we decided to finish the leftover ravioli accompanied by a can of Italian green beans. Hopefully we will get some Maryland blue crabs in Rock Hall, our next stop.

The weather forecast called for rain most of the day today, but each hour it changed. As of 8:00 PM, it hasn't rained yet. The wind has picked up though and the boat is rocking a bit. We hope it won't be raining tomorrow for our boat ride, but we'll just have to wait and see. If it rains, we will run the boat from inside.

Captain's Log, day thirty five (June 4, 2021)

It was cloudy this morning but not raining so we got up, walked the puppy, undid our shorepower cord and lines and headed back out into the Miles River. We could hear boats calling each other on the radio but we didn't see any until we got near Kent Narrows. Kent Narrows is the waterway between Kent Island and the eastern shore of Maryland and it is the eastern end of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge.

There is a high bridge that carries US route 50 over Kent Narrows but the old, lower drawbridge and the former route 50 is still in place. With a closed height of eighteen feet, HIGH COTTOM can pass through without the bridge being opened, but it is a very narrow bridge and we wouldn't want to meet a boat travelling in the other direction under the bridge.

Fortunately, there was no other traffic and we made it through the bridge into the Chester River. Soon, we were back in the Chesapeake Bay heading north towards Rock Hall, a favorite stop of ours. Our original plans had us travelling up the river to Chestertown but the marina was fully booked and couldn't accommodate us.

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Yep, we made it through with a couple feet to spare

As we neared Rock Hall, we saw boats anchored or drifting, apparently fishing. This must have been a good place to fish because we couldn't even count them all. Patti estimated about forty boats.



This must be a good fishing spot

We called Rock Hall Landing Marina for docking instructions but were asked to wait a couple minutes as a boat had entered a couple minutes before us and they were helping that boat.

We stopped for a few minutes and then proceeded to our assigned slip where we were helped by one of the dockhands.

We got settled in and went to the office to check in. Kiki got her expected dog treat. The folks here are always friendly and helpful. And keep dog treats on hand.



HIGH COTTON at Rock Hall Landing Marina

The first time we visited Rock Hall, they were having a triathlon event in the harbor where people swim, run and ride bicycles. Somehow we managed to arrive here for the same event several years later. There are tents and chairs set up in anticipation of this event tomorrow. We will be able to watch it from HIGH COTTON.

We walked to the other end of the harbor to a restaurant for lunch and then walked back and got the Sea Dog off the boat for a walk. We met some of the other boaters and she met some of the other dogs. We walked by the pool and asked the people about the water. They said it was frigid so we didn't bother putting on our swimsuits.



The crew of HIGH COTTON takes a break at Rock Hall Landing

The weather forecast called for showers and thunderstorms today, but except for about five

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minutes of clouds and light rain, it has been a beautiful afternoon.

Eventually, we went to the adjacent restaurant for a light supper. Then we took turns showering in the clean and modern bathhouses.

We have shopping to do so tomorrow we will take the one mile hike to the grocery store, West Marine and the hardware store. And watch the triathlon.

Captain's Log, day thirty six (June 5, 2021)

The first day of the triathlon. Actually, we were awake before they started and they started at the other end of the harbor. It was the commercial crab boats that woke us, starting their engines and leaving the harbor. For some reason, most of these boats have an open exhaust and no muffler. The Coast Guard closed the harbor during the swimming event so anyone not out of the harbor by 8:00 AM was stuck until the swimmers finished a couple hours later. There were big crowds and traffic from the participants and their families and supporters. We talked to a few when they stopped to pet the puppy.



Starting the first part of the triathlon in the harbor

The swimmers had to circle a marked course in the harbor twice and then exit at the end of the dock next to ours. There were tents set up and announcers announcing the people's names and home towns as they finished. People came from all the nearby states and some travelled over a hundred miles to participate. It was quite a show and a professional production. The announcers sounded like professional disc jockeys.

We set out for town with our shopping list. Google directions were a bit vague so we stopped and asked a local who was helping to direct the runners. She told us how to get to the hardware store, but as it turned out, she sent us well out of the way. Not a big deal if you are driving a car, but walking in the heat is a different matter altogether.

We got most of what we needed at the hardware store, nothing at West Marine, some supplies at Dollar General and the rest of our needs at the grocery store. The round trip was at least two miles, possibly more. We passed an ice cream shop but were afraid our groceries needed to get to a refrigerator ASAP so we didn't stop.

Once we returned to HIGH COTTON, we put everything away and ate the sandwich we had purchased at the grocery store. Then it was time to rest.

Captain Ron wanted to take advantage of the beautiful pool so he donned his swimsuit. Patti did not, but decided to walk to the pool anyway. Captain Ron made it into the water up to his waist but decided it was too cold to go any further so after a few minutes, we walked back to the boat.

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Captain Ron tests the water in the pool

We talked to a guy on a sailboat who apparently lives somewhere else and visits his boat on occasion. Patti warned him that a pair of birds was apparently building a nest in part of his mast. He thanked her and said he would clean it out and stuff something in it to keep the birds out in the future.

Patti took Kiki on a walk and she went to the marina office for dog treats. She entertained the staff as she often does by playing and throwing the treats before eating them. (Kiki writes: *"Since I am a dog, it's OK if I play with my food."*)

We somehow let the time go by and it was too late for dinner so we took turns showering and ate snacks.

We decided to stay here another day so we won't have to get up and be out of here before the swimmers start in the morning.

Captain's Log, day thirty seven (June 6, 2021)

Another day, another triathlon. Actually, there was a lot of partying going on last night. It seems a lot of people from Pennsylvania keep their boats here (it's not that far by car) and others bring their boats

from the Baltimore area and stay for the weekend. It wasn't loud though and we drifted off to sleep.

We were up and out walking the Sea Dog before the triathlon officially started but the participants were out warming up.

We had creamed chipped beef on toast for breakfast. Patti didn't make it, Bob Evans did but Patti warmed it up. (Patti writes: *"It was OK, but mine is better when I make it from scratch."*)

A group of boaters set up a table with all sorts of breakfast food on the dock. They also had a bar set up by 9:00 AM. We weren't invited though. It looked like twenty people or more participated. Apparently, they are regulars here and all know each other.



Breakfast (note the liquor bottles) on the dock

We took Kiki to the dock master's office where she got dog biscuits and entertained the people by playing with them. She has learned that many marina offices give out dog treats and when we take her for walks, she heads straight for the office.

We met a couple who had come in today a few slips down from our boat. They were on a nice trawler, a few feet longer than ours. They also had a small dog on board. Talking to them, we found

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that their home marina was in Baltimore and is the same marina we will visit a couple days from now.

We walked over to Waterman's Crab House and ordered a half dozen crabs and a couple ears of corn. We were disappointed that they were out of large crabs and only had medium crabs, but the medium crabs were pretty big, heavy and fat. They were delicious!



Fresh steamed blue crabs at Waterman's Crab House

After the "crab feast", we came back to HIGH COTTON, rested a bit and then walked the mile or so to the grocery store to get something to cook tomorrow when we will be anchored. We stopped on the way for ice cream. (Kiki writes: *"They think they are fooling me, but I can smell ice cream on their breath. Not cool!"*).

Captain Ron had to rest after all that walking so Patti took the pooch out for another walk. The grounds are are spacious and beautifully landscaped and maintained.

We took turns showering and we will soon turn in. Tomorrow morning we will fill the water tanks, pick up some ice that's already paid for and head for our northernmost stop of this trip, anchoring in Still Pond, just off the Chesapeake Bay.

Captain's Log, day thirty eight (June 7, 2021)

We had a little excitement today, more on that in a minute.

We had no reason to leave early, but no reason to stay either. Patti walked to the office and got the ice she had paid for yesterday. She also walked the puppy as usual. Captain Ron topped off the water tanks so we will have fresh water while anchored. He did his engine checks and unhooked and stored the shorepower cord. The engine was started.

Now for the excitement: Captain Ron had loaded our routes for the next several days into the chart plotter. Or so he thought. Just as Patti untied the lines, he turned on the chart plotter and attempted to select the route to Still Pond. It wasn't in the chart plotter and we were already loose and heading out of the slip.

He immediately selected the route we had used to get to Rock Hall, but in reverse. This would at least get us safely out of the marina and into deeper water in the Bay. He had Patti take the helm while he went below to figure out and correct the problem.

To make a long story short and not get too technical, our Garmin chart plotter has a limit to the amount of data it can hold in memory at one time. This is something they don't really mention in their advertising and it's pretty well hidden in the back of the operator's manual.

Captain Ron had loaded too much information into the plotter and since "Still Pond" was the last route alphabetically, the plotter didn't accept it. The somewhat unintuitive "route truncated" error message should have been the clue.

Captain Ron erased the SD card and loaded just four routes onto it and from the card to the plotter, copied everything to the other plotter and

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all was well. We switched to the Still Pond route and continued on our way.

More excitement! As we were leaving Rock Hall in the channel, a crabber was approaching from our right. Under maritime law, he was the “stand on” boat, meaning he should continue his course and it was our obligation to stay out of his way.

He passed well in front of us so there was no issue. Then he turned so he was approaching us. There should have been no issue as he was well to our port (left side) and boats normally pass port to port, just like autos do (in the USA).

Then, he turned again so he was heading into our path. According to maritime law, he was now on our port side, making us the “stand on” boat with the right of way.

We both wondered what he was doing and finally felt it necessary to blow the five blast danger signal. We are still not sure if he was at the helm, driving the boat or messing with his crabbing equipment.

There was no collision, but he came much closer than we were comfortable with. If we had stopped, he would have hit us broadside.

As we continued north, we again passed clusters of boats anchored and fishing in the same spots. Apparently, the fish congregate in certain spots and the fishermen and guides know these spots.

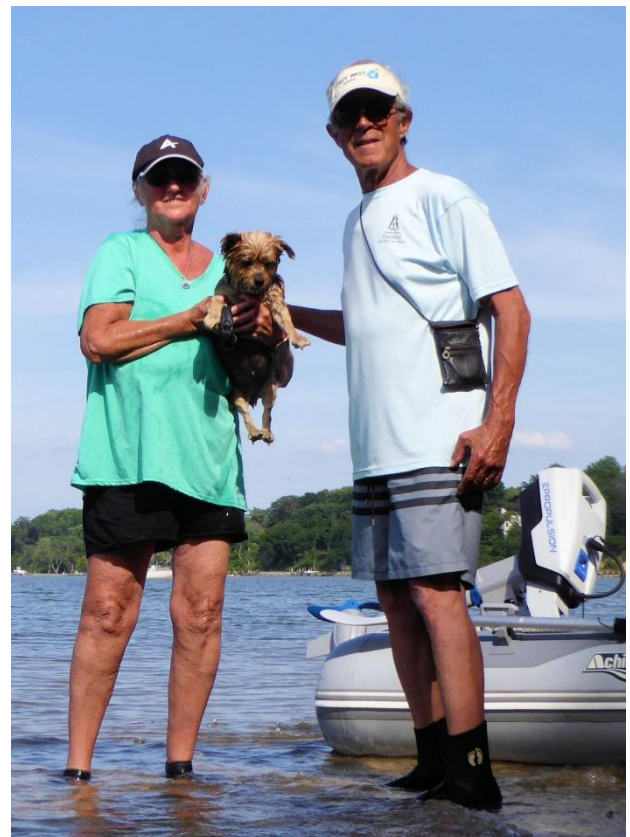
Other than the fishing boats and crabbers, we saw only a few other boats and surprisingly, no ships. We were actually in or next to the shipping channel most of the way.

We got to our destination, “Still Pond”. It’s not really a pond; it’s more of a small bay off the Chesapeake Bay. It’s a weekend hangout for local

boaters. Today being a Monday, we saw only one boat and it came in after our second visit to shore.

We got ourselves anchored and Captain Ron got the dinghy launched while the Sea Dog was still on the flybridge so she didn’t notice it. She did notice when Captain Ron was putting the motor on and of course, she was ready to go ashore.

We got in the dinghy (“Q-Tip”) and headed for the beach. For the humans, it wasn’t quite what it was cracked up to be, a long, narrow beach, but with a lot of rocks that made it difficult to walk. For the puppy though, it was great. She swam back and forth and around the dinghy and she dug in the sand.



The crew visits the beach

It was hot and sunny so after a while we decided to head back to the mothership. We rinsed and dried ourselves and the puppy and fixed a snack of

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apples and cheddar cheese. We rested a while and then decided to head for shore again so we loaded the crew and the puppy and headed for a different section of beach where it was a bit wider with fewer rocks.

Again, the Sea Dog swam and waded in the water. She seemed concerned when the waves hit the stern of the dinghy as it was beached and tried to figure out how to stop it (with no success). Patti looked for shells, sea glass and interesting rocks and brought back a collection.



Patti and the pooch exploring the beach at Still Pond, MD

Once again, we headed back to the mother ship, this time removing and storing the motor and battery. We left the dinghy in the water overnight so we could open the hatch and have ventilation.

Not long after we left the beach, a “GFBL” (Go Fast, Be Loud) boat entered the cove and anchored near the beach. The people on board got off the boat and swam to the beach. Aside from a pair of kayakers, these were the only people we saw on the beach. Of course it was a Monday, not a weekend.

Patti the chef whipped up a delicious meal of a ham slice, macaroni and cheese and peas. It was delicious. We eat well on HIGH COTTON.

After dinner, we climbed up on the flybridge to catch the breeze and watch the world go by. The GFBL boat started up and eased slowly away from the beach. Then it went to full throttle, exited the cove and headed south on the bay. What is important to know about these boats is, their main function is to go fast. They are usually powered by two V8 engines with no mufflers. This boat was out of sight in about five minutes but we could hear it for twenty minutes longer.



The sun sets in the west at Still Pond, MD

Once the sun went down, we came down from the flybridge, turned on the anchor light and anchor drag alarm and crawled into bed. We had a decent breeze and had a comfortable night’s sleep at anchor.

Captain’s Log, day thirty nine (June 8, 2021)

The land of the midnight sun? Not quite but it’s still light at 9:00 PM and getting light the next morning at 5:00 AM. We don’t have the blackout curtains on HIGH COTTON that we have at home and it’s hard to sleep when it’s light out.

So, for no good reason, we were up and underway at 6:30 AM this morning. That put us into Baltimore (Canton) at 11:30 AM when check in time is supposed to be 1:00 PM. We tried to call

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and request a slip close to shore and the facilities but couldn't get through to them on the phone. This is a very large marina with over five hundred slips. We are almost to the end of "G" dock and the facilities are at the beginning (land end) of "C" dock. Apparently we are here because of the length of our boat. The slips nearer the facilities are for bigger boats than ours.



The Francis Scott Key Bridge entering Baltimore Harbor

We were a little taken aback when the dock hand was explaining things and said "Remember, this is still Baltimore so watch yourself, especially after dark and be safe." Everything here works on a magnetic key card and the gates to the docks seem secure. The walkways at the shore end of the docks are actually a Baltimore park and open to anyone. It's OK; we have been to a city before.



The Anchorage Marina, Canton (Baltimore), MD

The first thing Patti wanted to do was to take a nice shower. She decided to do some laundry as well so she packed up the dirty clothes and off she went. When she returned, Captain Ron went for his shower. The facilities are clean and there's plenty of pressure, but like some other marinas, there is little privacy. The actual showers are private, but there are no individual areas for dressing. As we mentioned before, it reminds one of taking a shower after gym class in junior high school.



HIGH COTTON docked at the Anchorage Marina

Once we got ourselves all cleaned up, we decided to go for a late lunch/early dinner. We surfed the Internet and found a restaurant that seemed promising so we walked the several blocks to it. We walked in and nobody was there to greet us so we picked up a menu and began to look it over. It was completely different than their on-line menu and much smaller.

A lady came to seat us and we asked her about the difference. She said it was because of the higher crab prices. Neither of us could figure out what that had to do with chicken and steak no longer being offered. We decided to leave.

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The restaurant where we didn't eat

For some reason, many of the restaurants around here close at 2:00 PM and most of the others don't open until 4:00 PM. And a few are carryout only. We checked several and finally walked back to the Outback Steak House where we both got, of all things, steak! The same steak we can have back home in Charleston, but we were hungry and it was decent.

As we were walking back to the marina, it started to rain, but stopped just as quickly. We got slightly wet but not enough to worry about. There was thunder in the distance but we never got a storm.

We took the K-9 for a walk and she made a few friends and got petted. Once she heard the thunder she decided it was time to head back to the boat.

Patti decided to do some more laundry so off she went again with a tube of quarters. Tomorrow, we'll walk to the hardware store, West Marine and Safeway (a grocery store). We might even walk a bit further to some other stores. And if the weather cooperates, we will check out the floating pool on the end of "C" dock.

BTW: We can only get six TV stations at our slip. We don't even get all of the Baltimore stations. It's probably because of the tall buildings and higher ground next to the marina.

Captain's Log, day forty (June 9, 2021)

Captain Ron was a Boy Scout when he was younger. The Boy Scout motto is "be prepared". More on that later.

By the time Captain Ron rolled out of the sack, Patti and the puppy had already gotten up, gotten dressed and taken their morning constitutional. He got up, brushed his teeth and shaved and made coffee. Then Patti suggested going out for breakfast to the "Original Pancake House".

To make a long story short, the air conditioning was not working, the food was mediocre at best and it was overpriced. So much for that place. Perhaps we just ordered the wrong items.

Captain Ron wanted to go to the Hardware store for bolts and washers to hopefully keep the alternator belts from loosening as the engine runs. He also wanted to browse through the West Marine store for no good reason. He just likes to browse marine stores wherever we go.

There is a Target store a little more than a mile from the marina and since Captain Ron has been losing some excess weight and his pants have been falling down, he wanted to see about getting some better fitting shorts. We also needed to go to Safeway for Patti's Dr. Peppers.



Seen on the streets of Baltimore

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We went to the hardware store and got what Captain Ron needed and a few things that Patti spied. We went to west Marine and got nothing. We made the long walk to Target and they didn't have what Captain Ron wanted but he did buy a pair of better fitting shorts anyway. Then, of course, it was a little over a mile back to the boat. This is when the "be prepared" thing came into play.

Getting ready for our mission, Captain Ron forgot to put the key to HIGH COTTON's cabin in his pocket. HIGH COTTON is not like many boats with some sort of flimsy canvas or fiberglass door; it has a sturdy aluminum door with a substantial lock like what would be on a home or commercial building. Other than breaking an expensive window or hatch, there is no way to get into HIGH COTTON without the key.

So, as we were walking back to the boat, Captain Ron said to Patti "Did you bring the boat key with you?" Her answer was "No."

Normally, it's Captain Ron's responsibility to carry the boat key. Patti carries the money and credit cards.

Well, the ex-Boy Scout was ready for this possibility, there is a door key hidden in an unlikely place on HIGH COTTON. He got the key, opened the door and hid the key away for the next time. This is the first time since 2008 that the spare key has been needed.

Patti took the puppy for a walk and Captain Ron rested for a few minutes. Then he installed his new bolts and adjusted the belts. He noticed that his ratchet wrench was jammed and not working correctly but he got it done and put everything away.

We still had to go to Safeway and Captain Ron remembered that his Craftsman ratchet had a

lifetime warranty. He did some Internet research and found that Ace Hardware and Lowes would honor the warranty. He called the hardware store and the guy who answered gave him a bit of grief about people buying beat up Craftsman tools at yard sales and turning them in for new ones, but he finally agreed to exchange the ratchet. Captain Ron suspects the problem with the ratchet was related to dropping it in the water in the bilge while replacing a pump a few weeks ago but didn't feel the need to volunteer that information. A lifetime warranty should mean "lifetime", not "lifetime as long as you keep it dry".

So, we got out the granny cart and walked to the hardware store where the owner gave Captain Ron more grief but did hand him a brand new Craftsman ratchet worth about \$30 (it probably cost \$10 when Captain Ron bought it thirty years ago). Also, the original was stamped "Made in the USA". The replacement was not.

Then we walked to Safeway and loaded the granny cart with sodas and a few other items. We won't be near a grocery store for several days once we leave here. We stopped for ice cream and took it back to the boat where it was enjoyed by the two legged and four legged crew members.

We had leftovers for dinner, took showers and walked the K-9. We will be up and out of here early tomorrow, hoping to beat the predicted rain and get a slip in Annapolis.

Captain's Log, day forty one (June 10, 2021)

We wanted to get an early start so as to get to Annapolis before the predicted rain which was supposed to start around noon today. We got up, walked the K-9, got a bag of ice and got underway by 6:30 AM. The harbor was as smooth as glass and Captain Ron had to dodge ducks swimming

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across the channel. We thought about cruising the rest of the way to the Inner Harbor but decided against it.

The Annapolis City Dock (it's called "Ego Alley" by locals because many boaters cruise to the end of the dead end channel and turn around and cruise out without taking a slip, just to be seen) has a rather strange and unique way of dealing with the slips. They will take reservations but they charge an extra dollar per foot if you reserve a slip. The slips that are not reserved are "first come, first served", so you take your chances on getting a slip or being turned away but you save a dollar per foot. This is what we have always done.

We cruised under the Francis Scott Key Bridge and continued on the Patapsco River to its junction with the Chesapeake Bay. We passed two different dredging sites but were able to pass them safely by staying outside the channel where it was still plenty deep for HIGH COTTON. We were passed by a workboat that we later saw delivering supplies to one of the dredging vessels.

We passed Sandy Point State Park where we used to launch our smaller boat when we lived in Maryland and then passed under the Chesapeake Bay Bridge (officially, the Governor William Preston Lane Jr. Memorial Bridge).



Approaching the Chesapeake Bay Bridge from the north



The Chesapeake Bay Bridge again

The entrance channel to Annapolis is just a couple miles south of the Bay Bridge and in another forty five minutes or so we were backing into our slip in Ego Alley, assisted by a nice young lady who knew little about tying up boats. She checked us in and took our credit card payment and promised an e-mail receipt, but so far that hasn't happened.



Approaching Annapolis, MD from the Chesapeake Bay

This marina is in the center of the tourist area of Annapolis and the office and showers are on the second floor of a building separated from the dock by a public parking lot.

This marina is also unusual in that instead of using physical or electronic keys or a key code to keep the general public out of the bath and shower rooms, the locks are operated by "tokens", similar to coins. The office gives the slip holder a few

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tokens to use and when these are used up they give out more tokens.



HIGH COTTON at the Annapolis City Dock (Ego Alley)

So we got settled in, got our tokens, walked the Sea Dog, put her back on the boat and went to a taco place for lunch. Back at the boat we found we had no stations on TV and the marina does not provide Wi-Fi.

The combination CO and smoke detector on HIGH COTTON has apparently bit the dust, it was beeping and wouldn't stop. This frightened Kiki and she wanted to get off the boat. Patti took her for a walk while Captain Ron got out the vacuum cleaner and tried cleaning it. It was OK for about an hour, then it started beeping again. This is a "high tech" device with a permanent battery. Once the battery is turned on, it cannot be turned back off without destroying it. Captain Ron seriously considered throwing it overboard but in the end, he broke the tab that "kills" it. This is the second one of these we have had problems with so we will get a different brand as soon as we can.

The rains finally came about 4:00 PM but didn't last long. While looking for lunch we had spotted BLT sandwiches in the market so Patti walked to the market and brought back two for our dinner. After that, we asked Kiki if she would like to go for ice cream and of course she did so off we went. The

ice cream shop and many of the restaurants are just a short walk from our slip.



Kiki gets her ice cream as usual

After the ice cream, we walked around the waterfront and through part of the Naval Academy. There were many rain puddles and the pooch walked through them all. She had to get rinsed off before she was allowed back inside the boat.

It's been a long day and it's time for bed. Hopefully, we can sleep in tomorrow.

Captain's Log, day forty two (June 11, 2021)

It got cold overnight and the heat came on. That's a good thing because we have already put the heavy blankets away. Patti and the puppy got up early and went for a walk. The puppy led Patti to the ice cream shop but of course it wasn't open yet.

We decided to walk to the deli for breakfast. Learning from our experience in Baltimore, we ordered less stuff but Patti still brought half of hers home. Captain Ron ate his entire "short stack" of pancakes.

It was late enough when we finished that the stores were open so Captain Ron took the leftovers

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back to the boat while Patti shopped. We were in our raincoats and it drizzled most of the day, sometimes harder, sometimes lighter.

Captain Ron got his high speed Internet back, but he didn't want to use it all up like last month so he called the marina office and confirmed what he suspected, that they do not provide Wi-Fi for the boaters. The dockmaster said that there is a service available from a third party for a fee.

The pricing structure is a bit strange at \$6 for a day and \$12 for a month but he signed up for a month and that will cover the rest of our stay here and preserve the Verizon data allotment.

We walked Kiki a few times during the day and each time, she would look for the biggest puddles and walk through them. People watching thought that was funny. We went to the ice cream shop and got ice cream and sat on the bench, under cover and ate it in the rain. The K-9 got her share.



Kiki doing what she does best - making friends

Going to breakfast this morning, we passed a lobster roll restaurant where we had eaten on a previous visit to Annapolis. Captain Ron decided that a lobster roll would be his dinner for today so we walked back from the boat and got him a lobster roll and a bowl of lobster bisque. Patti got two hot dogs and a salad. We brought it back to the boat and dined on HIGH COTTON.

We mentioned before that this dock is called "Ego Alley" by the locals because people often drive their boats through, turn around and drive back out again. Sitting on our boat, we have been observing this, everything from twelve foot sailboats to fifty foot yachts. Of course, some are actually paying for dockage and have tied up for the night or weekend. There are some modern boats and an antique sailboat that we have seen so far. This is also the water taxi stop so people who have rented a mooring ball can take the water taxi to shore.

The rain stopped in the late afternoon and people are walking around the town and the waterfront. Tomorrow is forecast to be a nice day and we are expecting visitors.

Captain's Log, day forty three (June 12, 2021)

Again, Patti and the pooch got up before Captain Ron and again, the pooch led Patti to the ice cream shop. It wasn't open of course so back to the boat they came.

We skipped our showers last night because it was cold and wet outside, but this morning it was warm and dry so Captain Ron decided to take a shower. When he came back, Patti decided to take one.

Once we were showered and dressed, we walked up the hill to the deli for donuts that we had seen yesterday. We got four and headed back down the hill. We stopped at the CVS for ice because the marina does not sell ice.

We got back onboard HIGH COTTON and ate our donuts. Patti's sister Tracey, who lives about an hour away called and said she was on her way to visit with us.

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An hour or so later, Tracey showed up with two of Patti's other sisters, Fran and Penny and Fran's son Justin who is visiting from New Mexico. This was a surprise to Patti and we were both glad to see the family who we hadn't seen for a couple years.

Everyone climbed aboard HIGH COTTON but some of them started getting seasick so we got back off and went to a restaurant for lunch. After lunch, we walked around the waterfront for a while, then they had to leave for the drive home. It was nice seeing them and Tracey left Captain Ron a bag of home grown blueberries. They were yummy!



The Siron clan from Sunshine, MD

It was a beautiful day today in Annapolis and the town was jumping with cars, people and boats everywhere. We decided to take our drinks and the Sea Dog up on the flybridge and watch the action.

We mentioned Ego Alley earlier. Today the traffic was non-stop and from our flybridge, we had a front row seat. It was a constant parade of boats entering, travelling the few hundred yards or so to the end, turning around and heading back out. There were power boats, sailboats, big boats, small boats, kayaks and paddleboards. And of course the water taxis and tour boats were coming and going as well. Boats also came in to dock and the slips on either side of us filled up.

Patti walked to the ice cream shop and brought back ice cream for the crew, two legged and four legged.

Maryland and much of the mid Atlantic is experiencing the return of the cicadas, often referred to as "seventeen year locusts" even though they are not locusts.

These are insects about the size of grasshoppers that emerge from the ground every seventeen years, fly around, mate, lay eggs and die within a few weeks.

We didn't see any until we visited Baltimore a couple days ago. This afternoon, one landed on the deck of the flybridge and Kiki took an interest in it. She started by barking at it, then she got brave enough to bat it around with her paws. Patti threw it overboard but soon another one appeared and the now brave K-9 started again with this one, barking at it and batting it around with her paws. Eventually, she bit it and apparently decided it would be good to eat. That's when Captain Ron threw this one overboard.



Kiki checks out the bug

We came down from the flybridge to the air conditioned comfort of the saloon. Just before dusk, we took the Sea Dog for a walk so she could do her business. She met some people and got

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petted, did her business and we walked back to the boat.

It's supposed to be nice weather tomorrow and we may have more visitors, but now it's off to bed with the hopes that the bands and partying stop early tonight.

Captain's Log, day forty four (June 13, 2021)

The bands across the waterway played until late last night, then the nearby boats turned their stereos up and the partying continued until early this morning. Captain Ron somehow drifted off to sleep but Patti had a hard time sleeping.

Still, she managed to beat Captain Ron out of the sack and walk the hound. She also walked up to the CVS for a bag of ice. A few days ago we were shopping and saw a can of sausage gravy. We figured "what the heck, it can't be that bad" so we bought it. We had leftover sausage gravy and a biscuit from Patti's breakfast a couple days ago and leftover cornbread from lunch yesterday so Patti mixed the canned and the leftover sausage gravy and we had sausage gravy over biscuits and corn bread. It wasn't great, but it wasn't bad.

Patti's nephew Brock and his wife Aimee and their two children Aubree and Ethan came to visit from their home in Glen Burnie, not too far from Annapolis and we talked and visited on HIGH COTTON. The children played with Kiki. We thought about walking to a local restaurant for lunch, but with the children along and them having a vehicle, we decided to drive to a pizza restaurant outside of downtown where we could all just eat pizza and not have to deal with crowds.



Brock, Aimee and family with the Widmans at the pizza place

After lunch, they drove us back to the marina and went on home. We got the K-9 out and took her for a walk. It turns out that having a dog is good exercise for the owners as well as the dog. And of course each time we walk her she walks up to people and gets petted.

Later, we asked her if she wanted to go for ice cream and she did so off the boat we climbed again and headed down the street.

After the ice cream, we all walked around looking at the boats (the humans) and sniffing the ground (the Sea Dog). There is not a square foot of grass in the waterfront area, but the entrance to the Naval Academy is nicely landscaped and that is where the puppy feels most comfortable doing her "business". Fortunately, there is a trash can at the entrance.

We returned to the boat where we took turns taking showers. After our showers, we were sitting on HIGH COTTON when some people stopped and were looking at the boat. They caught our eye and motioned for us to come out so we went out and talked to them. They are from the Charleston area and visiting here.

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Our stay is over here tomorrow and we plan to anchor several miles south of here in the Rhode River where we can dinghy to a small island beach and let the Sea Dog do her thing. Then we will cross the Bay again and head south on the eastern shore.

Captain's Log, day forty five (June 14, 2021)

All is right with the world now; Captain Ron got his TV stations back! Actually, it's not "all right", we will get to that.

The weather forecast said it would rain last night. It didn't. The weather forecast said it would rain today. It didn't. Not that anybody is complaining about it not raining when we are boating, but it would be nice to know what is actually going to happen so we could make plans.

We were in no rush to leave today because we had a pretty short trip planned. As usual, Patti beat Captain Ron out of bed and walked the puppy. Captain Ron got up, and made his coffee and then checked the engine and filled the water tanks while Patti walked to the deli for donuts and to CVS for ice. We said goodbye to another boating couple that we met and cast off about 8:30 AM. Captain Ron wanted to blow his air horn when leaving the slip like the tour boats have been doing but he resisted the urge.

The water was a bit rough on the Bay today and we bounced quite a bit but it was only about a two hour trip and the last part was in protected waters. We passed the Thomas Point Shoal Lighthouse, known as one of the most photographed lighthouses in the USA. With the boat rocking as much as it was, Captain Ron took about a dozen more photos. He got a couple decent ones for his efforts.



The much photographed Thomas Point Shoal Lighthouse

We passed by Camp Wabanna, where Captain Ron spent two weeks each summer as a young child. (He can say it now, all the "cool kids" got to go to the YMCA camp at Camp Letts but he and his brothers went to Camp Wabanna.) Camp Letts is actually near where we anchored.



Camp Wabanna on the West River

There were a few boats anchored near Flat Island but a couple of them were leaving and no one was on the island.

We anchored HIGH COTTON and Captain Ron launched the dinghy off the bow without Kiki seeing it. We rested a bit and then Captain Ron got the motor off the flybridge and mounted it on the dinghy. It was at that point that the Sea Dog realized that we were going for a dinghy ride. And started jumping and barking.

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We all got into the dinghy and headed for the beach on Flat Island. This is a very small beach but it's really nice, all sand and a sandy bottom when wading. The Sea Dog barked the entire way and was the first one out of the boat. She really enjoys swimming and seems to be getting better at it, swimming longer distances.



Flat Island on the Rhode River

We posted about the puppy playing with the cicadas the other day. Well, she played with one today on the beach and then decided to eat it! Then she found another and gulped it down! Gross!



On the beach at Flat Island

A few other boats showed up with people and dogs so after a while we decided to head back to HIGH COTTON and rest. We rested for a while and ate some snacks. Captain Ron got a message that his

high speed data was all used up again even though it was renewed on June 9 and he had been using another service in Annapolis for the time we were there. He tried going on the website to find out what the problem is, but got nowhere. He plans on calling them tomorrow and getting things straightened out one way or another. In the meantime, somehow, he was able to use his phone and got what seems like high speed service.

Then, he got a message from Facebook saying that he was in "Facebook Jail" for "violating community standards. Apparently some snowflake took offense at a suggestion he had made on a boating group.

He found an option to contest the sentence and checked the box. Several minutes later, Facebook apologized and let him back on. Some people just can't handle the truth!

The other people and dogs left the beach so we got in the dinghy and went back to the beach for a few more minutes. Captain Ron decided to see how the water felt so he waded in. More people and dogs showed up and we were tired anyway so we hopped in the dinghy and motored back to the mothership again. This time we took the motor off and tied the dinghy to ride behind HIGH COTTON for the night.



Captain Ron tests the water in the Rhode River

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Dinner was microwave meals and a can of butter beans with cake from the deli in Annapolis for dessert.

Tomorrow we will cross the Chesapeake Bay to a nice “resort marina” for a couple of days.

Captain’s Log, day forty six (June 15, 2021)

Perhaps Mother Nature was insulted by our post about it not raining because it rained last night. Actually it was not just rain; it was a full fledged storm with thunder, lightning and even hail. When we tried to lift the dinghy onto the bow this morning, it was too heavy to lift and we had to let the water drain out first. At least it didn’t last long.

The Sea Dog was sick last night. Perhaps from eating goose poop on the beach or perhaps from eating cicadas. Or maybe a combination of the two. Anyway, she is better today.

We woke up about 6:30 AM. We got the boat ready, loaded the dinghy onto the bow, pulled the anchor up and were underway by 7:15 AM.

Our course took us out of the Rhode River and southeast across the Chesapeake Bay. We actually crossed our track from a few weeks ago when we went from Chesapeake Beach to St. Michaels.

We pulled into Knapps Narrows Marina a bit before 10:00 AM. On the way to the office to check in we met some of the boaters and motel guests and realized that we had just missed the free continental breakfast. Captain Ron rushed in and managed to snag a cup of coffee and a bagel before it was all put away.

We talked a while and then Captain Ron went to the office and checked in. Once that was done we walked back to the boat and got things organized. Captain Ron replaced the engine belts and then

Patti got the vacuum cleaner out and vacuumed the boat.



Easy docking at Knapps Narrows Marina

We left the K-9 to guard the boat and walked to the local sandwich/ grocery/liquor store and got a couple of sandwiches and some deli salads to go with them.

We walked back along the two lane country road with no shoulders to the boat and ate half of our sandwiches and some of the salads. By that time Captain Ron was ready for a nap so he headed for the V berth, scanned for TV stations and fell asleep.

There’s a really nice pool here so we changed into our swimsuits and walked to the pool. It was a bit chilly but we both got in and fully wet.

We didn’t stay in long; we got out, dried ourselves off and headed back to HIGH COTTON.

We took turns going for showers and this is where Captain Ron had to deduct a few points from his “resort” description. The shower water was not as hot as it should have been, did not have a lot of pressure or volume and didn’t smell that good. It’s well water.

We decided to take the Sea Dog for an evening walk and met an older couple that was staying in the motel. We talked with them for a while and

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Kiki got petted. Walking back to our boat we met a group of people travelling on five boats from the Baltimore area. They are friends and travel together. We stopped to talk to them and Kiki got petted some more. Some of them asked about our boat so we invited them to take a look inside. They invited us to breakfast tomorrow morning.

When we got to the marina this morning, the dockhand told us he was giving us the “sunset view”. Actually, this is the west end of the dock and furthest from the heads and showers, but it does provide an unobstructed view of the sunset which was pretty nice tonight.

Hopefully, we will get a good rest tonight, no sick puppy and no hailstorm.

Captain’s Log, day forty seven (June 16, 2021)

Patti beat Captain Ron out of the sack and took the puppy for her walk. Captain Ron rolled out of the sack a little before 8:00 AM, brushed his teeth, shaved and combed his hair and headed for the free continental breakfast the marina puts on every morning. No eggs benedict or waffles, but he did get coffee, fruit, an English muffin and a couple of hard boiled eggs. Patti had juice, mini donuts and eggs. We talked with some of the other boaters and motel guests and then took some boiled eggs back for the Sea Dog.

Later, we were walking around the grounds with the K-9 when our old friend Jeanie Hutchinson arrived from her home on nearby Kent Island. Jeanie was a schoolmate of Patti’s in high school and was married to a musician friend of Captain Ron’s. She brought us fresh corn, cantaloupe, strawberries, tomatoes and green beans for the puppy.

We sat and talked about the good old days and people we knew way back then.

Eventually, she had to go so we said our good byes. We finished the sandwiches and pasta salad from the other day and walked the pooch again.



Old friends reminisce

Captain Ron tried to get a slip in Oxford at the marina we have been to before but their response was that they were “fully booked”. This was all done on-line so Patti called the marina directly to see if she would get the same answer. The answer she got was that the lady who answered the phone didn’t know if they had any vacancies; it was all done on line. Progress, we suppose!

The lady did give Patti the phone number of another marina in Oxford, one that Captain Ron had never heard of and one that wasn’t on any of the guides. Captain Ron couldn’t find it on the Internet so he finally called the number. It turns out to be a new name and owner of another marina. They said they had just bought the place and were fixing it up. They have no Internet and the hot water is “supposed to be fixed tomorrow”. Captain Ron made a reservation for one day. We will see how we like it and then decide if we should stay another day or move on.

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After this, he did what he has been dreading for a couple days; he called Verizon to try to find out how his 15 GB of data got used up in three days when he was actually using a different ISP.

Well, he was on the phone for over an hour and never did find out how this happened but supposedly is now on a new plan with twice the high speed data and a savings of a dollar or so per month. We shall see. Captain Ron is not really fond of Verizon and their “data plans”, but they do have the best coverage at this time. Meanwhile, he decided to turn off his Verizon hot spot until he needs it again. That will probably be tomorrow.

Knapps Narrows Marina claims to provide Wi-Fi on the docks but the signal at our end of the dock is very weak. There is a hotel on the other side of the river with unsecured WIFI and Captain Ron is using that instead.

We cooked the corn that Jeanie brought us and sliced a fresh tomato. That was our dinner and it was delicious.

We took our showers and walked the puppy again. Captain Ron reports that the temperature of the shower water was satisfactory this time. Perhaps it's because he used the other shower. There still wasn't a lot of volume or pressure though. This often happens in rural areas where marinas often rely on well water.

On the way back, we stopped and talked with some of the other boaters on the dock. We find that cruising boaters are usually pretty friendly.

The sun is going down and we may or may not have a nice sunset with our “sunset view” position on the dock.



The sun sets in the west at Knapps Narrows Marina

Captain's Log, day forty eight (June 17, 2021)

True to our plans, we got up, got dressed and walked the dog and walked to the office for breakfast. Back at the boat we unplugged the shore power cord and released the lines about 8:30 AM. Right away, Captain Ron noticed that the route on the chart plotter was pointing us in the wrong direction. As soon as we passed through the drawbridge, Captain Ron handed over the helm to Patti and went below to figure out the problem.

It turned out that he had the correct route on his computer but had neglected to upload it to the chart plotter. The fix took only a couple of minutes and he returned to the flybridge and the helm.

We exited Knapps Narrows and entered the widest part of the Choptank River. The river is about five miles wide at this point. We could see perhaps a dozen or so crab boats working trot lines in the river. Maryland allows the traditional crab traps in the Chesapeake Bay itself, but not in the tributaries so the crabbers use trot lines.

Basically, a trotline is a length of rope, often up to a quarter mile long with bait attached every few feet. The crabber sets the line on the bottom with a marker at each end and then goes back to the

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beginning and snags the line and runs it over a roller on the side of his boat. As he moves forward along the line, it rises to the surface over the roller and he stands with a crab net and picks off the crabs that are eating the bait.

The real problem dealing with crabbers is, they are concentrating on catching crabs and are usually not watching where they are going with the boat. A couple times we had to change course to avoid them.

We got to Oxford in just a little over two hours but had never been to this marina before. They had warned us that they wouldn't be listening to the radio and that we should call them on the phone.

When we got near where we thought the marina was, we called them on the phone, only to get a recorded message saying that that number was not in service. This is the same number we called them on yesterday.

This marina is part of a small chain of marinas so we called the next closest one and the lady there called the one we were looking for on an extension and our marina called us from a personal cell phone.

After that bit of confusion with Patti making phone calls and Captain Ron circling the boat around in the creek, we finally found out that we were right in front of the marina so we pulled in and backed into our slip. There are no signs because this chain only opened the marina two weeks ago. Again, we were assisted by a very nice lady who knew very little about tying up boats. She is the office manager and apparently, they haven't hired any dockhands yet. We did meet the manager later in the day.



HIGH COTTON at DiMillos on the Chesapeake, Oxford, MD

We got settled in, walked the hound and paid for our stay (they haven't set up credit card payments yet so Patti wrote them a check). Kiki had the run of the office and got her expected dog treats.

They don't have ice yet so we put the K-9 back on the boat and walked a couple blocks to the small country store for ice and a few other things. Walking back, we decided to change our plans and stay here another day so we changed our reservations at the next marina and paid for another night here.

When we pulled in today, we saw people on a small sailboat two slips from us waving to us. It turns out they were a couple slips down from us at Calvert Marina in Solomons over the Memorial Day weekend. It's a small world sometimes.

Once we returned from the store, we had a lunch of sliced tomatoes. Captain Ron scanned for TV stations but fell asleep watching the TV. Patti woke him up with the suggestion to walk to the pool so we changed into our swimsuits and headed to the pool.

Unfortunately, the pool was a bit too cool for comfort so although we did get wet, we got back out, sat in the sun for a while and went back to the boat.

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We checked the Internet for restaurants, found one that looked promising and walked nearly a mile to it. We had a repeat of our experience in Canton a few days ago, the on-line menu was not the same as the “real” menu and Patti could not order what she was planning on. We chose to stay this time and the food was decent.

We considered stopping at the country store for ice cream but it was getting late by this time so we headed back to the boat, offloaded the Ship’s Puppy and took her for a walk.

Supposedly, they got the hot water situation fixed but by the time we finished dinner and walking the puppy, we decided to wait and take showers tomorrow.

Captain’s Log, day forty nine (June 18, 2021)

Today is a day in port so there’s nothing exciting to write about. Captain Ron and the hound slept in. Once they got up, Patti took the hound for a walk and then cooked breakfast for the crew.

After breakfast, she decided to do the laundry that has been piling up so she stripped the bed and did two loads. Captain Ron worked on the routes to get us back to Norfolk, VA. Hopefully, he will get them right this time.

Once the laundry was in the machines, we asked the Sea Dog if she would like to go to the beach. Of course she did so we set out for the park on the waterfront. There are actually two public beaches on the river here and it turns out the one in the park isn’t the one we remembered from our last visit. It was very small, but Kiki didn’t mind. The park was crowded with mothers and small children and some of the children were in the water and Kiki entertained them by swimming and digging. One small boy was digging in the sand and Kiki

went over and started helping him. He was not pleased with that so we had to get her away from him and have her dig somewhere else.



Kiki goes for a swim in the Tred Avon River



Kiki helps the children dig a hole in the sand

After her swim she ran around the park smelling things. We sat on a bench overlooking the river and Patti walked to the market and brought back ice cream for all.

The park is only about a three block walk from our boat. It turns out the larger beach is about five blocks in the other direction. We decided to just go back to the boat and let the puppy rest. Patti got our clothes out of the dryer on the way back.

We had peaches, strawberries and cantaloupe for lunch. After that, we (the humans) walked to the

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little market and bought two frozen pork chops and a can of sweet potatoes for a future dinner. We have fresh green beans to go with it.

Searching the Internet for restaurants we found we had a choice of walking a mile one way or five blocks the other so we chose the five blocks. We each got a decent hamburger and were able to substitute a salad for the French fries. Then we stopped at the ice cream shop in the same building for ice cream.

Back to the boat and it's time for showers and then to bed. It's been nice here in Oxford, but it's time for us to move on.

Captain's Log, day fifty (June 19, 2021)

We had a three hour voyage planned today so there was no reason to leave early. We decided to eat breakfast before getting underway. We had milk on the boat that needed to be used up and we had purchased two single servings of cereal at the little general store so that's what we ate. We filled the water tanks in anticipation of having questionable water at our next marina.

We disconnected the shorepower cable and untied the lines and away we went. Captain Ron checked the route beforehand just in case and it was fine.

The creek behind Oxford was as smooth as glass but once we turned into the Tred Avon River, the wind and waves picked up. Once we got to the Choptank River we wished we had left the Sea Dog below in the cabin. One of us would have stayed there with her or we would have run the boat from the lower helm. It was rough on the water, very rough. Again, the crabbers were out in force going every which way and not watching where they were going. We were able to avoid them today with no close calls.

Our course took us from the Choptank River into the Bay itself and then up the Little Choptank River to Slaughter Creek. It's called a creek, but it is as wide as a lot of rivers.

We called the marina on the marine radio and got no response. That was not a good sign. We called on the phone and asked if the docks were floating docks. The lady who answered the phone didn't know. That was not a good sign either.

Patti asked if there was a dockhand to help us dock. There wasn't. Not a good sign.

So, we got our lines ready for fixed slips and docked ourselves. The slip was too long to use the outside pilings and a bit too short for the middle set, but we managed with a few adjustments.

We looked at the dock and it was covered in bird poop. Not just poop on the dock, there was poop on the poop!

Fortunately, there was a one hundred foot hose with a nozzle coiled up near our slip ready for the occasion. Captain Ron used nearly the entire length of the hose washing bird poop off the dock and only in the direction towards land and the office. Somebody else can get the rest.



HIGH COTTON at Slaughter Creek Marina

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Finally, Kiki was allowed on the dock and we walked to the office to check in and pay. That's when we learned that there is no WIFI and no laundry even though the website says there is. Captain Ron will have to use his Verizon hot spot and the clothes will have to stay dirty until we reach our next marina. We do have TV though.

There is a restaurant that is open Saturday and Sunday so we ate our meal of the day about 3:00 PM and we will eat there again tomorrow. The food was pretty good. "Live music" consisted of a guy sitting on a stool, playing guitar and singing. He was actually pretty good.

Captain Ron was walking the puppy when she spied a small beach. There was a small wall separating the beach from the dock and she looked both ways and then jumped down from the wall, onto the sand and into the water where she swam back and forth. Once she finished she had to get rinsed off to be allowed back inside HIGH COTTON. Later on in the afternoon we walked her again and were talking to some people who had come here from across the Chesapeake Bay for drinks and dinner. The pooch jumped off the wall and swam again.

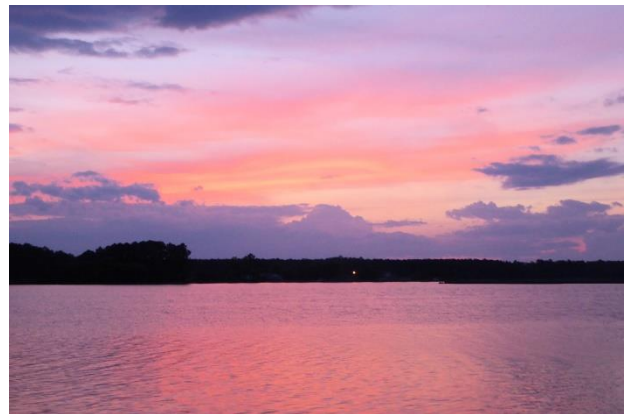


Kiki goes for a swim in Slaughter Creek

We booked two days here and we will have to watch the weather to see if we have to stay longer.

Our next voyage is almost eight hours unless we find a different stopping point. As of now, the weather forecast for Monday doesn't look like good travelling weather. There is a pool here, but like the others we have tried, it's pretty chilly.

We walked the pooch again and she walked over to a couple to get petted so we talked with them a while. It looks like we may have a decent sunset tonight. Then it's off to bed for some much needed rest. (Kiki writes: *"One of my favorite things about going on boat cruises is meeting people. They always pet me and tell me how cute I am! Of course, I already know that."*)



Sunset over Slaughter Creek

Captain's Log, day fifty one (June 20, 2021)

There's not much to write about because there's not much to do here. The pool is chilly at best and there's nothing to walk to.

We got up of course and walked the Sea Dog. Actually, it was her idea to get up. The sun came up and it got light. She can easily sleep in the daylight, but when it first gets light in the morning, she wants us to get out of bed and walk her.

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Breakfast was creamed chipped beef over toast. Not from scratch, from a frozen bag. It wasn't bad but Patti's homemade version is much better.

Captain Ron did some calculations and determined that we might or might not have enough diesel fuel to make it to our next destination, Somers Cove Marina in Crisfield, MD. If he had done those calculations a couple days ago we could have filled up on fuel in Oxford or purchased fuel at this marina when we came in yesterday.

Basically, there were two choices; move the boat to the fuel dock and fill it up or carry fuel in a fuel jug from the fuel dock to the boat and just buy enough to make sure we would make it to Crisfield. Running out of fuel in a boat is a lot more complicated than running out of fuel in a car. You can't just park the boat and call AAA. We do have a towing membership and they would bring fuel to the boat, but restarting a diesel engine that has run out of fuel is a bit complicated and something we don't want to deal with while rocking in the middle of the Chesapeake Bay.

Captain Ron thought it over and decided to just carry fuel to the boat from the fuel dock. The marina had no fuel jugs but we carry a one gallon fuel jug on the boat to fill filters if necessary. It actually holds one and a half gallons if filled to the top and had about a gallon of fuel in it so he dumped that fuel into the tank and made eight trips to the pump and back. He got his "steps" in today. The fact that fuel here is twenty five cents more per gallon than in Crisfield helped to influence his decision.

After the refueling marathon, he went inside and rested for a bit. As the day wore on, boats started coming in to eat at the restaurant and drink at the bar. We helped several of them tie up and eventually went for our meal. Again, the food was decent. There is nothing around here so

apparently people travel from pretty far away to dine and drink here. We talked to several who came by boat from the western shore of the Bay, twenty and thirty miles away.

Kiki walked to the beach three different times and swam. She made friends with a three year old boy and they dug in the sand together. He waded (his mother was watching him) and she swam.

The "live music" today is Karaoke. It seems to Captain Ron (a retired professional musician) that calling a guy singing to recorded music is pretty far from "live music", but it gets worse as people from the crowd get up and attempt to sing.

There is only one shower for everyone in the marina but since we are apparently the only transients here, this was not a problem. Patti took her shower, followed by Captain Ron. The only issue is, to get to and from the shower from the boat, we had to walk with our shower bags between the stage and the diners.

Low tide here tomorrow is at 8:30 AM and since the creek has some shallow places and we want to make some distance before the winds pick up on the Bay, our plan is to leave at first light or about 5:30 AM. We can do it, we've done it before.

And so, to bed.

Captain's Log, day fifty two (June 21, 2021)

Yes, our post is late. Yesterday was a very long day.

True to our word, we got up at 5:00 AM. After getting dressed, walking the puppy, unplugging and storing the shore power cord and extracting ourselves from the spider web of lines holding us in this oversized slip, we were on our way by 5:40

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AM. We had our running lights on just to be safe and legal.

Slaughter Creek was as smooth as glass and we never found the shallow spots we had been warned about. As we turned into the Little Choptank River the breeze picked up and so did the waves.

To go south today, we had to first go north out of Slaughter Creek and then west on the Little Choptank River before turning south on the Chesapeake Bay. This added an hour or so to our journey.

With winds out of the south, it didn't take a lot of wind to make the Bay choppy and eventually, we decided to take the Sea Dog down below before she became the Seasick Dog. Captain Ron and Patti took turns driving from the flybridge.

Heading south on the Bay, we passed the Cove Point CNG facility again and this time there was a ship loading compressed natural gas. We were on the other side of the bay but we could see it at the dock.



CNG Tanker taking on compressed natural gas for export

Eventually, our route took us southeast through more protected water and the Sea Dog came back up to join the rest of the crew.

The US Navy has a couple wrecked ships stationed in the Chesapeake Bay that they use for target practice at times. Apparently, today was one of those times as we heard the Navy range boats calling other boaters and directing them away from the target practice area. Fortunately, we had passed these ships before this was to start so we weren't affected.

We saw what appeared to be a cow nosed ray swimming along near the surface, but it dove before we could get a photo. Patti saw two dolphins while she was driving and Captain Ron was napping with the hound below.

We eventually got to our destination, Somers Cove Marina in Crisfield, MD and headed to the fuel dock where we took on sixty seven gallons of diesel fuel. Apparently, we could have made it here without the fuel we bought yesterday, but better safe than sorry. The boat on the other side of the fuel dock took on nine hundred gallons of diesel fuel. It was a big boat!

After fueling, we went to our assigned slip. A floating dock at last! And a nice sturdy one to boot. We got tied up and the puppy made a bee line for shore. She had business to attend to.

Captain Ron got the power hooked up and we went to the office to check in and pay. Kiki entertained the office folks. We took the "Pay for three nights and get the fourth night free" deal.

Back at the boat it was time for Captain Ron to change the oil. He got out the oil change pump, the new oil and the necessary filters and funnels, hooked up the oil change pump and turned it on. It made noise but did not pump oil.

He checked for blockages and then got out a screwdriver and removed the cover from the pump and extracted the impeller (a small rubber thingy for the non-mechanically inclined). It was toast!

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Most of the vanes were broken off and of course it wasn't going to pump oil in that condition.

Now this is a specialty repair item, not commonly found in local marine stores but available on-line. Captain Ron googled "marine parts" and found a boat shop that he remembered from our last stop here. He called and the owner said he didn't have it but might be able to order it and have it by the next day.

Captain Ron put the broken impeller in his pocket, grabbed his wallet and phone and headed for the store. He met up with Patti and the pooch and they decided to walk with him.

At the store, the owner's tune changed a bit and he said he wouldn't be able to order the part but suggested a couple other places. Captain Ron called them and they couldn't help either.

Walking back to the boat we passed a small restaurant that sold ice cream so we went in and ordered some. They even had "doggie cups" of vanilla ice cream with treats on top.

Back at the boat, Captain Ron was pondering the situation, wondering how he could repair his oil extraction pump and how soon he could find a replacement part. Calling a mechanic to come and change the oil was one option of course.

He finally had what turned out to be a brilliant idea. He walked down the dock to where some people were sitting on their sailboat and asked them if they had an oil change pump that he could borrow. It turns out, they did!

They were eating at the time so the guy brought it to HIGH COTTON several minutes later. It was not an electrical pump like ours, it was a hand operated vacuum pump and made for a smaller engine so it took three extractions to get all the oil

out of HIGH COTTON's engine and another to empty the transmission, but it worked.

Fortunately, we had never actually discarded the bucket we replaced a few weeks ago so that was used for the dirty oil.

So, eventually, the oil and filters were changed and everything was cleaned up and put back in place. Captain Ron returned the oil extraction pump. We haven't figured out if we can get back home without another oil change though.

Captain Ron was ready for a few minutes of rest and then it was time to eat. We headed to town to the carry out sandwich shop but when we got that far we decided to check out the restaurant just about a half a block further up the road.

We went in expecting to get sandwiches but ended up ordering full meals. The food was delicious, reasonably priced and the portions were huge. Captain Ron had the turkey special with turkey, gravy, mashed potatoes, stuffing, green beans and corn pudding. The entire plate was covered in food and there were two extra dishes for the corn pudding and green beans. Patti had fried chicken, mashed potatoes and stewed tomatoes. The owners sat and talked with us. Needless to say, we brought a bunch of food back to HIGH COTTON.

By the time we got back to the boat, it was 8:00 PM and Captain Ron really needed a shower so he trudged over to the bathhouse. After that, Patti went for her shower. Captain Ron was in bed, half asleep by the time Patti returned. It was a long day indeed.

Captain's Log, day fifty three (June 22, 2021)

One would have thought that Captain Ron would have slept in until 9:00 AM this morning.

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Unfortunately, that did not meet the Sea Dog's agenda so we were both up about 7:00 AM. We got dressed and the pooch got her morning walk.

Patti cooked breakfast for the crew. Later, we decided to walk to the city dock where the boats to Smith and Tangier Islands dock. Neither of these islands are connected to the mainland by roads so everything and everybody has to come and go by boat.

On the way there, we stopped at a "general store" to buy a bottle of water for the K-9. Well, it's not really a general store, it's a store that sells clothing and souvenirs. Not bottled water or other things one would expect to find in a general store. The lady gave Kiki a cup of water and we invested in the local economy by buying several things that we don't really need.

We got to the town dock, walked around, sat and watched the action for a bit and then walked to the little ice cream shop near the dock. The sign in the window said "closed, will return at 12". A web search revealed that it was closed permanently!



The HIGH COTTON crew rests on the Crisfield, MD city dock

On the way back to the boat we stopped in the sandwich/ice cream shop where bought ice cream yesterday. Even though Kiki was allowed to eat her ice cream in the shop yesterday, today the lady said she was not allowed in the shop.



As usual, Kiki made a friend at the city dock

We left without buying anything and stopped at the marina office and bought ice cream and took it to the boater's lounge to sit and eat it. After that, we went back to the boat, got the used oil from yesterday's oil change and took it to the marina's recycling station and dumped it into the tank.

Our next planned stop was to be in Onancock, VA. Captain Ron called to reserve a slip and was told that they would be full this weekend and could not accommodate us. We could anchor in the basin and take the dinghy ashore, but we don't really want to visit that badly.

Captain Ron did some planning and concluded that we could skip Onancock and go straight to our next planned stop, Cape Charles, VA. He called and found that that marina was also full booked for the weekend. It appears there are boat clubs on the Chesapeake Bay travelling in groups and booking the marinas. We have not had this problem in the past.

Part of cruising is being flexible so we will figure something out tomorrow.

The weather forecast called for rain and storms today. It was nice, warm and sunny until about 1:00 PM, then the winds picked up. We rolled our bimini top up to protect it from the wind. It rained for a while and then it cleared up but got much

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cooler. We took the pooch out and she played in the puddles.

Dinner was leftovers from the restaurant meal last night along with some fresh green beans that were beginning to show signs of age.

Captain's Log, day fifty four (June 23, 2021)

We slept until about 7:00 AM this morning. As usual, the Sea Dog was ready to get up so we got up with her.

We brushed our teeth, got dressed and walked the puppy, our usual routine. We left her to guard the boat and walked to town to the restaurant we ate dinner at the day we got here. We knew it was closed yesterday for maintenance but it was supposed to reopen today. It didn't.

We were sitting on a bench outside looking for another place to get breakfast when the owners came out. They explained that they hadn't been able to get everything done yesterday so they were finishing up today and promised that they would be open tomorrow. They recommended a small place down the street that served breakfast sandwiches.

We walked down the street to the restaurant and went in. It was small and not the cleanest place we have ever seen, but we each ordered a breakfast sandwich. Patti got a bacon and cheese sandwich and Captain Ron got scrapple. For those who have never heard of scrapple, it's not well known in the south, but is popular in Maryland and Pennsylvania. It is made from the leftover pig parts after the hams, ribs, bacon and such are cut. The meat is cooked, chopped and mixed with corn meal and formed into cakes which are then sliced and fried. Try it, you'll like it. Or maybe not.

The marina here is owned and run by the State of Maryland. They do not have a courtesy vehicle, but the staff will drive boaters to where they need to go and pick them up and bring them back when they are finished. The last time we were here they drove Captain Ron to the hospital.

We stopped on the way back from the restaurant and they drove us to the grocery store. Captain Ron suggested a small cart but Patti wanted a full sized cart. She filled it up!



The galley wench stocks up for the next few days

We called the marina and they came and got us and brought us back. Our purchases filled a dock cart, but somehow, Patti found a place for everything on the boat.

We set out on a walk with the K-9. We may have mentioned this before, but Somers Cove Marina is a very large marina with over five hundred slips, a couple storage lots for trailer boats and a couple of boat ramps. Kiki set off in the opposite direction from the office, towards the other side of the basin. What she often forgets is, wherever you walk, you have to walk back. She was halfway around the marina when we stopped and turned her around. It was a long walk.

Captain Ron did some research trying to find us a place to move our boat to on our way back south. If one believes the weather forecasts (something

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we are not too sure about), we have a window of relatively light winds Friday and Saturday so our plan is to leave Crisfield Friday morning early and motor about eight and a half hours southwest to a nice marina on the western shore of the Bay on the outskirts of Hampton, VA. They have a nice pool and it's a reasonable walk to a nice beach on the Chesapeake Bay. We will have to provide our own food; there is nothing near the marina. He called and made reservations.

We walked to a restaurant that has only been open a month or two. It's in a building on the waterfront that was formerly a different restaurant. We checked the menu and then asked the waitress if they had crabs (there was nothing on the menu about crabs).

It turned out that they did serve crabs and had a special for forty five dollars that included six crabs, a half-pound of shrimp, a half-pound of clams and two "sides" (we chose corn on the cob). We ordered one special and split it. It was delicious and filling. No leftovers. We will probably go back tomorrow for pit beef sandwiches (another "Maryland thing").



Our delicious \$45 seafood special plate

We chose to sit outside because it was cold inside. Well, as we sat and ate outside, it became a little chilly there as well. It was warmer than inside, but

still chilly considering we were wearing shorts and tee shirts.

We stopped at the marina office for ice cream on the way back and took it back to the boat where it was shared with the Ship's Puppy.

There were people in the pool today but it was pretty windy. Hopefully, the wind will die down and hopefully we will get a chance to try out the nice looking pool here. For now, the sun has set and it's time for bed. Old folks need their sleep you know.

Captain's Log, day fifty five (June 24, 2021)

Captain Ron tried hard to sleep in this morning but the hound wanted her morning walk. Patti got up and took her, leaving Captain Ron to try to go back to sleep. Eventually, he got up, got dressed and brushed his teeth and shaved. Today is supposed to be the second day of summer, but it was in the fifties last night. The heat came on several times.

We called the restaurant that was supposed to have been open yesterday and they were open today so we walked to the end of the main street and had breakfast; waffles and eggs for both of us. Patti added bacon, Captain Ron did not.

After that, we walked back to the boat where Patti gathered up the dirty clothes and headed for the laundry room. After she put them in the dryer, she walked to the museum gift shop and then to the shops on the main street, helping to support the local economy again.

Captain Ron asked the Sea Dog if she would like to go for a walk and she did so he walked her around the grounds. When they got near the laundry building, she made a bee line for the laundry room

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door and when Captain Ron opened it, Patti was inside folding clothes.

Back on the boat, we watched two boats coming into the marina and docking in slips across and down from us. It seemed like neither had ever docked a boat before, they had no lines or fenders ready and the second boat tried to dock before the dockhands were finished with the first boat.

Docking takes practice and skill of course and nobody was born knowing how to dock a boat, but it seems that a little bit of common sense would tell someone to have their lines and fenders attached before heading for the dock. Perhaps they will figure this out on their own someday.

We decided to put our swimsuits on and head for the pool. Unfortunately, it was too chilly to enjoy. Patti got in and got back out. Captain Ron only got his legs wet. We stretched out on the chaise lounges and dozed off for a half hour or so and then walked back to the boat.



Patti tests the pool

Patti got more ice and refreshed the cooler and we walked to the same restaurant we went to last night. We didn't have crabs tonight, we had pit beef sandwiches. For some reason, they put tomato based barbeque sauce on the pit beef. That's not how it is typically served in the part of Maryland we lived in. We stopped for ice cream

on the way back and took it to the boat so the puppy could have some too.

After that, we took turns showering. We have a long day tomorrow so we need our rest.



Sunset at Somers Cove Marina, Crisfield, MD

Captain's Log, day fifty six (June 25, 2021)

As planned, we were up at 5:15 AM and underway just before 6:00 AM. There is certainly no global warming going on in Maryland as we bundled up in our winter boat clothes. The temperature was in the upper fifties.

We had rolled the bimini top up the other day when the winds were strong so we were sitting in the sun (once it came up) and that made it seem warmer.

Staying in the channel leaving Crisfield required several twists and turns but once clear of the channel, we had a straight shot diagonally south west along and across the Chesapeake Bay for about fifty five miles or eight hours.

We were alone for most of this time with an occasional fishing vessel in the distance. We saw a few cow nosed rays but again, couldn't get a photo of them. We did see several ships anchored near Cape Charles and waiting to go to the docks in

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Norfolk. We were pretty far away from them at that point.

What we did see was two inflatable birthday balloons floating on the water. This is a personal gripe for both of us. Letting balloons go into the atmosphere is no more than littering. They don't keep going up and get burned by the sun; they fall back to earth as litter and a danger to wildlife.

We recovered them and discarded them in the trash once we were docked at the marina.

The last hour or two of today's voyage was where the Chesapeake Bay meets the Atlantic Ocean and the water got much rougher and more uncomfortable. It was a relief to pull into the inlet to Salt Ponds Marina.

While crossing the inlet, we heard several calls by US Navy boats warning private boats away from where a submarine was coming in from the Ocean. We weren't close enough to see it though.

We got into Salt Ponds Marina just before 3:00 PM, making it a nearly nine hour day on the water. Kiki was glad to see land and quick to take care of business.



Heading for the Salt Ponds Marina

The temperature dropped a bit in the afternoon so we didn't get a chance to try the pool. It's a nice

looking large pool. We can also walk to the beach so we will probably take the Sea Dog there tomorrow.

Dinner was ground beef with a can of "Manwich" plus some store bought cole slaw. Showers have been postponed until tomorrow.

Captain's Log, day fifty seven (June 26, 2021)

Summer has returned. Of course we are in Virginia, but still not that much further south than yesterday. It was in the mid-seventies when Captain Ron rolled out of bed this morning and eventually reached the mid-eighties.

Patti had mentioned seeing a coffee pot in the marina building so the crew walked to the office and Captain Ron got his morning coffee. We talked to some of the other boaters and Kiki got petted. Captain Ron got another cup of coffee and we walked the puppy some more and returned to the boat.

Patti fixed breakfast for the humans, canned sausage gravy over toast. The K-9 got dog food. Canned sausage gravy is not nearly as good as the home-made variety, but it's convenient and requires no refrigeration.

Looking at the weather forecast which called for rain beginning around noon, we decided to try out the swimming pool so we changed into our swimsuits and walked to the pool. We had to chase a couple of ducks out of the pool before getting in ourselves.

The water was a bit cool but we did manage to get in and swim for a bit. After a few minutes a bunch of young children arrived for a birthday party and we decided we might as well get out and head back to the boat.

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OK fella, it's time to get out and let the humans use the pool



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

We had planned to take the puppy to the beach today but since it's a city beach, we were concerned over whether dogs were allowed on the beach or not. We had taken her to this same beach a few years ago but were not sure of the regulations.

Patti decided to walk to the beach to look for signs while Captain Ron returned to the boat to look on the Internet. They both came up with the same information; no dogs on the beach from Memorial Day until Labor Day. So, the puppy did not get to go to the beach. (Kiki writes: *"That's not fair, I'm small and don't take up much room. Puppies should always be allowed on the beach!"*)

She did go to the marina building and got petted by the children from the birthday party that had moved inside because of the rain.

In trying to plan our next few days, we looked at weather forecast and found that each source we checked had a different forecast. We eventually came up with a plan and booked a slip in Norfolk, VA for the next two days.

It did start to rain a little after noon so we stayed on the boat. Once it stopped, Patti took the pooch for a walk and she found several puddles to wade through. Captain Ron caught up with them and she walked through the puddles again.

The marina has a freezer with a small selection of packaged ice cream so we each got a cup and ate them on the boat.

Dinner was the rest of the Manwich and a can of what was labelled as "hoppin' john". It was not the hoppin' john we are accustomed to and make every New Years Day, it was just black-eyed peas with a bit of tomatoes and peppers. It was OK though.

After dinner, we took turns showering. The showers were OK, the water was hot enough, but there was not enough pressure for a good shower.

Tomorrow we head for Norfolk, a less than three hour cruise.

Captain's Log, day fifty eight (June 27, 2021)

We forgot to mention yesterday that when Kiki was taking her morning walk, she spotted a family of otters on the dock. As far as we know, she has never seen otters before, but she quickly decided that they were something worth chasing. Patti felt otherwise of course, and being bigger than the puppy, she won the tug of war. Kiki did not catch

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an otter. (Kiki writes: *"I don't think it's right that when I find fun things to do like chasing otters that my humans won't let me do them."*)

We didn't have to leave early today, our trip was less than three hours and we weren't supposed to check in at Waterside Marina before 11:00 AM. Our experience has been that most marinas aren't too fussy about the check in time as long as we don't arrive at 8:00 AM or so.

Our route today was a bit like when we left Slaughter Creek Marina several days ago, head north, then east to go south. It wasn't nearly as log of a detour though, probably a mile or so.

As we approached the Hampton Roads inlet, we began to see ships and boats of all types. Freighters, tug boats with barges, tugboats without barges and recreational vessels. We saw a "recreational vessel" (private yacht) that was over a hundred feet long and travelling at three times our speed. It got to the inlet well before we did but its wake hit us by surprise and rearranged things in the head.

We saw a dark object on the horizon. It kept getting larger and we finally realized that it was a very big container ship.



A container ship in the distance behind us

It followed us into the Elizabeth River and kept getting closer. We, of course, were keeping a close eye on it, both visually and on AIS.

Eventually, the captain called us on the VHF and asked if we could move to the outside of the channel. We were more than happy to oblige. One of the advantages of having AIS on HIGH COTTON is that any other vessel with AIS will know our boat's name without having to read it visually. We think of AIS as a valuable piece of safety equipment.



Time to move over and let the big boy pass

The container ship never actually passed us, but it did make a turn towards a dock that took up the entire channel for a few minutes. Just for reference, this ship was over 1200 feet long. That's almost forty three times longer than HIGH COTTON!

We called Waterside Marina and aside from a problem with understanding one of their radios, we got in and docked easily. Once we got everything tied up and plugged in, we took the K-9 for her walk.

Waterside Marina is next to a lovely city park with plenty of grass and shade trees. Kiki did what she had to do and then we walked around a bit. The only problem with the park is, there are paved paths around and through the park and the electric rental scooters have found their way to Norfolk.

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People ride these scooters amidst the pedestrians at a pretty high rate of speed. As a pedestrian, one has to be on the lookout for them at all times. (Kiki writes: *"I like riding on my boat but I like to get off and explore new places when we stop. Sometimes I am in a hurry."*)

Back on board HIGH COTTON, Captain Ron did a scan on the TV and found no watchable stations! This is in contrast to the thirty or so in Salt Ponds just twenty or so miles away. Captain Ron suspects it's because the marina is surrounded by tall buildings on three sides.

We left the K-9 to guard the boat and walked to Granby Street to get something to eat. Granby street is pretty much one restaurant after another, but we found many of them closed on Sunday. Our favorite Italian restaurant was closed but we knew it would be. We will go there tomorrow. We got submarine sandwiches at a place called "WitchWitch". Ordering was a bit weird but the sandwiches were pretty good.



Like the sign says, Welcome to Downtown Norfolk

From there, we walked to the mall and walked around. Patti bought some souvenirs, Captain Ron bought nothing.

We walked back to Waterside where we got ice cream and took it back to the boat to share with the puppy. The temperature was in the upper

eighties by then and the ice cream was a bit soft by the time we made it to the boat. We also got a bag of ice for the cooler.

We walked the pooch again, taking a container of water with us. We talked with people and she got petted as usual.



New Bern has its bears, Norfolk has mermaids



HIGH COTTON visits the big city (Norfolk, VA)

We took turns walking to the bathhouse for showers. One of the downsides of this marina is the distance from the slips to the bathhouse. We have to walk around three sides of the marina to the other end of the Waterside complex. Patti timed the walk at six minutes.

Being Sunday night, it's pretty quiet here and we expect tomorrow night to be quiet as well.

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Weekends here are typically loud with live bands and crowds of people. We are too old for that.

Captain's Log, day fifty nine (June 28, 2021)

Today was going to be the usual day in port; try to sleep late, get awoken by the puppy, etc. and that's how it started out. After walking the puppy, Patti cooked breakfast for the crew.

One of the things that Waterside does for transients is to arrange and pay for a taxi ride to and from the closest grocery store, a Harris Teeter. We did this the last time we stayed here and it worked out well so decided to do it again even though we could have gotten by without grocery shopping.

The marina called the cab company and we walked to the street and waited about twenty minutes in the hot sun. Once the driver arrived, he blamed it on traffic congestion and then missed the turn to Harris Teeter and went several blocks out of the way.

He dropped us off and we went inside and did our shopping. Again, we bought more stuff than we actually needed; a cart full. Captain Ron called the marina to have them call the cab company while Patti went through the checkout line.

She came out of the store with the groceries and we waited. And we waited. After about a half an hour, we called the marina and asked them to call the cab company again. We waited another half hour with our refrigerated groceries getting warmer by the minute. We called the marina again.

After a few more minutes of waiting, we decided to make the best of a bad situation and arranged for an Uber ride back to the marina. The car showed

up in less than ten minutes and aside from the fact that the driver drove like a maniac and ran over a couple curbs while turning corners, we made it back with our groceries. All total, we waited an hour and a half. Captain Ron posted a couple of unflattering reviews of the cab company on-line and discussed this with the marina manager.

Once we got the groceries to the boat and stored, we walked the Ship's Puppy again. We had remembered seeing chairs and benches in the park on our last visit but there were none yesterday. Today there was a crew from the city setting up chairs and benches. This was a mystery to us.

We walked the hound and talked to a few people. We found a chair to sit in opposite an apparently homeless woman who was charging her cell phone in a convenient electrical outlet. Some of the things we see on our cruises leave us scratching our heads!

By this time, Captain Ron needed a power nap so we returned to HIGH COTTON and he went below to rest for a few minutes (or longer).

We walked to the restaurant district and ordered an early dinner at a pizza/Italian restaurant we visit every time we come to Norfolk. It was delicious, but of course we had way more than we could eat so we came back with more stuff to cram into the tiny refrigerator on the boat.

Later, we decided to take the hound to the park once again. The homeless lady was still on her bench. Captain Ron and the pooch saved a seat while Patti walked to the Waterside building for ice cream. Unfortunately, she soon discovered that the entire place and all the restaurants in it are closed on Monday and Tuesday. So, no ice cream for us today. The next closest ice cream shop is about a half a mile each way and we decided against it.

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As we look around the marina, we realize that HIGH COTTON is the smallest boat here. Some smaller boats have dropped by for temporary docking but all the overnight boats are considerably larger than ours. No matter, ours is comfortable, easy to handle and economical to maintain and operate. We watched a one hundred and fifty foot boat leave with at least six crew members on board. It boggles the mind!

The dockhand told us that the marina was fully booked except for one slip for next week's Independence Day holiday weekend. We expect it will be a zoo with special events in the park and a fireworks show over the water. We are as patriotic as anyone, but the pooch doesn't like fireworks and our plan is to be somewhere that we might see some in the distance but she won't hear them.

We were low on potable water and with our expected stop tomorrow at the Elizabeth City free docks with no electricity or water; it was time to top off the tanks so Captain Ron got busy with that task. Depending on the temperature, we may change our minds and take a slip in a cheap marina with a longer walk into town.



A US Navy Aircraft Carrier out of the water for maintenance

Captain's Log, day sixty (June 29, 2021)

Yea, Captain Ron missed the deadline again. Deal with it!

Today was a long, long day. Up again at oh-dark-thirty, Patti walked the puppy while Captain Ron got the boat ready to travel. Going by the distance, it was only an hour and a half from the marina to the first lock on the Dismal Swamp, but if we missed the 8:30 AM opening we would have to wait until 11:00 AM for the next opening and of course, that would have put us in Elizabeth City pretty late in the evening. The risk here was that any of the three railroad bridges could have been closed for trains to pass and we could have been held up.



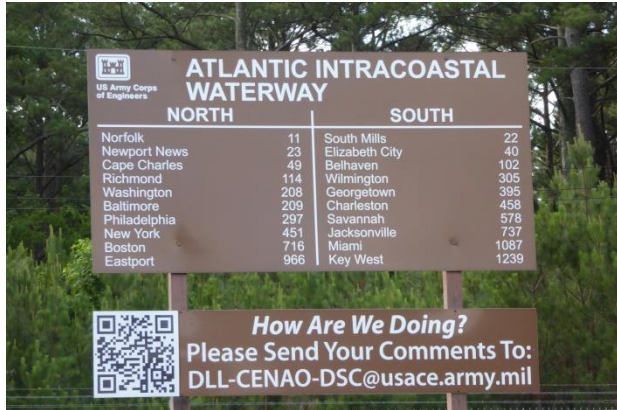
One of the lift bridges we were concerned about

Fortunately, all the bridges were open and we got to the lock in plenty of time. We tied HIGH COTTON to a dolphin (a group of pilings lashed together), turned off the engine and ate breakfast.

Once the lock opened, we motored in and got our lines set. Another boat showed up at the last minute and locked through with us.

Our goal was the 1:30 PM locking at the other end. It's not possible to enter the first lock at 8:30 AM and make it out at 11:00 AM even in a fast boat because there is a speed limit.

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Only 458 miles to home

We always hope to see wildlife on the Dismal Swamp Canal. Today we saw several turtles sunning on logs but Patti was below when Captain Ron saw his "wildlife", of the day, a black cow getting a drink from the canal.



Captain Ron's "wildlife"



Our view on the Dismal Swamp Canal

Even though we were travelling slower than our usual seven knots, we made it to the South Mills Lock at about 12:30 PM. We tied HIGH COTTON to the bridge fender and the other boat tied up to us. Since they would be cruising faster than us, we offered to let them go in front of us in the lock.



"Pennsbury" in front of us in the Great Mills lock

Once through the lock, we still had a couple of hours cruising to get to Elizabeth City. The other boat eventually pulled out of sight. We were nearing Elizabeth City when Captain Ron realized that the Elizabeth City drawbridge is on a restricted schedule and we would have to wait if we didn't get through it by 4:00 PM. We sped the engine up a bit and got through just a few minutes before 4:00 PM.



The Elizabeth City drawbridge welcomes us

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We decided to go ahead and take one of the free slips at the Elizabeth City waterfront. The “slips” are pretty rustic and different sizes. We didn’t want to take one that was too big but unfortunately, we selected one that was a bit too small. It was wide enough for HIGH COTTON, but not for fenders or fender boards when we backed all the way in. It took quite a bit of repositioning the boat to get a satisfactory tie up. We tied the dinghy to the bow rail on its side so we could open the hatch and get fresh air into the V berth. There is no power so no air conditioning at this free dock.



Free dockage at Elizabeth City, NC

Many years ago there was a man named Fred Fearing who had a group of friends who would hang around the docks, give roses to the ladies and put on a wine and cheese party for transient boaters. Unfortunately, Fred and his “Rose Buddies” have passed on, to be replaced by homeless people who sit on the benches staring out into space or talking to each other without a thought of assisting boaters.

We got the K-9 off the boat and went for a walk along the waterfront and in the park. We talked with some of the locals who were fishing from the dock and the puppy got petted. (Kiki writes: *“I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again, I like riding on my boat, but I also like getting off at each stop and exploring and meeting new people and puppies.”*)



Kiki relaxes in the park at Elizabeth City, NC

We put the Ship’s Puppy back on the boat, got cleaned up a bit and walked across the street to a restaurant we had enjoyed on a previous trip. We were too hot and tired to eat full meals so Patti got a quesadilla and a salad and Captain Ron got a crab cake sandwich. Everything was delicious as we expected from our previous visits.

Walking back to the boat, we noticed people bringing blankets and lawn chairs to the park so we asked them what was going on. It turns out Tuesdays are “movie night” in the park. Some guys were setting up a giant inflatable movie screen and sound system at the other end of the park.

Back aboard HIGH COTTON, the crew had had a very long day and just gotten into bed when the movie started. It seemed the sound crew wanted to provide the “theater experience” even though it was open air so every car chase and crash was played at full volume. This was great for the movie goers perhaps, but not so good for the tired boaters trying to go to sleep.

Thankfully, the movie ended about 10:00 PM and we were able to get to sleep. The next day was a planned early departure to hopefully beat the wind and rough water on Albemarle Sound.

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Captain's Log, day sixty one (June 30, 2021)

We got up early enough today to get the K-9 walked, get the boat ready and get underway by about 7:00 AM.

The route today was simple enough, head down the Pasquotank River, cross Albemarle Sound, head up the Alligator River until just before the bridge and turn west to the marina. It was mostly straight south. Unfortunately, the wind was out of the west, creating waves on the beam (side of the boat). This creates a very uncomfortable swaying from side to side. At some point, the swaying was so bad that it overturned the cooler in the saloon and all the water drained out and ran down the hatch seam into the bilge. Well, the bilge needs cleaning so Captain Ron will deal with it.

After a very long four and a half hours, we pulled into the shelter of the Alligator River Marina's basin.

We walked the hound and checked in of course, and the next thing we did was take turns showering. Patti took a load of laundry with her and took care of that while she showered.

Back at the boat, we rested a bit and then took the Sea Dog for another walk. She found a puddle to play in but then we took her to the marina's boat ramp. Down the ramp she ran and into the water where she swam back and forth. She got out and rolled in the mud and sand until she was a mess and then ran back into the water. Captain Ron found a stick and threw it in for her to retrieve.

Back at the boat, she got a bath in the cockpit before she was allowed inside.

We (the humans) went into the restaurant for dinner. The term "restaurant" is probably a stretch, but they do cook food and they have a room with tables for people to sit and eat it. We

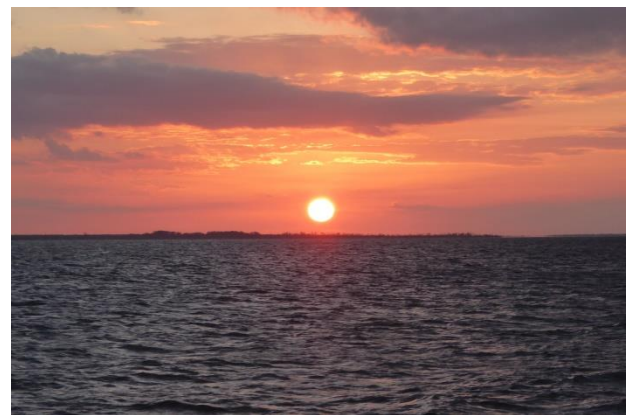
had fried chicken, french fries, fried okra and corn nuggets (fried balls of corn and dough) and cole slaw.

During Kiki's evening walk, we talked with some of the other boaters who came in after us. Now it's time for bed. It will be an early departure again tomorrow to try to beat the predicted winds.

Captain's Log, day sixty two (July 1, 2021)

The Birthday Bunny snuck onto our locked boat last night and left birthday cards for Patti. She is now officially on Medicare!

Wanting to beat the predicted winds again, we were up at the crack of dawn. Actually, it was before the crack of dawn. We had the Sea Dog walked and the boat readied in forty five minutes and were on our way at 5:45 AM. Captain Ron had to slow down on the way out of the marina to let a line of ducks swim across the marina's entrance. Our course took us parallel to the Alligator River swing bridge, a quarter mile or so to the swing span. We called the bridge tender on the VHF and he opened the bridge for us.



Sunrise over the Alligator River, NC

As early as it was, it was a bit rocky on the Alligator River so we took the pooch back down below and

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Patti stayed with her while Captain Ron ran the boat.

As we got further up river (south, the Alligator River runs from south to north), the winds and waves died down. Patti came up to relieve Captain Ron and Captain Ron brought the pooch back up after a few minutes.

We passed a fairly large trawler anchored out of the channel and then turned into the Alligator River – Pungo River canal, a twenty mile canal connecting the two rivers.

“Eagles 9, Bears 0”. Sounds like a football game score but it wasn’t. All the cruising guides talk about seeing wildlife on this canal but in the eight times we have passed through it, the most exotic wildlife we have ever seen was a deer. We saw nine bald eagles and no bears. We did see a rafter (flock) of turkeys though. (Captain Ron looked this up on the Internet).



A "flotilla" on the canal headed north

We exited the canal onto the Pungo River and were soon heading for the entrance channel to Dowry Creek Marina on the outskirts of Belhaven, NC. This is a beautiful, family owned marina with a heated (yea!) swimming pool and a courtesy vehicle. They have a very small selection of frozen foods including ice cream.

The pool is at a comfortable eighty five degrees and the laundry is free. Patti did two loads and Captain Ron relaxed in the pool. We walked the hound to the office and got ice cream and sat outside in the chairs on the balcony overlooking the waterway. This time it was Captain Ron who had to share his ice cream with the puppy.

We mentioned yesterday that the sound was so rough that it overturned the cooler and the water ran into the bilge. Captain Ron tried to examine it last night but couldn’t get one of the hatches open. It wouldn’t open this morning either, but Captain Ron was able to open the other hatch and then use a screwdriver and a pair of pliers (used as a hammer like any good electrician would do) to pry it open. It seems the water caused the wood subfloor to swell and this jammed the hatch. Lacking the proper tools (a sharp chisel), he cut away the offending wood with a utility knife and the hatch is operating properly now. It needs to be sanded and painted when we get home.

We learned this morning that a dear friend, the wife of one of Captain Ron’s long time band members lost her battle with cancer and passed away last night. We talked to the marina and they said we can leave our boat here as long as necessary and offered to drive us to the rental car office in Washington, NC, about a forty five minute drive from here.

We don’t know when the service will be but we are leaving here tomorrow and heading for Maryland. We will stay at Patti’s sister’s house (the old home place) and have the rental car for a week. We have no suitcases so grocery bags will have to do. We can’t really plan anything until we know more.

We will take our showers, walk the hound and hit the sack. It’s a six and a half hour drive from the rental place to Sunshine, MD plus the ride to the

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rental office. And with a holiday weekend, it could easily be a longer trip.

Captain's Log, day seventy one (July 10, 2021)

There's no need to bore everyone with the details of our "land cruise" so here it is in a nutshell:

One of the people from the marina drove us to Washington, NC, the nearest place with a car rental agency. It's about thirty five miles from Belhaven. We drove to Maryland with the pre-holiday traffic.

Patti's family was in from New York state and other parts of Maryland so there was a reunion of sorts since we hadn't been together since before the pandemic. It was good to see everyone again.

We heard there wouldn't be a service for Claudette (her request) so on Monday we drove to Allen's house and visited with him for a few hours.

Since we had checked the rental car out at 10:00 AM, we wanted to return it before that time and save being charged for an extra day. That meant leaving Maryland at 3:00 AM Tuesday for the drive back to NC.

For some reason, the trip back was shorter than the trip north and we got to the rental agency at about 8:30 AM. After waiting a few minutes, they decided that they could drive us back to the marina.

It turns out that it was later decided to have a viewing and funeral but we will have to miss that.

Back at the marina on Tuesday, we made use of the pool and did laundry. Then we got the courtesy car and drove to the Food Lion and the Chinese restaurant for takeout.

The food was bad; we took showers and went to bed. Perhaps expecting good Chinese food in rural North Carolina was a bit too much.

Wednesday, having gotten up at 2:30AM the previous day, Captain Ron slept until 10:00 AM. The younger crew members got up earlier and did whatever people and dogs do early in the morning. We swam in the pool again and talked with other boaters. The remnants of tropical storm Elsa were forecast to pass near us on Thursday so boaters were coming in and getting tied up in anticipation of the storm.



Patti & Captain Ron enjoying the pool at Dowry Creek Marina

Thursday morning was quiet, but by noon the winds were picking up and waves were rocking all the boats. The marina staff and other boaters were going around making sure all the boats were well secured. We ended up with seven lines, two fender boards and a fender on HIGH COTTON. We managed to keep it from hitting the dock, but it was like sitting in a washing machine. We skipped dinner. Eventually, most of the boaters ended up in the Captain's Lounge or on the porch overlooking the boats. The marina bought pizza for everyone.

Kiki, of course, wasn't allowed in the lounge so she and Patti sat on the porch. Kiki got petted, Patti did not.

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Eventually, the storm passed and we were able to get a quiet night's sleep on HIGH COTTON.

Friday was a beautiful day on land, but rough on the water so we decided to stay another day. We swam in the pool and took the loaner car to Food Lion again. Patti did some more laundry (unlike most marinas, the laundry here is free).

Friday night we had thunder, lightning and heavy rain. Nothing we couldn't handle though.

That brings us to today, Saturday. We had planned a later start, but we woke up about 5:30 AM so we decided to go ahead and get underway. Undoing the spider web of lines, fender boards and fenders took a while but we got it done and slipped quietly out of the marina at 6:20 AM. Patti lost a flip flop off the side of the boat but we were able to recover it with our handy dandy ever ready crab net.



Leaving the beautiful and enjoyable Dowry Creek Marina

The first couple of hours were uneventful but then we had to leave the Pungo River and cross the Pamlico River into Goose Creek. That's the normal ICW route. We noticed on our chart plotter, an AIS signal from a boat headed down the Pamlico River. Clicking on the symbol, we learned that it was a tugboat headed for Morehead City. This meant it would be joining the ICW and also heading into Goose Creek.

We sped HIGH COTTON up a bit hoping to beat the tug (and the large barge it was pushing) into the creek but soon realized that we were going to lose that race so we backed off and followed the tug into the creek.



Racing this tug and barge

At first, this was not a problem as the tug was going nearly as fast as we normally cruise, but after a few miles, it slowed way down for no apparent reason.

After several minutes of this, Captain Ron called the tug on the VHF radio and told the captain that we would like to pass. We received what we thought was a somewhat rude reply of "OK captain if you think you can make it, but I'm not going to slow down and I'm staying in the middle."

Not wanting to spend the rest of the day behind a tug and barge doing barely four knots, Captain Ron hit the throttle, steered to port and made it past the tug and barge.

Goose Creek turns into a canal, the canal turns into the Bay River and the Bay River empties into the Neuse River. After turning west onto the Neuse River, we noticed that the depth sounder was blinking and not showing the actual depth of the water. It wasn't important at that point because the river is more than twenty feet deep, but Captain Ron went below to see if he could

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diagnose the problem. He couldn't so we continued to our destination, River Dunes Marina east of Oriental, NC.

Although we had been told on the phone that we would be put on the fuel dock, we were directed to a slip just like every other time we have stayed here.

After walking the K-9 and getting checked in (Kiki is not allowed in the buildings), Captain Ron decided he had better find the problem with the depth sounder. He turned the key on, the warning buzzer sounded and the pooch wanted to get off the boat. Eventually, Patti took her for a walk while Captain Ron worked on the boat. He also disconnected the alarm buzzer so this won't scare the puppy again. The light still works as does the buzzer at the upper helm.

Apparently, the problem is the same as the last time; the fluid in the cup the transducer sits in was too low. Captain Ron cannot figure out how this happens, it cannot evaporate and there are no signs of a leak. He added a bit of water and it appears to be fixed, at least for now.

We put on our suits and went for a swim in the pool. Captain Ron also spent a few minutes in the hot tub easing his aches and pains.



Captain Ron relaxes in the marina's hot tub



Patti enjoys the North Carolina sun

We considered eating dinner in the fancy restaurant but instead got sandwiches at the nearby breakfast and lunch restaurant.

We took turns showering in the deluxe shower facilities. Pretty fancy; water comes not only from above, but from the front. It was plenty hot and had plenty of pressure. There's a "steam" option but neither of us tried that.

Captain Ron wanted to watch his favorite country music shows on the TV in the lounge, but couldn't get it off of Netflix so he gave up and walked back to the boat. We will stay at least another day here and then continue heading south.

Captain's Log, day seventy two (July 11, 2021)

Today was a day in port and with nothing around and no car, it has to be a pretty simple day.

The K-9 wanted to go for an early walk so Patti took her while Captain Ron got dressed and made his morning coffee. He didn't get to drink it though, because when Patti returned at 8:00 AM, she suggested that we go to the café for breakfast.

After breakfast, we made arrangements with the dockmaster to spend another night and to fill our tanks with diesel fuel tomorrow morning. We

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found ourselves in a position similar to what we were in a few weeks ago not being quite sure we could make it to the next marina on the fuel we have. Fuel here is a bit on the expensive side, but it's quality fuel and not worth the chance of running out on the water.

We returned to HIGH COTTON, relieved the K-9 of her guard duty and took her for another walk. Actually, she took Captain Ron for a walk and Patti had to look around to find them. Kiki had made a beeline for the café and walked around on the patio looking for dropped food.

Patti showed up and we had a nice conversation with a couple of ladies who were also boaters and were eating outside at the café.

We eventually walked back to the boat where Captain Ron spent some time paying bills on-line. Patti went to the café and bought a sandwich for her dinner tonight. Captain Ron still has most of his from yesterday.

After the bill paying, we decided to go to the pool (one of the main reasons we chose this marina). There were no boaters around, just a couple of mothers with their children. We swam and soaked in the pool. Patti got out to sunbathe and Captain Ron got into the hot tub. It is a really beautiful pool and deck with cabanas, two hot tubs and a bar. Patti got a beer and charged it to our slip. Captain Ron got ice water.

We came back to the boat and the pooch wanted to go for a walk. She is either really fond of this marina (the grounds are beautifully landscaped) or she is still afraid of the warning buzzer she heard yesterday.

Patti took her for a walk. After a half hour or so, Captain Ron went looking for them and brought them back to the boat. We ate our sandwiches

and took turns showering. Patti took the hound for another walk.

A large boat came in and tied up at the fuel dock right in front of the pumps. We are hoping this will not be a problem tomorrow morning when we plan on fueling up and leaving. We shall see.

Captain's Log, day seventy three (July 12, 2021)

We didn't need to get up early this morning because we couldn't get fuel until 8:00 AM anyway. We forgot to tell the K-9 though and she was up at the crack of dawn barking at the people in the slip next to ours who weren't getting fuel and decided to leave early.

We got up, got dressed and took the hound for her usual morning walk. We talked to the two guys on the big boat at the fuel dock and found that they weren't getting fuel. They said they would help us dock when we came over.

We went back to HIGH COTTON and got everything ready and had breakfast. About 7:30 AM we cast off and motored the couple hundred yards to the fuel dock. The guys on the big boat caught our lines and tied us up. The boat, that is.

About 8:00 AM one of the employees showed up at the fuel dock and we were able to take on sixty five gallons or so of diesel fuel. Captain Ron walked to the office to finalize our checkout. The fuel cost wasn't as high as we had been lead to believe, but Patti's beer (at poolside) was nearly as much as a six pack costs at the store.

One of the hardest things to fix is something that's not broken! When Captain Ron got back to the boat, Patti called down and told him that the depth sounder was flashing again. Captain Ron thought he had fixed it the other day. He opened the

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hatch, removed the transducer and there was plenty of fluid in the cup. He opened up the hatch behind the instrument panel to check the wires and noticed that the depth sounder module had no indicator light. He checked the power cable and it was then that he realized that the depth sounder only gets power when the key is in the "ON" position (he intentionally installed it this way to minimize power use when we anchor). When he moved the boat to the fuel dock he turned the key "OFF" but left the GPS on. Without a signal from the depth sounder module, the last known depth flashes on the GPS screen. This is normal, turning the key back on produced the actual depth reading.

So, with HIGH COTTON's fuel appetite satisfied for a few more days and everything in working order, we headed out of the marina, the creek and into the Neuse River again. It was rough! Cruisers often warn about rough paces on the ICW, but the Neuse River can match any one of them. At least today we were heading into the winds and waves so we were rocking front to back and not side to side.

This went on for a little over an hour until we turned into Adams Creek. The water was flat and smooth but now we had to deal with about half a dozen shrimp boats. We have mentioned crabbers previously; well shrimpers are pretty much the same. They are paying attention to their nets and not to where their boats are headed. And they will often make unpredictable moves. Sometimes there is no one actually steering the boat or watching where it is going. Captain Ron's plan for dealing with crabbers and shrimpers is to expect the unexpected and be ready to take evasive action. We also had to deal with several smaller boats and a sailing catamaran that was wandering all over in and out of the channel.



A local shrimper working Adams Creek, NC

Once we got further into the creek, we were mostly alone and had an easy and pleasant trip toward Morehead City, NC. We saw some nice waterfront homes in various "beachy" colors.



One of the nice "beachy" homes on Adams Creek

Nearing Morehead City, we entered more open water but it was nothing compared to earlier today. We called the marina and got docking instructions. We were placed on the "T" head (end of the dock) which made docking very easy but meant a long walk to shore. As often happens, we were the smallest boat in the entire marina. Most of the others were large "sportfish" boats intended for fishing in the ocean.

We checked in and got information about the marina. We decided to walk to the local hardware store that also carries marine parts on the off

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chance that they would have the part Captain Ron needs to repair his oil change pump.

We passed a different marine parts store and decided to go in. They asked if they could help and Captain Ron told them what he needed. The guy reached up on the wall and pulled down a similar part. He checked and determined that this was not the correct part but that he did actually have the correct part in stock. In fact, he had six of them. And the price was considerably less than what West Marine charges and they would have to order it. Captain Ron only needed one so he bought it. Meanwhile, the other guy in the store gave the pooch dog biscuits and played with her. It's a shame we don't have a marine store like this one at home in Charleston, SC. (Kiki writes: *"When I go into stores I expect the people to give me treats and pet me."*)



The railroad runs down the middle of the main street

Back on the boat, we were resting from the day's journey when a large trawler came in and attempted to dock on the dock behind us.

Their first attempt was unsuccessful and in defense of HIGH COTTON, Captain Ron decided to go out and see if he could help even though there was a dockhand already there.

Using our longest extendable boat hook, he was able to grab a stern line from the boat and secure it

to the dock. The lady threw a bow line to the dockhand and with some effort (a lot of effort), the large boat was brought to the dock and tied up. It's pretty difficult to pull a large boat sideways by hand with dock lines.

We talked to the couple about where we had all been and where we were going and then it was time for us to find somewhere to eat dinner. Unfortunately, it was Monday and Monday is the day many of the restaurants in Morehead City are closed. After selecting two restaurants from their menus and finding them closed, we walked to our third choice.

As we have found several times on our trip, the actual menu in the restaurant was a bit different than the one left at the marina and the one on the restaurant's website. Some items were missing and most of the prices had increased. We also had a waitress who admitted to being new and had to go and ask when we asked questions about the menu items.

We had more than we could eat and brought the rest back to the boat for tomorrow's dinner. On the way back, we stopped for ice cream to bring back to the boat. In ninety degree weather, this was not the best decision we could have made. We stopped in the marina's lounge to eat the melted portion and then walked back to the boat with the rest so the puppy could have her share.

While we were looking at restaurant menus, we saw a place that looked like a great spot for breakfast tomorrow so we decided to walk there for breakfast and leave later than usual. We are just going to anchor so there's no rush.

The showers here are nice and there's plenty of hot water and pressure.

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Captain's Log, day seventy four (July 13, 2021)

Again, the puppy was the first one stirring this morning, but we got up, got dressed and walked her (actually, Patti walked her). Captain Ron didn't make his morning coffee in anticipation of getting coffee with his restaurant breakfast.

Leaving the Ship's Puppy once again to guard the boat, we walked the three quarters of a mile to Grumpy's Restaurant in anticipation of freshly made sausage gravy over biscuits.

It was closed! Something about a broken air conditioner. Grrrr!

So, we walked back to the boat, stopping at the gas station for a small bottle of milk for Captain Ron's blueberries and a large coffee to go.

We untied the lines, unplugged the shore power cord and bid the Morehead City Yacht Basin adieu. We have stayed at the other two marinas in Morehead City and this one is definitely the best of the three.

Our trip today was basically a long stretch of a narrow channel in the wide but shallow Bogue Sound. Green markers on the left, red markers on the right and don't let the wind blow the boat out of the channel. Captain Ron saw some dolphins while Patti was driving, but there were other boats coming in both directions so she didn't see them (neither did the Sea Dog) and we couldn't stop to wait for them to surface again.

The Marines at Camp Lejeune were apparently not training in the vicinity of the ICW today so we were able to continue our journey south without interruption.



No gunfire today at Camp Lejeune

We timed the Onslow Beach Swing Bridge just right with only about a five minute wait. Actually, we sped the boat up a bit to make sure we would be there for the scheduled opening. This bridge is operated by the US Marine Corps and follows a very strict schedule. If you are a few minutes late, you have to wait another half hour for an opening.



Onslow Beach Swing Bridge

We pulled into the anchorage in Mile Hammock Bay and set the anchor. Captain Ron tied the dinghy on its side to the bow rail so we could open the hatch and get some cooling air.

We were the first boat in. Later, a sailboat came in and anchored nearby. It looks like they will be our only company tonight.

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Our view from the Mile Hammock anchorage

We did some planning and made reservations for the next two nights. Dinner was leftovers from the restaurant last night.

The marina we wanted to stay at tomorrow was fully booked so we have a reservation at our second choice. Unfortunately, they have no showers so we will have to shower on the boat or go without. It doesn't really matter; it's just the three of us.

Captain's Log, day seventy five (July 14, 2021)

Mile Hammock Bay is normally a nice enough anchorage and it's widely used by cruisers passing through this part of the ICW because there are no other anchorages nearby and the only nearby marinas are run down and not suited for transients. But, it is on the grounds of the Camp Lejeune Marine Corps Base and the Marines will do what the Marines want to do, when they want to do it.

Last night, they decided that it would be a good night to practice chasing each other around in circles over the anchorage in low flying helicopters! For over three hours they did this! Sleep was impossible for all but the Sea Dog and she may have been pretending.

So, sleep deprived and grumpy, we got ourselves up this morning, closed the hatch, put the dinghy back in place and began raising the anchor. Apparently it was set well in the bottom and when the chain tightened, it tripped the circuit breaker for the windlass. There's an adjustment for the clutch and it should have just slipped instead of tripping the breaker so that's another thing for Captain Ron's list of things to do.

The circuit breaker was reset, the anchor raised and we were on our way south again.

There was a lot of boat traffic for this early in the morning; apparently people were heading out to fish. Traffic thinned out for a while and then began to build again as we neared Wrightsville Beach just before noon. There were boats pulling people on tubes, boats heading for the inlets and people in kayaks and on stand up paddleboards.

We called the Bridge Tender Marina and were directed to the south end of their face dock. Three dock hands met us and grabbed our lines and plugged in our power cord. At least the south end is as far away from the drawbridge as possible. The noise should be less.



HIGH COTTON docked among the "Big Boys"

Three dollars per foot plus five dollars for power seems a high price to pay for a marina with no showers and heads that are only open during

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business hours, but for some reason, this is a high priced area. Usually for that rate we get deluxe heads, a captain's lounge and a pool. The boat behind us is about a forty foot boat and the sportfish behind that is about seventy feet long.

We walked the K-9 of course and checked in to the marina. Even though it was a long and convoluted path to green grass, the pooch made her way like she had been here yesterday (she hadn't ever been here).

After walking the puppy and letting the air conditioner cool the boat down a bit, we got the hose and did something we should have been doing all along; we hosed down the boat. We didn't actually wash it; we hosed it down to remove much of the dried salt. It really needs more than even a thorough washing, it needs a compound and wax job, something that will be hired out after we get home.

We decided to walk across the bridge to the other side of the ICW to a restaurant for dinner but we decided it would be a good idea to clean up first. We emptied the head compartment and took our showers and then put on clean clothes. Captain Ron shaved.

We started for the restaurant but heard thunder so we returned to the boat. Nothing happened so we started out again. This time we made it all the way. The food was good but as we have been experiencing, the prices on the "real" menu were higher than the prices on their website menu.

We walked back across the bridge to the marina and Patti took the puppy for a walk.

Tomorrow will be a relatively short day on the water although part of it is on the Cape Fear River which can be rough or a piece of cake, depending on the wind strength and direction and the current direction.

Hopefully, there will be no helicopters circling tonight!

Captain's Log, day seventy six (July 15, 2021)

We woke up last night about 1:00 AM wondering why it was hot on HIGH COTTON. Captain Ron got up to set the thermostat to a lower temperature but it wouldn't respond. Then he noticed that the boat wasn't getting power from the dock pedestal. He put on his shorts and flip-flops and went out to check the breaker on the pedestal. It had tripped but could not be reset.

The other 30 amp receptacle was being used by another boat so he had to get back on HIGH COTTON and get the 50 to 30 amp adapter and reconnect HIGH COTTON to the only other available receptacle. The air conditioner came on and Captain Ron returned to the boat, got undressed and went back to bed.

By the time Captain Ron woke up again at 8:00 AM, Patti and the pup had already gone for their morning walk and were talking to the people on the boat behind us. They were heading north and we were heading south.

We unplugged our shore power cord and the people from the other boat helped us off the dock even though we could have easily gotten away without help. Most boaters we encounter on our cruises are pretty friendly and helpful.

Boat traffic seemed heavy for a Thursday morning but boating is pretty big in this part of the country. There were boats heading to the ocean to fish, boats fishing off the ICW and boats beached on sandbars.

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Heading into Snows Cut, we had a strong tidal current with us and saw nine knots on our GPS.



An unusual house on the ICW south of Wrightsville Beach

Later, near the mouth of the Cape Fear River, the current was against us and we saw four knots on the GPS. Tidal currents can have a big effect on a slow boat.

Speaking of the Cape Fear River, when we first exited the channel from Snows Cut to the Cape Fear River, we could barely see a ship in the distance coming from Wilmington, NC. It was going faster than us and as we were about to turn off the river into the ICW channel at Southport, it passed us with a huge wake.



It's about time to move out of the way of this ship

We called the Southport Marina and were met by two dockhands who took our lines and got us tied up and plugged in. This is a first class operation

here and just two thirds the price of the marina in Wrightsville Beach where we stayed last night. The heads and showers are nice and clean, the docks are sturdy and the grounds are nicely landscaped.

The pooch got her walk of course and went to the office for a dog biscuit.

Once we got settled in and rested a bit, we walked to town to shop and eat. Southport is a quaint small town, but also a popular tourist destination. It seems like they must have bussed people in today because the streets and shops were crowded.

Patti managed to find some things she needed but Captain Ron did not. We found a restaurant that looked promising and had an early dinner. Then we stopped in a shop for ice cream on the way back to the marina. (Kiki writes: *"They are not fooling me, I can smell ice cream on their breath. Not cool!"*)

Kiki got a walk and met some people while Captain Ron rested on the boat. Then it was time for showers and another dog walk. Tomorrow we head for the Myrtle Beach Yacht Club where there is a nice pool. We will also be back in South Carolina.

Captain's Log, day seventy seven (July 16, 2021)

We forgot to mention yesterday that when we backed into our assigned slip we were right next to another Camano Troll, a sister ship to HIGH COTTON. It was a 2003 model (HIGH COTTON is a 2000) and is the one we often see at Harborwalk Marina in Georgetown, SC when we stop there. We talked with the owner for a few minutes about our boats and our travels.

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Two (Camano) peas in a pod

Back to today, we woke up to the sight of an alligator swimming around in the slip behind us! It was about five feet long and obviously not afraid of humans. Kiki saw it and was curious but Patti picked her up and carried her off the dock. Captain Ron walked around and took photos but it didn't dive out of sight like wild alligators usually do.



A "friendly" alligator in a slip at Southport Marina

We did our usual pre-departure routine, turned in the bathroom key and slipped quietly out of the marina and onto the ICW.

Even though it was not quite 7:30 AM, there was boat traffic on the ICW. People were heading out to fish. Each time we passed a town, it was the same, people in their boats heading somewhere to fish.

Then there were the Jet Skis. Bunches and bunches of Jet Skis (more properly known as "personal watercraft"). Singles, pairs and larger groups. We counted twenty one jet skis in one group heading towards us. The Sea Dog warned us by barking whenever jet skis or fast boats came near.



And the jet skis attack



A motorized "Tiki Bar" on the ICW

As we neared the North Carolina/South Carolina border we saw the gambling boat heading out to sea. This is a fairly large cruise boat outfitted for gambling and it cruises out to where it is immune from US gambling laws.

We contacted the Myrtle Beach Yacht Club on the radio and came to the fuel dock for fifty five gallons of diesel fuel. Fuel here was \$2.99 per

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gallon. Our last fill up at River Dunes Marina near Oriental, NC was \$3.51 per gallon!

We were assigned one slip on the radio but as we were fueling up, our assignment was changed from "A" dock to "C" dock. We drove around and backed into our slip and realized that we were docked in the shadow of the infamous pirate ship "Pearl 1"! (Actually, Pearl 1 is a 41 foot sailboat owned by our friends Patty and Bruce Goulet.) Unfortunately, they are away from their boat so we didn't get to see them.



The infamous pirate ship "Pearl 1"

We made the long walk to the office where we paid for our fuel and our slip. The K-9 got a dog biscuit and got to lie on the cool floor.

We finally convinced her to go back to the boat where we got everything ship shape and changed into our swimsuits.

As is usually the case, dogs aren't allowed in the pool area so the humans walked back to the pool and cooled off for a while. It's a lovely pool and we had it all to ourselves.

We began to wrinkle so we walked back to HIGH COTTON, changed clothes and walked to the restaurant for an early dinner. The food was delicious and reasonably priced.

Back at the boat with our bellies full, Patti decided to take the pooch for a walk. Captain Ron watched TV for a while, surfed the Internet and then went looking for the rest of his crew. He found them in front of the office, sitting on the porch and talking to one of the resident boaters. Many people here live full time on their boats.

Eventually, it was time to go so we walked back to our slip. Kiki had to be carried part of the way but she headed straight for HIGH COTTON once we got close.



Looking out over the boats at the Myrtle Beach Yacht Club

Tomorrow, we head for Georgetown, a rather long ride for one day. We hope to leave early and get through Myrtle Beach before the rented jet skis get started.

Captain's Log, day seventy eight (July 17, 2021)

Again, Captain Ron forgot something:

Yesterday, as we were cruising down the ICW, a large "ray" jumped out of the water and did a belly flop. Captain Ron saw it, Patti only saw the splash. Apparently there are many different types of rays in North Carolina, sting ray, manta ray and skate. Whatever it was, it was three to four feet across. We have seen this before in Georgia a few times.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

So we got up at 6:00 AM and were underway about 6:40AM. We passed through a confusing set of no-wake zones and then requested an opening of the Little River Swing Bridge. The little River Swing Bridge is not over the Little River, it's in the town of Little River.



The Little River Swing Bridge opens for HIGH COTTON

Shortly after passing through the bridge, a fairly large boat taking people fishing left the dock and turned around in the river in front of us, apparently without checking for traffic first. We had to move to the very edge of the channel to avoid being hit. It has been our experience travelling on the ICW through Little River that the captains of these fishing boats are pretty rude and inconsiderate of other boaters. Not all of them perhaps, but most of them. They have a well-known "less than stellar" reputation for being rude to pleasure boaters.

Anyhow, we continued south on the ICW through Myrtle Beach. The boat traffic picked up, especially the rental jet skis. Again, hordes of untrained operators going as fast as they can with no particular destination. Many of them passed us multiple times going both ways. The Sea Dog kept us posted by barking at them. (Kiki writes: "That's my job on the boat, warning my humans when jet skis threaten.")



More jet skis



This looks like great fun but the ICW is not a good place for it

We observed many new homes under construction along the ICW. There were people working on them even though it was a Saturday.

There's a local "hangout" off the Waccamaw River in Thoroughfare Creek near Sandy Island several miles north of Georgetown. There is a nice sandy beach there. As boats passed us heading south, we speculated that that is where they were headed. We also saw a fairly large alligator swimming in the river. And we saw several turtles sunning themselves on logs along the shore.

As we passed the entrance to Thoroughfare Creek, we saw several boats entering. We also saw what appeared to be a hot dog and drink barge at the entrance with a big "open" sign. We didn't stop to investigate though.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



The county school boat for students living on Sandy Island

Most of the Waccamaw River is fairly narrow and runs through the woods so it's well protected from the wind. The last few miles though are wider and run through marsh and we began to feel the wind.

As we left the Waccamaw River and entered Winyah Bay, we began to feel the effects of the wind and were glad to make the turn into the Sampit River and the channel to Georgetown, SC.

We called Harborwalk Marina and were assigned a space on the outside of the face dock behind another boat. Easy peasy, just pull in and stop. They should all be this easy.

We took the pooch off the boat for a walk. She did what she normally does after a long boat ride and then headed straight for the ramp to the captain's lounge in the building with the showers and laundry. Somehow she seems to remember these things. The lounge is air conditioned and the floor is cool. (Kiki writes: *"Yes, I remember and yes, I like to lie on the cool floor. I haven't been to the groomer in a while and my hair keeps me too warm for the summer time."*)

We saw another alligator on the way to the lounge. Unfortunately, this one was dead and floating upside down where the ramp meets the parking lot. It was beginning to smell.

We walked to the dock house, got checked in and the puppy got a dog biscuit. Then we walked back to HIGH COTTON.

Patti decided to do some laundry and we decided to take our showers while the machines were running. Harborwalk Marina is a small marina but it has really nice, clean heads and showers. The laundry area is clean as well.

Once we were all cleaned up and presentable, we walked to a new restaurant in town. We had seen the menu at the marina and Captain Ron had decided on the chicken pot pie. Unfortunately, even though it is still on the menu, they no longer serve it. He had the chicken fried steak. So did Patti. It was delicious.



Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes and butter beans

Once we finished dinner and returned to the boat, Patti took the hound for a walk and then to the captain's lounge. Eventually, Captain Ron went looking for them and met them on the ramp and we all returned to the boat.

Tomorrow, we plan to leave early and hope to make it back to our slip in Charleston just before 5:00 PM. We are sad to end our cruise, but at the same time, we will be glad to get home.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain's Log, day seventy nine (July 18, 2021)

Well, we made it home! More on that later.

Our plan was to make the trip from Georgetown to our home marina just south of Charleston and arrive at slack current to make docking easier. Our computer software estimated the voyage to take about nine and a half hours, but of course it couldn't account for speed gained or lost from tidal currents or no-wake zones.

We got up at 6:00 AM, walked the Sea Dog, completed our pre trip tasks and headed out at about 6:40 AM.

We saw just a couple small boats leaving Georgetown and heading down Winyah Bay on the ICW. We had a favorable current and reached 9.7 knots for part of the distance. This put us ahead of schedule but later in the day we found ourselves with an opposing current.



Gaining 2.7 knots with the help of the current in Winyah Bay

As we passed McClellanville, we found ourselves in less than five feet of water as it was low tide and a notoriously problematic portion of the ICW. A faster boat caught up with us but slowed down and stayed behind us until the channel got deeper. Then, he pulled out to pass. Captain Ron slowed down to allow the other boat to pass with a minimum wake. As the boat passed us, we realized that it was the boat that had been directly in front of us on the dock at Harborwalk Marina last night.

Later on we were passed by another boat that had been docked at Harborwalk Marina last night. This boat passed us at high speed just a few feet off our port side and gave us quite a wake. The same boat had done the same thing the day before.

Captain Ron attempted to contact the captain on the radio to explain the proper procedure for passing but was unsuccessful. Perhaps, if you do something wrong on the water, you wouldn't want to answer the radio to discuss it.

We saw a few alligators and a single raccoon along the ICW as well as some dolphins. Unfortunately, the only time we saw dolphins diving in one place, there was too much boat traffic to stop and let the Sea Dog watch them.

The closer we got to Charleston, the more boat traffic we encountered. By the time we got to Isle of Palms, it could be described as heavy traffic with boats of all sizes going both ways and sometimes crossing the ICW from one side to the other. Also, the wind picked up and the water was beginning to get rough. Since the Charleston Harbor can be rough in even moderate winds, we decided to take the pooh below where she would be more comfortable.

As we approached the Charleston Harbor, Captain Ron could see a large container ship leaving Charleston and heading out to sea. The AIS showed that we would pass astern of the container ship. What he didn't see was another container ship in the harbor heading from sea to the ports in Charleston. The two ships slowed down and passed each other in the shipping channel while HIGH COTTON and several other smaller boats tried to stay out of the way in the churning waters of the Charleston Harbor.

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Two ships passing in front of HIGH COTTON in the harbor

Once the ships were out of the way, we continued across the harbor, dodging several boats travelling in all directions. There were several sailboats apparently out for a Sunday sail and going nowhere in particular and of course we had to stay out of their way as well.

We could see that we would arrive at our marina well ahead of slack current so we called and asked if we could come into the fuel dock (which is much easier than docking in our slip) and fill our tanks with diesel and wait there for slack current to move to our slip. They said that would be fine so we proceeded to the marina, pulling in at about 3:15 PM.

We got tied up and ready for fuel. When they turned on the fuel pump, nothing happened so we were unable to get fuel. Strangely, this is the third time this has happened to us here. We do have enough fuel to get to somewhere else on our next trip but Captain Ron likes to keep the tanks topped off to avoid any chance of condensation in the tanks and to be able to move the boat if necessary without being concerned about fuel.

We did have time to unload the boat and cart everything up to our truck which we had left in the remote parking lot. We moved it closer of course to load it. We brought the towels and bedding

home to launder and turned the mattresses up so they could air out. We'll go back next weekend and put things back in order.

Shortly before 5:00 PM, we left the fuel dock, motored around the dock and backed into our slip. We got tied up and connected to shore power, locked up the boat and walked to the truck and drove home.

So it's good to be back home and sleeping in our queen sized bed, but it's a bit sad that our cruise has ended. If all goes well there will be another cruise next year.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Epilogue

Duration	79 Days
Distance	1681 NM
Time underway	240 hours
Fuel used (diesel)	524 gallons
Fuel consumption	2.18 GPH
Fuel mileage	3.2 NMPG
Fuel cost	\$ 1620.00
Nights anchored	7
Nights on free docks	1
Nights in marinas	70
Marina cost	\$ 1772.83

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 marine chart plotters for that. He did use its “auto routing” feature to plot routes to new destinations but found that it was important to manually check and correct each route before uploading it to the chart plotter and following it. Some of the auto generated routes would have sent us out of the way or into unsafe areas.

Unfortunately, this time we were unable to visit a few of our planned stops because the marinas were fully booked by the time we called them. Apparently, there are more people boating and cruising this year than there have been in the past.

Cell phones, of course, made it easy to contact marinas ahead of time to inquire about slip availability and make advance reservations. We did find that more and more marinas are going to “on-line” booking and payments. We would rather speak to humans, but progress is progress, we suppose.

Two of the online resources we used were:

<https://activecaptain.com>

<http://cruisersnet.net>.

Other (print) resources were:

Dozier’s Waterway Guide Atlantic ICW
Dozier’s Waterway Guide Chesapeake Bay

Our neighbor kept our lawn mowed, brought in the mail and packages, and kept an eye on the house for us. We set up our utilities for “auto pay” and this makes a few less things to worry about when we are away for an extended period.

We enjoyed ourselves as we have on our previous cruises and now it’s time to start planning our next adventure onboard HIGH COTTON.