

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

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

The following is an account of a cruise south on the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) from Charleston, SC to the west coast of Florida and back.

Captain's Log, day one (May 17, 2022)

Well, as you can see, we are off to a late start this year. It turns out that both Patti and Captain Ron needed some dental work and that took a couple weeks. Kiki the Sea Dog had a grooming appointment on the 13th and Captain Ron had a music performance on the 16th so here we are. Patti went to her usual workout at the gym, her friends took her to lunch and then one of them showed up to drive us to the marina. The marina has become busy with its boat club and will no longer allow us to leave our vehicle there while we are gone.

We got to the marina about 2:00 PM, got everything loaded and cast off our lines just after 3:00 PM.



Medications packed

For the non-boaters reading this, tides and tidal currents are a big part of boating in coastal South Carolina and Georgia. As we left the marina heading “upstream” on the Stono River, we were fighting a current of over two knots. Our normal procedure is to run the engine at 2,000 RPM. This gives us a speed of seven knots if there is no current. Our first hour or so today was into a two knot current so our actual speed (over ground) was five knots. Later, we found ourselves traveling along with the current and had a speed over ground of nine knots. It all pretty much works out even in the end.



Leaving Charleston in the rear view mirror

Today was a beautiful day on the water, sunny but not too hot, and with a cooling breeze. We saw few boats, we assume that most people are working on a Tuesday afternoon. We did catch up to and pass a sailboat. Later in the evening as we were anchored, we saw it pass by on the ICW

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

(Intracoastal Waterway). We saw a few dolphins but none were close enough for Kiki to see. She looks forward to seeing the “big fishies” so hopefully we will see some tomorrow.



The Sea Dog keeping watch

A little over two hours into our trip we passed a well-known anchorage in Church Creek, just off the Intracoastal Waterway. It’s a place we have anchored several times before and we might have anchored there tonight if we hadn’t gotten an earlier start than we expected. There were three other cruising boats anchored there already but there is room for a dozen or more. We decided to press on.

Eventually we came up behind a tugboat pulling a large barge. Even though they are commonly called a “tug and tow”, they rarely actually tow the barge they almost always push it (or sometimes more than one barge). This one was actually towing the barge. Judging from its speed, we called on the radio to arrange a safe pass, but it seems like the faster we went, the faster the barge went. We eventually gave up and just followed it.



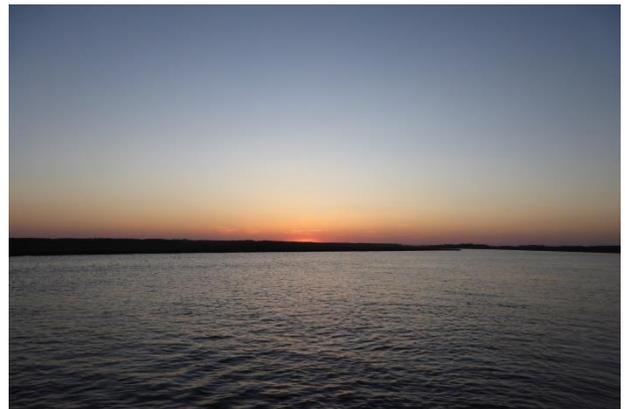
Tug and tow on the ICW south of Charleston

About 6:30PM we had to make a choice; anchor now or continue another hour or so to the next safe anchorage while following the tug and barge.

There’s an anchorage we have heard about just off the ICW in Toogoodoo Creek. It’s not only a nice anchorage; “Toogoodoo Creek” is fun to say! Try it!

So here we sit anchored in Toogoodoo Creek with marshland all around us, no homes or buildings in view, waiting for the sun to set. Dinner was fried chicken brought from KFC.

It should take about five and a half hours to get to Beaufort, SC tomorrow.



The sun sets over Toogoodoo Creek

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain's Log, day two (May 18, 2022)

We forgot to mention yesterday about our first boat repair of our trip. Before we even started the engine, Captain Ron was setting up the bimini top and one of the stainless steel tubes came off in his hand! Well, one is not a serious boater if one doesn't have an allen wrench set in the bottom of the tool box so out it came and the bimini was repaired. Not a big deal.

So we had a nice night's sleep in Toogoodoo Creek last night and awoke early, ready to go. We got dressed, put the harness on the K-9, made a cup of coffee for Captain Ron, raised the anchor and retraced our route back to the ICW.

Just like yesterday, it was a beautiful day to be on the water, sunny but not too hot and with a breeze. We did pass through a couple areas with lots of biting green headed flies. The pooch hid behind the storage bins under the helm and Patti broke out the fly swatter in an attempt to reduce their population.

We were gaining on a sailboat and attempted to contact the captain to arrange for a slow pass (this is where the boat being passed slows way down so the boat passing can pass it with minimum wake). Captain Ron tried several times but got no answer on the radio. For some reason, this is fairly common for sailboats. With no answer on the radio, Captain Ron sounded the horn signal for passing but got no response. We just went on and passed it anyway. Later, we heard another boat attempt to call this same sailboat on the radio with the same results.

A power boat much faster than ours came up behind us and did call on the radio for a slow pass. We slowed down, he passed us and we moved over into his wake so he could speed up and not rock us.

We passed several boats heading in the other direction (north) today. It's the time of the year when the "snowbirds" head back home after spending the winter in Florida or the Bahamas.

We saw several pods of dolphins today and the ship's puppy got to watch them and talk to them. None talked back though and they were apparently too busy doing dolphin things to swim along with us as they sometimes do.

We got to Beaufort at about 12:30 PM and found two large boats and a small boat on the free day dock. There was a space in between the two large boats so we shoehorned HIGH COTTON between them. A guy from the boat in front of us came out and caught our bow line.



HIGH COTTON at the Beaufort, SC free day dock

We got ourselves tied up securely and took the hound to shore for a visit. We walked around town, stopping in a few stores and then went to the ice cream parlor where we all had ice cream. That was our "lunch". Kiki got petted of course.

We walked to the boat ramp where the K-9 ran down the ramp and into the water for a swim. She enjoys swimming and playing in the water. The sprinklers in the town park were running so she played in them and walked through some puddles on the way back to the boat. As always, she got a

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

fresh water rinse on the back of the boat before coming inside.

Back aboard HIGH COTTON, we rested for a couple of hours. Actually, Captain Ron fell asleep so he doesn't really know what the rest of the crew did.

We left the pooch to guard the boat and headed back to town for a little more shopping and dinner. Patti found a "cute dress" to purchase. Captain Ron found nothing of interest. (Kiki writes: "*Yea, they say they leave me to guard the boat, but I know they are out there having fun without me.*")

After dinner, we returned to the boat and took the ship's puppy for a short walk. Then it was back to the boat and move it off of the free dock (the free dock is for day use only, overnight stays are not permitted).

We motored a mile or so further south and anchored out of the channel near a bunch of moored boats. We have anchored here several times before. It wouldn't be a good place to anchor in a storm but it's fine in calm weather.



Sunset near Beaufort, SC

We called Thunderbolt Marina in Georgia earlier in the day to reserve a slip and they told us to call in the morning so that's what we will do. We will fill up our diesel tanks and spend the night.

Captain's Log, day three (May 19, 2022)

Well, it happened again! Even though HIGH COTTON was locked up as tight as could be, somehow the Birthday Bunny managed to sneak in and leave birthday cards for Captain Ron! Captain Ron isn't divulging his age, but Roosevelt was President of the USA when he was born. Franklin, not Teddy!

Last night was not as calm as we expected or was predicted. The wind was howling and the boat was rocking a bit. Also, the ship's puppy had an upset stomach, probably from eating things she found on the ground during her walk around town yesterday. We are considering getting her a muzzle to wear when she walks.

Anyway, we woke up somewhat early, got dressed, did our engine checks and got underway just ahead of a large tugboat and barge that was heading south on the ICW. Better to be in front of it than to have to try to pass it later on.



Tug and tow on the ICW near Beaufort, SC

Our route today took us on the back side of Hilton Head Island and then past Dufuskie Island. A couple miles past Dufuskie Island, Patti looked behind us and there was a line of a dozen or more small boats, all running at high speed. About half of them sped by us, some, much too close, before we got to a really narrow part of the ICW with the

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

red and green buoys across from each other and perhaps a hundred feet apart. One of the smarter members of the group decided to hold back and pass us after we exited the narrow section and the rest stayed behind him. Eventually, the rest of the boats passed us but everyone came to a no-wake (slow) zone so the whole bunch had to slow down for a half mile or so. Eventually, they took off and were soon out of sight. Our guess is they were members of some sort of boat club and were heading somewhere together, perhaps Savannah.



Here comes the boat club!

We crossed the Savannah River into Georgia and in an hour or so, we arrived at Thunderbolt Marina (in Thunderbolt, GA, a suburb of Savannah). We called on the radio and the dockmaster told us to pull up in front of the fuel pumps. He didn't tell us that he wasn't going to help us dock (which is the normal custom at most marinas).

He also didn't help us fuel our boat. Usually, a dockhand will bring the hose to the boat and hand it to the captain. Today, we had to dock ourselves and Captain Ron had to get the fuel hose and drag it to the boat himself and put it back afterward. On the upside, no tip was necessary.

After paying \$6.06 per gallon for sixty six gallons of diesel fuel, Captain Ron's next task was to change the oil and filters on the engine and transmission.

This went fairly well except for a bit of spillage that had to be cleaned up and dropping the transmission dipstick into the bilge (under the engine) which required assembling Patti's mop handle to retrieve.

Captain Ron was now thoroughly tired and soaking wet so it was time for a shower.

After his shower and a complete change of clothes, we walked to Tubby's Tank House, the only restaurant within walking distance for dinner.

We walked back, talked to some of the other boaters for a while and now it's time for bed.



Tubby's Tank House

Captain's Log, day four (May 20, 2022)

Tied to the dock with electricity and air conditioning, clean and well fed, we had a great night's sleep last night. We awoke at 7:00 AM or so, got dressed and got ready to leave Thunderbolt Marina. Captain Ron topped off the water tanks and Patti got a couple bags of ice and re-iced the cooler.

One of the "perks" of Thunderbolt Marina is free Krispy Kreme doughnuts in the morning so we waited for them to arrive and then untied our lines

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

and headed out. Unfortunately, they no longer have coffee for guests so Captain Ron had to make his own.

There are several no-wake zones on the ICW, apparently protecting the properties of the well to do folks, so it was speed up, slow down, speed up, slow down for a while.

Just past the last no-wake zone, we spotted a dozen or more dolphins circling around and doing whatever it is dolphins do. We stopped the boat and let the pooch watch. (Kiki writes: *"I like to watch the big fishies playing in the water. Mawmaw and Pawpaw stop the boat so I can see them."*).

We saw quite a few boats including many that were apparently headed north to their summer homes. A couple boats did pass us heading south. We also saw several small boats; apparently locals out to fish or just cruise around. We were underway for about nine hours today which is longer than we normally run. We did take turns running the boat and Captain Ron went below for a couple of power naps.

Georgia, south of Savannah, is very rural until Brunswick, GA. There's only one marina within a reasonable distance off the ICW and that is too far north for a good stopping point so we are anchored just off the ICW in the Darien River (which, not surprisingly, leads to Darien, GA, a town you might have stopped in for gas while travelling to or from Florida on Interstate 95). We have anchored here a few times in the past and it's a decent anchorage.

We had leftover chicken from our first day (KFC) so Patti stripped it off the bones and added it to canned cream of chicken soup and served it over rice for our dinner. It's a great way to dress up leftover chicken. The ship's puppy got her share.

Captain Ron took a shower in the cockpit. There's nobody around to see him. Rain is predicted tomorrow. We have a reservation at Jekyll Harbor Marina so we'll travel in the rain if necessary.



"Wildlife" on the ICW



Shrimp boat on the ICW in Georgia

Captain's Log, day five (May 21, 2022)

We got up and got underway at first light this morning to beat the predicted rain. It was about a four hour trip from our anchorage to Jekyll Harbor Marina on Jekyll Island, GA. We had no rain, but we had an unexpected sight; three manatees several miles north of St. Simons Sound. They were just swimming around, doing whatever it is that manatees do. It's pretty rare to see them this

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

far north. We also saw a couple stingrays jumping out of the water and flipping and one small alligator. (Kiki writes: "Those were some really big fishies!"). We saw surprisingly few cruising boats this morning.



The Sea Dog watching for Big Fishies



Patti takes the helm

We got to Jekyll Harbor marina about 11:00 AM. In contrast to our experience in Thunderbolt, two dockhands directed us to our slip, caught our lines and tied the boat up, connected the electrical cable and took our bag of trash.

We got settled in and went to the office to borrow one of the golf carts but it started to rain so we went back to the boat. Captain Ron fell asleep watching TV.

After an hour or so we went back and got the golf cart and took the pooch to the Dairy Queen for ice cream. The humans had ice cream as well. We saw an armadillo beside the road but it went into the woods when Captain Ron got out to take its picture. We rode around a bit in the golf cart, stopped in a couple of the shops and then returned to the marina. Then it started to rain again.

Patti and Captain Ron took showers in the nice facilities. After our showers we walked to the on-site restaurant for dinner. It was good. Patti brought some of the boiled egg from her salad back for the hound.

It's still raining and the wind has picked up. There has been a bit of thunder and lightning. Hopefully, it will be clear and calm tomorrow as we have to cross St. Andrews Sound which takes us nearly into the ocean. Our reward will be a stop in Fernandina Beach, FL.

Captain's Log, day six (May 22, 2022)

Things quieted down last night and we had a good night's sleep. We wanted to get across the notoriously rough St. Andrews Sound before the winds kicked up so as soon as it was light, we got up, got dressed, walked the K-9 and got ourselves underway. Even though we were in a slip perpendicular to the current, we were able to get out without assistance or difficulty.

As we rounded a bend in the ICW, we entered St. Andrews sound and it was as flat and quiet as we have ever seen it. As a bonus, the tide was going out so we picked up almost two knots of speed for the longest part. Of course, the rest of it was fighting the current but that was the shorter leg.

Actually, nearly all of today's four hour and twenty minute cruise was on the inland side of

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Cumberland Island. Unlike yesterday though, we didn't see any wildlife. We did pass a couple of boats heading north though.

As we entered St. Andrews sound, a larger boat that had been at Jekyll Harbor Marina came up behind us, passed us and headed out into the ocean. We thought nothing about this until the same boat passed us on the ICW as we were crossing into Florida. All we can figure is, he went out into the ocean, found it too rough for his liking and turned around and came back into the ICW and caught up with us. He continued on down the ICW as we stopped in Fernandina Beach.

We passed the US navy's Kings Bay facility where they service submarines. Years ago, we saw one heading out to sea with its support ships. We haven't seen one since and saw none today. We did see the Navy security boat cruising back and forth in front of the entrance to keep unwanted visitors away.



Entrance to Kings Bay

Docking at Fernandina Harbor Marina didn't go as smoothly as it should have because of the inexperience of the dockhand who grabbed the wrong line first and allowed the stern of the boat to swing with the wind. Captain Ron is going to have to be a bit quicker to give instructions when things aren't being done correctly.

We eventually did get HIGH COTTON tied up correctly and we got everything connected and put away.

Fernandina Harbor Marina is now connected to a nationwide marina booking service called Snag A Slip so we had already supplied all the information they needed and had paid over the phone so there was no need to go to the office. (Kiki writes: *"Yea and I didn't get any treats either. I don't like this arrangement."*)

As we were two years ago, we are at the far end of the dock from where it connects to dry land. The pooch waited patiently for us to get things set up and made it all the way to land before watering the grass. She was a good puppy!

The historic District of Fernandina Beach is just across the street and railroad tracks from the marina (Yes, the railroad runs right through the town.) We walked into town and stopped at the visitor's center where we talked to a lady that was from the next town over from where Captain Ron was raised. Then we went into one of the shops where the pooch got a treat from the employees behind the counter. She seems to have figured out that many of these shops keep dog treats behind the counter so that's where she heads when she enters a shop.



Fernandina Beach welcome center

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



Captain Ron discusses current affairs with one of the locals

Next, we went to the ice cream shop where everyone got his or her own cup of ice cream. Even the pooch.

After some discussion, it was decided that Captain Ron and the K-9 would head back to the boat while Patti continued on her mission of supporting the local economy. Unfortunately, the K-9 wasn't fully on board with that plan and resisted several times, finding puddles of water to walk through and sit in. Captain Ron ended up carrying a wet dog back to the boat.



Kiki finds a nice cool puddle to sit in

Patti eventually showed up at the boat, laden down with her purchases and we discussed where we would stop for the next few nights.

The discussion then turned to where we would go for dinner. There's a well-known restaurant right at the marina but for some reason, it is closed on Sunday and Monday and today being Sunday, it wasn't an option.

We looked on-line at several nearby restaurants and decided on pizza. We walked about three blocks to the restaurant and had a very good pizza and salad.

Back at the boat, Captain Ron walked the quarter mile or so to the shower facility and took his long, hot shower with plenty of pressure. He stopped in the lounge and talked with another boater for a few minutes and then returned to HIGH COTTON so Patti could go and take her shower.

We called a marina earlier today to see about a slip for tomorrow night, but the person who answered the phone said he didn't know if any were available and we would have to call in the morning. If we don't get a slip we will either stop at a free dock or anchor somewhere between here and St. Augustine. It's time for bed.



HIGH COTTON on the dock at Fernandina Harbor Marina

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain's Log, day seven (May 23, 2022)

We forgot to mention that yesterday afternoon, a boat full of six women pulled in behind us at the marina and spent the night. They have been cruising and visiting various cities along the southern ICW. One of the women was the captain. More on this later.

We had to wait until 8:00 AM for the marina to open so we could buy ice and turn in our key card. Captain Ron had noticed a coffee machine in the captain's lounge the evening before so he figured he could get a free cup and not have to make his own. He made himself two cups but there was no creamer so he had to wait until he was back on the boat to doctor it up to his taste.

He was able to use the engine and bow thruster to turn around in the marina fairway so he didn't have to back out.

We headed south on the ICW but a few miles south of Fernandina Beach we came to a sudden stop. Yep, we hit the bottom. According to the markers and the chart plotter, we were in the channel, but in reality, we were not. Conditions change because of silting and storms and with an older marine chart, it's not always accurate.

We tried to find deeper water without success so we turned around and retraced our track for a quarter mile or so and were able to get across what must have been a sandbar to deeper water. It was nearly low tide at this point.

After an hour or two, we saw a larger, faster boat behind us and gaining on us. Then we saw it sideways and stopped. Listening to the radio, we learned that it was aground and unable to move but the boat full of women passed them and made a large enough wake to free them from the bottom. We heard the captain of the stuck boat

tell the lady that he should have just followed the trawler in front of him (that would have been us).

The women followed the other boat for a while and then decided to speed up and pass it. A few minutes later they called us and informed us that they would be passing us. That's fine, but they didn't slow down like most cruising boats do and they rocked us pretty well.

We had some choices to make today, one was to spend the night at the Jacksonville free dock near where the ICW crosses the St. Johns River or continue on for another hour or so and stay at the Palm Cove Marina. Palm Cove Marina isn't well known by transients, it's mostly resident vessels and dry stack boats, but they do take transients, they are relatively inexpensive, and they are within walking distance of restaurants, a grocery store and a drug store. We needed aspirin for Captain Ron. He takes one every day as a blood thinner. Oh, and they have a nice pool! We decided to continue on to the marina.

We got ourselves docked (with assistance) took the ship's puppy for a tour of the grounds, got everything shipshape and rested for a bit. Then we went to the pool for a dip. It was nice and refreshing after a windy day on the water.



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

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

After walking back to the boat and changing into our “good clothes”, we walked to the Shrimp Shack (sort of a Captain D’s or Long John Silver on steroids) and had a nice meal. We walked across the highway to the drug store, got a giant sized bottle of aspirin and walked back to the marina and HIGH COTTON.



The Shrimp Shack

By this time, the pooch was ready for another walk so we toured the grounds again.

We’ve made plans and reservations for our next two stops including the Memorial Day weekend so we’re set for the next week or so. We just have to get there.

Captain’s Log, day eight (May 24, 2022)

We had no reason to get up early, but for some reason, we did. We got up, got dressed, walked the pup, did our engine checks and were underway by about 7:30 AM. The route from Palm Cove Marina in the outskirts of Jacksonville to St. Augustine is pretty much a straight shot on a couple of rivers and a man-made cut so it was just a matter of staying between the red markers on the right and the green markers on the left. We were underway for about four hours.



Houses on the east side, woods on the west side

We saw a couple of dolphins but they were busy doing dolphin stuff and didn’t put on a show for us. We passed several cruising boats headed north to their summer homes. A couple were from Rhode Island.



A unique boat on the ICW



The wind is free

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

We passed under St. Augustine's Bridge of Lions and waited for the marina to send a dockhand to our slip. We headed down the fairway, stopped and backed into the slip where the dockhand caught our lines and tied us up. We got the shorepower cord connected so the air conditioning would run, then took the Sea Dog to land to do her business.

The St. Augustine Municipal Marina is right in the historic district and is part of a public park. The grounds are nicely landscaped and cared for.



HIGH COTTON docked at the St. Augustine Municipal Marina

After walking the hound, we walked to the dock office at the end of the pier to check in, pay and buy two bags of ice for the cooler.

After arranging the ice and beverages in the cooler and getting the boat squared away, we were hungry so we decided to find somewhere to eat lunch. Leaving the K-9 on the boat, the humans walked around town for a bit and then walked back to a restaurant across the street from the marina for a late lunch.

After lunch, we walked to the street with all the touristy shops and such and shopped. Patti tried on a couple of dresses but ended up with nothing. Captain Ron didn't bother. He saw a nice shirt, but at \$110.99, he decided not to even try it on. Being retired and out of the music business, he doesn't

really have a place to wear a \$110.99 shirt. The rest of the volunteer band he is part of in our senior community mostly wears shorts and support hose!

We returned to HIGH COTTON and took turns walking to the marina facilities for showers. Patti walked the puppy while Captain Ron took his shower and then we sat on a bench observing people. Our late lunch turned out to be our meal for the day. Tomorrow we will probably have a "real" dinner. There are many choices here in walking distance from the marina.

We are staying here through tomorrow and we will do some more sightseeing and shopping and hopefully a few things on the boat.



Another HIGH COTTON in the marina

Captain's Log, day nine (May 25, 2022)

Today was a day in port so there is little to post about, just two old tourists and a small dog wandering around town.

Captain Ron rolled over and went back to sleep this morning. By the time he woke up, Patti and the hound had taken the dirty clothes to the marina's laundry room and put them in the washing machine. For those folks who don't know, most

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

marinas have laundry facilities so having clean clothes, towels and bedding isn't a problem. Captain Ron got dressed, shaved and walked to the marina office for free coffee.

About 10:00 AM, Patti suggested going to a breakfast restaurant so off we went. One of the menu choices was biscuits and gravy. They offered a half portion or a full portion. Patti asked the waitress how big a half portion was and she said it was pretty big so we both ordered half portions. They were huge and certainly enough for us.

We walked back through the shops and Patti found a few more things she liked. One of the shops we visited yesterday and forgot to mention was a clock shop. Not "junk" novelty clocks, "real" wind up and weight driven clocks including large traditional grandfather clocks. They ranged from \$1,100 to \$24,000. Yes, \$24,000 for a large wood cased, limited edition grandfather clock. For those who don't know, we have approximately thirty traditional mechanical clocks in our home including a grandfather clock so this display of clocks was interesting to us and especially Captain Ron who constructed many of the cases for the clocks in our home.

We eventually made it back to the boat (without any new clocks) and took the ship's puppy for a walk. She has apparently gotten some more food off the ground and has an upset stomach again, but she seems to be getting over it.

One of the things we bought at the shops was a bag of assorted candy. After we got back to the boat, Captain Ron got a piece of taffy, started eating it and a crown came off his tooth. Not the one he got just before we left, one next to it. So, we will have to try to find a dentist who will hopefully be able to glue it back on. It's not causing him any pain, but going a couple months without it might not be a good idea.

Earlier, we had considered going to an Irish Restaurant for dinner tonight, but as we passed it on the way to breakfast, we saw that it was closed on Wednesdays. We decided to go to a nearby restaurant that we've eaten at before but when we got there, we found that there would be a one hour wait. Our next choice was a Spanish bakery/restaurant that we had walked past earlier today. We got there and found that it was closed today!

We settled on an Irish Pub that was probably more of a bar than a restaurant. The food was pretty good but there was a very limited selection.

Back at the marina, we took the Sea Dog for a short walk. She met some people who had petted her earlier today and they petted her again. There was an apparently homeless lady sitting on one of the benches cursing into her phone like a sailor.

One thing we remember about St. Augustine is the large homeless population hanging around the park and the tourist areas. For some reason, we see more of them here than any of the other places we have stayed.

We will be leaving St. Augustine tomorrow and heading for Palm Coast, FL where we will meet up with Captain Ron's brother, Captain Dick! (No, just kidding, Dick is a lot of things, but he is not a captain.) Dick and his wife Teresa live in Palm Coast, FL.

Captain's Log, day ten (May 26, 2022)

It was only about a three hour cruise to our next destination, Palm Coast Marina in Palm Coast, FL so there was no real hurry to leave this morning, but we did want to get underway before the predicted winds kicked up. The ICW is mostly protected in this area so winds wouldn't be

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

dangerous, but they could be uncomfortable in some of the more open sections.

We pulled out of our slip, leaving beautiful and historic St. Augustine (and the homeless people) behind. Captain Ron's brother Dick called saying that the dentist could see him at 2:00 PM or next Tuesday. We figured we could make the 2:00 PM appointment so Dick said he would pick us up at 1:30 PM.

We got to the marina at about 11:30 AM and pulled up to the fuel dock where we took on sixty six gallons of diesel fuel at \$6.59 per gallon. Then we motored around to the other side of the marina and into a slip where we will spend the holiday weekend.

Dick showed up and took Captain Ron to the dentist where, for a little over \$200 (because this dentist doesn't accept our dental insurance), the dentist told him that he would cement the crown back in place, but "it will come back off". Apparently, there is decay in the tooth that will have to be dealt with when we get home.

HIGH COTTON needs a new pump which normally costs \$200, but by some stroke of luck, it went on sale at West Marine yesterday for (just) \$140, so they stopped at West Marine on the way back to the marina and picked up the pump. Captain Ron will have fun installing it later.

They picked up Patti and the puppy at the marina and went to Dick and Teresa's house. Teresa and Patti headed off to the grocery store leaving Captain Ron, Dick and the Sea Dog behind with instructions to "walk the dog".

Dick and Teresa's home is just a block or two from the ICW and there is a nice walking path along the water so Captain Ron and Dick set out to walk the puppy along the path. Kiki walked as far as the end of the driveway, turned around and walked back to

the front door. Captain Ron picked her up and carried her a couple houses down the street and set her down. She turned around and walked back to the front door. Captain Ron picked her up and carried her about a half a block in the other direction and set her down. She crossed the street and headed back for Dick's front door! Apparently, the Sea Dog did not want to go for a walk today.

Teresa and Patti returned from the grocery store and proceeded to fix dinner. It was delicious.

After dinner, Dick returned the HIGH COTTON crew to the marina where Captain Ron took a shower (Patti had taken one while Captain Ron was at the dentist). By then, it was time for bed,

Captain's Log, day eleven (May 27, 2022)

Captain Ron is getting bad at remembering things, but here's something from yesterday. As we were approaching Palm Coast, in a narrow part of the ICW (really a canal at this point), we looked ahead and saw a barge approaching us. Usually, barges on the ICW are pushed by tugboats, but this one had the tug boat alongside the barge, making it twice as wide as a normal barge. Captain Ron contacted the tug's captain and made arrangements to pass "port to port" (the same way cars pass on the roads in the USA).

Well, this would have been fine except for the width of the combination of barge and tug and the fact that the tug wanted to take its half out of the middle! We had to get as far to the starboard side as possible without running into the private docks along the canal. We got into some shallow water but the tug passed OK and we got back into the middle of the canal safely.

So today was a day in port. We had no reason to get up early so we didn't. Once we got up, got

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

dressed and walked the hound, Patti cooked a “real” breakfast for the crew; Eggs and scrapple for Captain Ron and eggs and bacon for Patti and the pup. Actually, the puppy only got eggs, no bacon.

We walked around the marina with the Sea Dog looking for and chasing lizards, one of her favorite pastimes. She seldom catches them but she keeps on trying. We saw several dolphins in the canal in front of the marina. Kiki saw them too but they were just passing through, they didn’t put on a show.

Later, Captain Ron walked over to the face dock on the canal to take some photos of HIGH COTTON. He was talking to another boater when the skies darkened and a big gust of wind came up. He had to grab onto an electrical pedestal for fear of being blown off the dock. He saw lightning in the distance and decided it would be best to get back inside the boat before the storm came. The expected storm never materialized.

We called Captain Ron’s brother Dick and he came and picked us up and took us to their house. Dick and Captain Ron swam a bit in their pool until another storm appeared and they decided to get out of the pool.



Captain Ron, Patti, Kiki, Teresa and Dick

We had dinner, walked the K-9 around the yard and neighborhood and then came back to HIGH COTTON in time for bed.

Captain’s Log, day twelve (May 28, 2022)

We are still in port so there’s not much to report. We slept in late, got dressed and walked the ship’s puppy. Captain Ron had thought of getting a diver to clean the boat’s hull of barnacles and grass because we didn’t get it done right before our trip began. He asked the marina dockmaster if he knew anyone and as expected, he did.

Back at the boat, Captain Ron called the diver and left a message. The diver called back and said he could be here Tuesday morning but Captain Ron explained that we had planned on leaving very early on Tuesday morning. Eventually, the diver decided he could come today.

It was more than an hour before he showed up and he spent at least an hour working on the boat. It was about 2:00 PM when he was finished.

We decided to walk to the “European Village”, a collection of shops and restaurants in Palm Coast within walking distance of the marina. We had lunch in a Vietnamese restaurant (not impressed and no free refills on \$3.50 iced tea!). Patti was able to find a few things she really needed in the shops. Captain Ron was not.

Back at the boat, it was too late to visit Dick and Teresa so we just sat around talking to a resident boater and then took turns showering. It will be an early bedtime tonight. (Kiki writes: *“I like this marina. They give me treats when I go in the office, there is lots of grass and lots of lizards to chase.”*)

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



A Palm Coast lizard

Captain's Log, day thirteen (May 29, 2022)

So again, there was no boating, just a day in port. Captain Ron's favorite daughter, Robyn and her husband Wally made plans to drive from their home in "The Villages", in central Florida to Palm Coast for a visit.

We slept late, then Patti fixed a full, "homemade" breakfast for the crew. We called Dick and he came and took Patti and the pup to his house where Patti helped Teresa prepare the big cookout. Dick then took Captain Ron to the local Home Depot for screws to make it easier (hopefully) for him to install the new pump he picked up the other day.

Back at Dick and Teresa's house, Robyn and Wally showed up and there were hugs and handshakes all around. Robyn is a new grandmother which, of course, makes Captain Ron a great-grandfather! Robyn's daughter called and we got to see the new addition to the family live.



Captain Ron, Patti, Teresa, Robyn, Wally and Dick

We had our hamburgers, hot dogs and all the usual fixings, took pictures and talked about various things, as one would expect.

Eventually, Robyn and Wally had to leave for their two hour drive back to The Villages to take care of their dogs.

Dick drove the HIGH COTTON crew back to the marina so the humans could shower and then everyone went to bed,

Captain's Log, day fourteen (May 30, 2022)

OK, this is our last day in port for a while. We pull out of here and head south tomorrow morning.

Captain Ron slept late while Patti gathered up a load of dirty clothes and headed for the laundry room (It's not actually a room, the washers and dryers are outside, but under cover. Remember, this is Florida). Unfortunately, another boater beat her to it so she had to wait until the other loads were finished. Captain Ron finally rolled out of bed and Patti took the bed sheets and blankets to the washer.

Captain Ron had figured out in his head the next two stops for us, one in New Smyrna Beach and the next one in Titusville. Unfortunately, when he

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

called the marina in New Smyrna Beach, they were booked solid and had no open slips for tomorrow. We decided to just anchor somewhere near there and head for Titusville the next day. The Titusville Municipal Marina was able to give us a reservation.

We called Dick and he came to get us and take us to his house. Teresa drove Patti to the grocery store to stock the boat for the next several days.

Once Patti and Teresa returned from the store and put the food away we all got into the swimming pool for a refreshing dip.

Once we were all sufficiently wrinkled by the water we got out, dried off and had a chicken dinner.

We said our goodbyes to Teresa and thanked her for her hospitality. Dick drove us back to the marina where we said our goodbyes to him and thanked him for his hospitality.

Captain Ron topped off HIGH COTTON's potable water tanks and then went to take a shower while Patti put everything from the grocery store away. Then she went to take a shower. It's time for bed.

(Kiki writes: "OK, nobody said anything about me today. I was very cute today and everybody petted me and made a fuss over me. And I got to go for a ride in the car twice! I swam in the pool and chased lizards around the pool enclosure. I like visiting people.")

Captain's Log, day fifteen (May 31, 2022)

OK, we're heading south again. We got up, got dressed and walked the hound. Captain Ron did his engine checks. It apparently rained a bit last night because the deck and helm were wet. Patti got everything uncovered on the flybridge while Captain Ron got the last bag of ice from the marina

and Patti drained the cooler and refilled it with the ice.

We unhooked the shorepower cable and the dock lines and headed out of the marina at about 8:00 AM. As we travelled past Dick's neighborhood, he took some photos of HIGH COTTON underway on the ICW. We saw an alligator swimming across the ICW in Palm Coast.



HIGH COTTON headed south on the ICW, Palm Coast, FL

As we headed south on the ICW, we encountered various speed zones, supposedly for manatee protection. We were wondering, but we eventually got a glimpse of several manatees. We also saw a few pods of dolphins and stopped a couple times to let the Sea Dog watch the big fishies.



One of many different speed regulations in Florida

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



A manatee on the ICW

We continued through Daytona Beach because we didn't feel that would be enough progress for us today. The dockmaster at New Smyrna Beach called and said he still didn't have a slip for us, but we were now number one on the waiting list. Well, number one on the waiting list isn't much of an improvement over number three because it still doesn't result in a slip for the night!



Passing through Daytona Beach on the ICW

There are a couple of other marinas in New Smyrna Beach but they are too far from town to walk so it would just be a stop for the night. We decided to just continue on and anchor when we got tired.

There are a couple of anchorages just south of New Smyrna Beach but we decided that it was a good day for cruising so we passed them by. They were pretty full of wrecked or abandoned boats anyway.

Unfortunately, there are very few places to anchor south of New Smyrna Beach once past the ones we mentioned. We tried one that's shown in Active Captain (a boating source for anchorages and marinas), but as we headed for it, the water got shallow and we actually touched bottom and had to power off a sandbar. The water in this area is very shallow with only a dredged channel for larger boats like ours. "Larger" is relative of course, HIGH COTTON, at twenty eight feet in length, is larger than most trailered boats, but much smaller than the sixty foot plus yachts that we often see in marinas where we stay.

So, faced with the choice of anchoring in wide open Mosquito Lagoon or travelling another two hours to an anchorage that might not be any better, we pulled out of the channel into seven feet of water and dropped the hook. It's a bit rough, but the winds are supposed to calm down later. We were underway for eight and a half hours today, more than we usually do, but we will get into Titusville that much earlier and there are places to go and things to do in Titusville.

Captain Ron did a scan on the TV and found over sixty stations to choose from. We will get up and underway tomorrow whenever it happens. It's two or three hours to Titusville and we don't want to show up at 9:00 AM.



Sunset on the Mosquito Lagoon, Florida

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain's Log, day sixteen (June 1, 2022)

Our anchorage last night was a bit rougher than we had expected, but we slept anyway and woke up in the same place where we went to sleep so all is well.

We got up, got ourselves dressed, pulled the anchor and got underway by 7:30 AM. We found ourselves being blown out of the narrow channel by the wind so we had to make corrections from time to time. After an hour or so we followed the ICW into Haulover Canal. Haulover Canal is a known spot for manatees and there is a little cove with a boat ramp and dock where people often come to observe the manatees. Since we had plenty of time this morning, we pulled into the cove and docked HIGH COTTON for a few minutes to watch the manatees. There were several, but unfortunately, they weren't very active so we got back on the boat and headed for Titusville Marina.



The Sea Dog watching the manatees

As we approached the marina, it began to rain but it quickly stopped. We called the marina and got our slip assignment. A competent dockhand met us at our slip and we were quickly backed in and tied up. The ship's puppy was glad to feel the grass between her toes after two days on the water and quickly took care of business. Then she went to the office for a dog biscuit while Pawpaw paid the

dockage fee. Then we all walked outside to the seawall where three manatees were taking turns drinking the fresh water runoff from the marina office roof drains.



HIGH COTTON docked at the Titusville Municipal Marina

Patti needed to have a prescription filled at CVS and we needed a meal so we left the K-9 to guard the boat and set out for town, about a half mile away.

Patti arranged for her prescription to be filled and we walked another half mile to a diner we had enjoyed the last time we were here. We were not disappointed and came home with a bag of leftovers plus an extra order of country ham.



Patti gets her daily salad

Just as we left the restaurant, it began to rain. By the time we found cover, we were soaking wet.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

We stopped in a little “boutique” where Patti had purchased some items on one of our previous visits. Patti didn’t find anything to buy this time, but the lady gave us an umbrella that someone else had left in the store several months ago. Of course it stopped raining so we didn’t actually have to use it.

When Patti paid for her prescription, she was given a \$5 coupon so we just had to buy something else. Captain Ron saw what he thought was apple juice in single serving bottles so we bought two six packs. Later in the evening as he was drinking one, he read the label and found that it was actually “Apple Juice Beverage” containing 48% apple juice and presumably 52% plain water. It’s OK, it tastes like watered down apple juice, which of course is exactly what it is. He has eleven bottles left to enjoy.

We returned to the boat where Captain Ron found sixty eight TV channels to enjoy. Several, of course, are in Spanish, several more are selling jewelry and home appliances and a few more are trying to save his soul. Still there’s plenty of news, weather and mindless entertainment to be had.

The crew went to the office for ice cream. Patti and Kiki shared a cup while Captain Ron ate all of his. (Kiki writes: *“Yea, that sounds good in writing, but Mawmaw ate most of it and just gave me a few bites.”*) The pooch got another dog biscuit and got petted by most of the staff.

Once we finished the ice cream and dog biscuits, we decided to walk around the marina. Surprise! Standing on her boat on one of the other docks was our former slip neighbor from St. Johns Yacht Harbor in Charleston, SC, our “home” marina. She and her husband and three dogs live on their boat and left Charleston several months ago to travel. We had a nice talk. They are heading for North

Carolina soon to get away from Florida for the hurricane season.

We went back to the boat where Patti ate her country ham and Captain Ron ate some leftover salad.

We took turns taking nice long showers. We walked the puppy again and it’s time for bed.



Titusville Municipal Marina

Captain’s Log, day seventeen (June 2, 2022)

We had no reason to stay in Titusville, although it is a nice enough town. Our mission today was to continue south. We needed a bag of ice so we got everything ready and waited for the marina to open at 8:00 AM. The Sea Dog went to the office with us for treats and to say good bye. The staff took turns petting her, we got our ice, got the boat untied and headed back to the ICW. The ICW at this point is on the Indian River and it’s very wide, but shallow except in the channel. Boaters must travel at “minimum wake speed” everywhere outside of the ICW channel and no more than 25 MPH in the channel to protect the manatees.

Of course, the manatees don’t understand if they are in the channel or not. We saw a few outside the channel and one in the channel directly in front

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

of HIGH COTTON which required us to cut the throttle and shift to neutral to avoid hitting it. We didn't feel a thud so apparently we missed it.

We also saw dolphins and stopped to let the pooch watch them for a few minutes. She talked to them but they didn't answer back. We saw a few cruising sized boats including a couple of sailboats actually sailing. They were headed north, of course.



The Cape Canaveral Vehicle Assembly building



A Sailboat headed north, taking advantage of the free wind

Our destination today was a small marina in Eau Gallie, FL (pronounced "Aw Galley") called the "Eau Gallie Yacht Basin". It's a small marina, apparently with no dockhands and no office. We had to pay on-line and couldn't raise anyone on the radio or the telephone. When we got there, some of the liveaboard boaters told us which slip to take and

helped us with our lines. They also told us where the heads and showers were and gave us the code and directions to the main part of town. We've never been here before so it was all new to us.



HIGH COTTON docked at the Eau Gallie Yacht Basin

Eau Gallie is a small town that has apparently been absorbed by neighboring Melbourne, FL. They run together.

We walked the pooch, of course and she found a patch of grass to her liking and took care of her "business". We walked some more and then headed back to HIGH COTTON where the air conditioning was beginning to take effect.

We rested a bit and then decided that we (the humans) would walk to town, browse, and get something to eat. We didn't see any stores or shops worth visiting so we began looking for a decent restaurant. We stopped in one to look at the menu, but there was a bar, two pool tables and just one table for dining so we decided to look elsewhere. The next one we looked at didn't have anything appealing so off we went again. Two local women we met suggested a place called "Squid Lips" so we decided to eat there. It was OK, but nothing to write home about (although it seems that is exactly what we are doing).

So then it was back to the boat. Patti took the puppy for a walk around the neighborhood while

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain Ron fell asleep watching TV. This boating is tiring work!

Our string of great boating weather is apparently about to come to an end soon. Heavy rains are predicted in this area starting tomorrow so we will get underway early and hopefully get to Vero Beach City Marina before it begins to rain. We have reservations for two days but we may try to extend that if it hasn't finished raining. Vero Beach is not a bad place to be stuck.

Captain's Log, day eighteen (June 3, 2022)

It's been said that cruising is fixing your boat in exotic places. OK, Captain Ron gets it and has done this many times. But how about a camera? Yes, Captain Ron was taking pictures of the sunrise this morning and the camera started beeping and displaying an "Error writing" message. After handing the helm over to Patti, he took the camera down and figured out that the memory card had failed. Fortunately, there was a memory card in the backup camera so the switch was made and the camera is back in operation.



Sunrise leaving Eau Gallie Yacht Basin

Because of the weather forecast for today, we wanted to get an early start and we did. Up at 5:45 AM and we got all our chores done and were out of

the marina at 6:15 AM. Not too shabby, but at 6:15 AM, there were already people out on the water in boats and in the public park across from the marina.

We didn't see many boats for the first couple hours today but we saw a few dolphins. As the morning wore on, several cruising boats passed us heading north, including a couple under sail. We passed by an island with several nice homes on it where access is only by boat, no road or bridge.

We got to Vero Beach and turned up the channel towards the Vero Beach City Marina. This marina is well known among cruisers and is sometimes referred to as "Velcro Beach" because boaters often "stick around" instead of continuing on their journeys.

We called the marina on the radio and they told us we would be in the same slip we were the last time we were here. That was three years ago. They must have us in their computer system.

We backed into our slip with the assistance of three competent dock hands, got tied up and plugged in and the K-9 was ready for a walk. The grounds here are beautifully landscaped and apparently there are a lot of interesting smells as well (things that dogs can smell but humans cannot smell).



The well-traveled Sea Dog at the Vero Beach Marina

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

We went to the office to check in and pay and the pup got a dog biscuit and petted. She entertained the staff by throwing the dog biscuit around. Then she ate it.

We walked back to the boat to cover up and put things away because it started to rain. We also folded up the bimini top because high winds are predicted for tonight and tomorrow.



HIGH COTTON tucked into her slip at the Vero Beach Marina

The rain slowed down so we (the humans) took turns walking to the showers. The heads and showers here are nice and kept clean. After that we rested a bit and then walked the ship's puppy again. She likes puddles and walked through every one she found. She took us for an extended tour of the grounds, stopping to sniff something every few seconds. She had to get dried off when she got back to the boat.

We put our raincoats on and took the fifteen minute walk to the closest restaurant for our meal of the day. Captain Ron had been "hankering" for steamed, spiced shrimp so that's what we had.

Back at the boat, it was another walk for the hound. She either finds this marina fascinating or she has some excess energy she wants to burn because it was an extended tour again.

Captain Ron watched a crime show on TV while Patti and the pooch napped. Then it was yet another long dog walk around the marina grounds. She spied a rabbit and thought she should chase it. We didn't let her, though. (Kiki writes: "It's fun to chase bunny rabbits. I don't know why Mawmaw wouldn't let me chase it.") This time, she had to get rinsed and dried before she got back on the boat. She should sleep well tonight.

We are staying put here at least through Sunday night. Supposedly, there will be a lot of rain and flooding here tomorrow. Of course, in a boat, flooding isn't a big concern. We can stay inside if we have to and eat "boat food".

Captain's Log, day nineteen (June 4, 2022)

The rain started sometime after midnight. Kiki scratched on the door to go out to pee, but when she saw the rain she changed her mind and came back in. The rain slacked off about 8:00 AM so Patti got dressed, put on her rain gear and took the pooch for a walk. She spied another rabbit (or maybe the same rabbit as last night) and again tried to chase it. Again, Patti wouldn't let her.

Since we are staying in port today, Patti cooked a full breakfast for the crew, scrapple and grits for Captain Ron and eggs and sausage for her and the four footed crew.

Captain Ron decided that this would be a good time to lubricate the squeaking and hard to pump head (toilet), but he had to get his tools and supplies out of the lazarette and got wet doing so. It was a quick and simple job to remove the plunger and lubricate the cylinder and "O"-ring. After he finished, Patti decided to clean the boat (Vacuum and mop the inside, not wash the outside). By this time the rain had stopped so Captain Ron took the ship's puppy for a walk. She

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

looked for the rabbit, of course, and then found some nice puddles to walk through. She and Captain Ron went in the captain's lounge to see what was on TV but they found nothing. Back outside, some boaters petted the puppy.

About this time, Patti was finished and walked toward the lounge. Kiki saw her so we all went for another walk and the hound walked through some more puddles. Again, she had to get rinsed and dried before getting back inside the boat.

We walked back to HIGH COTTON where lunch was cheese and apple slices. The rains stopped and the skies cleared. It was windy, but nothing like what had been predicted. Captain Ron fell asleep watching TV while Patti napped in the saloon. The Sea Dog napped as well.

We were walking the hound again (she seems to really like walking around this marina) when we saw a very large boat heading for the fuel dock next to our boat. The marina staff had left for the day so we caught their lines and helped them dock their boat.

Dinner was leftovers from the restaurant in Eau Gallie. After dinner, the humans took turns showering.

We have another day in port tomorrow but it's time to hit the sack tonight.

Captain's Log, day twenty (June 5, 2022)

We had no reason to get up early this morning but our "big boat" neighbors fired up their engines at about 7:30 AM. Actually, it was Captain Ron who was trying to sleep late; Patti and the puppy had already gotten dressed and gone for their morning walk. The Sea Dog found the rabbit again and attempted to chase it.

The "big boat" was ready to leave just before 8:00 AM so we helped them with their lines. This boat was nearly seventy feet long and based on listings we have seen, was probably worth about four million dollars! HIGH COTTON, on the other hand is twenty eight feet long and worth a small fraction of that amount.



Our "big boat" neighbors leaving the marina

There were two servings of grits left over from yesterday's breakfast so Patti cooked up some eggs to go with them and we had a real breakfast again this morning. We will be underway tomorrow so we won't have that luxury for a while.

We decided to walk to the "beach" part of Vero Beach. Not only is there a nice sandy beach along the coast, there are shops and restaurants along with hotels and such. Again Patti found some things she really needed and again, Captain Ron did not.

We debated where to eat our meal for the day but ended up at a small Italian restaurant where we have eaten every time we have stopped in Vero Beach. We stopped along the beach but we hadn't brought swimwear so we didn't walk down the steps to the beach or go in the water. It was a beautiful day and the beach was pretty crowded.

The walk from the marina to the beach area wasn't too bad, but of course, we now had to walk back.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

In total, we walked about three miles. That's not much for some folks, but it's a hike Captain Ron is not used to. He got in his "steps" today.



The humans visit the beach

Back at the boat, Patti took the Sea Dog to hunt for rabbits while Captain Ron rested and watched a couple "who done it" shows on TV.

"Dinner" was the half sandwich that Patti brought home from the restaurant. Captain Ron still has his half.

We plan on anchoring tomorrow night so Captain Ron topped off the potable water tanks so we don't run out of water. We have reservations for the next two nights after that when we will be on the Okeechobee Waterway.

We will take our showers, walk the ship's puppy again and turn in for the night.

Captain's Log, day twenty one (June 6, 2022)

Today started out great, but went seriously downhill from there. More on that later.

We woke up around 7:00 AM or so. Patti took the puppy for her customary morning stroll. She found the rabbit, but this time, the rabbit didn't run

away, it played with her by running around the kayak storage racks, keeping just ahead of the K-9.

Meanwhile, on HIGH COTTON, Captain Ron got dressed, made his morning coffee and did his engine checks. We had folded up the bimini top because of predicted high winds that never materialized so he unfolded that and set it up to keep us somewhat shaded as we travelled.

We got ourselves unplugged, untied and out of our slip a little before 8:00 AM. We saw a manatee in the lagoon as we were leaving the marina. Later, we saw dolphins and stopped so the Sea Dog could watch them. (Kiki writes: "Yes, I like to watch the big fishies and Pawpaw often stops the boat so I can watch them and talk to them.") We also saw a stingray leap out of the water.

Early in our trip, we were pretty much alone on the water but as it got later in the day, boat traffic picked up. We saw some cruising boats and again, a couple under sail. Unlike much of the ICW, the Indian River is very wide and good for sailing.

We passed through Ft. Pierce without stopping. We have stopped there before and enjoy the town and the Saturday morning flea market, but it wasn't Saturday morning and we had only been underway for a couple of hours and wanted to make a little more distance today.

Instead, we continued south on the ICW until we got to the St. Lucie River, the start (or end, depending on your perspective) of the Okeechobee Waterway that crosses Florida from the Atlantic Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico.

Our plan was to go up the St. Lucie River to an anchorage just past Stuart Florida and anchor for the night.

Well there are three bridges in close proximity to each other. A high rise bridge, which is no concern

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

to HIGH COTTON, a very low railroad bridge that is kept open for boat traffic unless a train is coming and a low road bridge that HIGH COTTON cannot pass under unless it is opened.

The road bridge used to open on request, but apparently now, it only opens on the hour and half hour. We got there at about 1:10 PM so we had a twenty minute wait. While we were waiting, a train came along so that bridge went down and we ended up waiting a while longer for the train bridge to open and the road bridge to open.



Waiting for the train to pass



Now, to pass through the bridges

Our anchorage was a mile or so past the bridge so we headed for it, found a decent spot among the boats already anchored there and “dropped the hook” (a cruiser’s term for deploying the anchor

and backing down on it to make sure it has a good grip on the bottom).

One of our cruising resources said that there was a small park nearby with a very small beach area and a dock. We asked the ship’s puppy if she wanted to ride to the beach in the dinghy. She thought about this for about one nanosecond and said she did.

Captain Ron got the dinghy (HIGH COTTON’s dinghy is named “Q-Tip”) off the bow and into the water and installed the electric outboard motor. We all piled in and off we went.

We got to the park and Patti let the Sea Dog out of her life vest. She jumped out of the dinghy and into the water and began swimming back and forth along the beach. Then she dug holes in the sand. She swam some more and then Patti walked her up into the park area where she saw some Gopher Tortoises walking across the path. She wanted to chase them but Mawmaw held her back.



The ship's puppy goes for a swim

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



One of the Gopher Tortoises in the park



HIGH COTTON at anchor near Stuart, FL

Eventually, we headed back to HIGH COTTON where we took the motor off the dinghy but left it tied behind the boat so we could open the hatch above the V-berth and get a cool breeze at night. This is where things began to go downhill.

We turned on the TV and saw reports of storms and possible tornados but everything appeared to be several miles north of us. Then the skies darkened, the wind began to blow and it began to rain. Captain Ron went down and closed the hatch, but did not latch it. Big mistake! We had to close all the windows and the door because of the heavy rain. Then, there was thunder and lightning. Loud thunder and very close lightning. Although it was still afternoon, we couldn't see anything around us for the rain and dark skies.

All of a sudden we heard a big gust of wind and a loud crash. It sounded like the noise was from the flybridge (the bimini top was still up) until Captain Ron noticed the center part of the windshield was broken.

The unlatched hatch had blown open, broken the stops and blown back into the windshield, breaking it. Fortunately, it is laminated safety glass so it is still intact, just broken.

Of course, this all meant that we had a two foot square hole in the roof over our bed in a downpour so Captain Ron hopped up on the bed, stuck his body through the hole and pulled the hatch closed. Of course, he was now soaking wet as was the bed and bedding.

The storm seemed to stay right over us for about two hours. Once the rain stopped we went to the flybridge to assess the damage. The ends of the frame had come loose, allowing the whole thing to blow apart. There wasn't much we could do in the dark so we secured it as best we could.

Now we faced trying to sleep in a soaking wet bed. Patti got a dry beach towel to put on Captain Ron's side of the bed and she slept on the lounge in the saloon with the puppy. Oddly enough, the Sea Dog, who usually gets upset by storms didn't seem phased by all of this and probably took it better than the humans.

BTW: It was about 10:30 PM by the time we got to bed and Patti heard fire truck sirens and saw the trucks and smoke at a luxurious house on the shore near where we were anchored. Captain Ron got up at about 1:30 AM to use the head and looked out the window to see the house fully on fire with flames coming out of the top. The fire continued to burn until 3:00 AM or so. Somebody's day was far worse than ours.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



Not a good night for one homeowner

Captain's Log, day twenty two (June 7, 2022)

Sleeping in a wet bed wasn't all that pleasant for Captain Ron, but he did sleep. The rest of the crew probably did better.

We got up, got dressed and did the engine checks. Captain Ron got the bimini frame to where it wouldn't interfere with driving the boat, but of course, it wasn't going to provide any shade for us today.

Now, we were faced with the task of getting the dinghy back onto the bow of the boat. Usually, that's not too difficult (it weighs about 75 pounds), but today it had about four inches of water in it (yes it rained that much). We tried to tilt it so it would drain, but we couldn't even do that. We pulled it back to the swim platform where Captain Ron bailed it out with a bucket. Eventually we got it up onto the bow and secured.

As we were pulling the anchor up, there was a lot of mud on the chain. Captain Ron unscrewed the cover of the washdown hose and discovered that it was broken in two. He did the best he could by raising and lowering the chain to get the mud off.

We continued up the St. Lucie River and into the St. Lucie Canal. We had one lock to go through to raise us about fourteen feet. There will be another lock tomorrow that may raise us a bit more, depending on the level of Lake Okeechobee.

There were three east bound boats already locking through when we got to the St. Lucie lock so we had to wait for them to be lowered before we could enter the lock.

Once the east bound boats were clear, we entered the lock along with a sailboat and were raised up. Between the wait and our actual locking, we spent an hour or so.



Waiting for the St. Lucie Lock to open



"Wildlife on the St. Lucie Canal

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

It was another hour and a half or so to Indiantown Marina in (you guessed it) Indiantown Florida. We were given a slip assignment by the marina, but no assistance. Fortunately, a guy on a nearby boat came over and helped. Most boaters are like that. We usually help others when we get the chance.

We went to the office to check in and pay, but boaters are no longer allowed in the office. Business is conducted through a jalousie window.

After driving in the Florida sun all morning, Captain Ron was in no mood to start fixing things, but realized that they weren't going to fix themselves.

He got out his handy allen wrench set and began to work on the bimini top. He was able to reattach the ends to the poles. He had feared that the canvas would be ripped, but it turns out that the zippers that hold the canvas to the frame had merely come unzipped so it was just a matter of placing the pockets around the frame and zipping them up. He looked at the hatch and there are a couple of broken plastic pieces, but it looks like it can be salvaged. The dinghy would have to be moved so he decided to leave this for another day.



The cracked windshield

Now, nothing to do with last night's fiasco, but it was time to install the pump that he bought at west Marine in Palm Coast. This meant getting out all the tools.

Captain Ron has tackled this job before and has come to the conclusion (please pardon the lack of "political correctness" here) that boats are assembled by left handed midgets! It's great that they can manage to cram all these systems into such a small space, but it certainly does make repair or replacement a real task.

Anyway, after several work breaks, the pump got installed and the tools put away.

During all this time, Patti was washing and drying clothes and bedding and walking the Sea Dog around the marina grounds. Unlike some marinas, this one is also a boat yard with a lot of gravel and stored boats. There is grass though. And lizards. Lots of lizards. Big lizards, small lizards, multi-colored lizards and lizards with curly tails. The ship's puppy had a good time chasing them. There is also a resident alligator but of course, we kept the puppy away from it.

We took showers, changed into clean clothes and walked the mile or so into town. The name of the town is "Indiantown", but by the looks of things it should be called "Mexicantown" because that is all we saw. We had dinner at a nice Mexican (what else) restaurant that we ate at the last time we were here. The other choices were BBQ or Burger King.



Indiantown, Florida

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



Patti's burrito dinner



Captain Ron had the tacos

Of course, it was a mile long walk back to the boat but we stopped for a few minutes to talk to one of the local residents.

The air conditioning and V-berth fan have been running since we got here and the sheets have been laundered so hopefully the bed is dry for now. Tomorrow we cross the lake.

Captain's Log, day twenty three (June 8, 2022)

We slept much better last night on clean dry bedding. We didn't want to get up and leave, but leave we must. We had reservations on the other side of Lake Okeechobee at Roland Martin's Marina in Clewiston, FL.

We rolled out of bed, got dressed, walked the hound and got out of the marina a little after 7:00 AM. It took us a little over an hour to get to the Port Mayaca Lock and we saw a couple of alligators and a bald eagle along the way. The lockmaster didn't say anything, but it appears we were lowered about a foot to the lake level.



The St. Lucie Canal



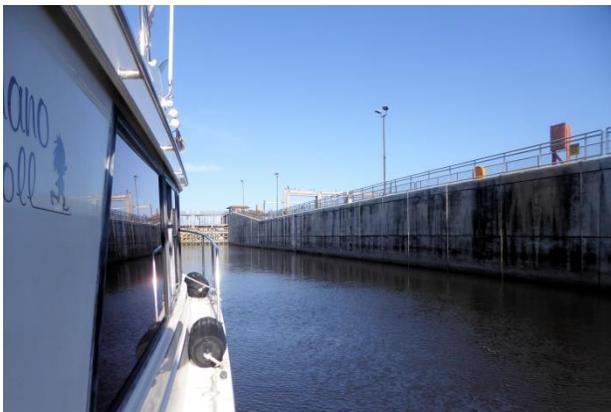
A bald eagle watching over boat traffic on the St. Lucie Canal

It took us nearly four hours to cross the lake. It's a very big lake. We passed a few cruising boats going the other way and one large center console fishing boat passed us going our direction but way faster than we were going. He was soon out of sight.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



A railroad lift bridge on the Okeechobee Waterway



HIGH COTTON in the Port Mayaca Lock

We pulled up to the dock at Roland Martin's marina where we took on sixty eight gallons of diesel fuel at the "bargain" price of \$5.98 per gallon. The last load of fuel we bought was \$6.59 per gallon.

Once we finished fueling, we just pulled the boat up the dock and out of the way of the fuel pumps. The dockmaster said there was plenty of space tonight. The dockmaster is the famous "Captain Sam" who is eighty two years old and still docking boats and pumping fuel.

We walked to the office where we paid for our fuel and slip for the night. Kiki got some dog treats and everybody petted her.

We led the ship's puppy on a lizard hunt and went to the Tiki bar for lunch. The hostess said we would have to sit outside in the sun with the pooch so we took her back to the air conditioned boat and went back to the Tiki bar where we were now allowed to sit inside. No air conditioning, it was all open but there were fans and a roof to block the sun.

We had a nice and relatively inexpensive (for a change) early afternoon meal and walked back to the boat.

The skies darkened and it began to thunder, Kiki does not like the thunder. Then it began to rain, but just light rain, not a "storm". Eventually, of course, it stopped raining and we took her for another walk. This marina also owns and rents cottages, trailers and condos and the hound walked us around all of them, trying to avoid going back to the boat.

The showers here are a bit "rustic" and not air conditioned, but in a pinch, they will do. We won't have showers tomorrow unless we take them on the boat so we took turns showering. It turns out there is plenty of hot water and plenty of pressure. Since the wind and rain cooled things down earlier, the lack of air conditioning is not a problem.

Captain's Log, day twenty four (June 9, 2022)

We checked the weather forecast for today's destination, Labelle, FL and the prediction was for rain starting around noon so we needed an early start. We woke up at about 6:30 AM and started getting ready. Patti got everything on the flybridge uncovered and ready while Captain Ron made his morning coffee and checked the oil and coolant in the engine. Patti took the puppy for a walk and she went in the office to say goodbye. She got petted and got dog treats. She knows how to work

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

these marina people! (Kiki writes: *“Every business should welcome doggies and have treats available. We bring our humans in and they spend money.”*)

Back at HIGH COTTON, we disconnected the shorepower cable and untied the lines. The portion of the marina for larger boats is just a long floating dock on a canal that leads to nowhere so the choice is to turn around or back out to a wider space and turn around. Captain Ron wasn't confident that the canal was wide enough to turn around in so he backed the boat out to the turning basin.

We took the canal back out to the Okeechobee Waterway and turned to port. We were still in a canal that parallels the lake for several miles. We saw a dozen or so alligators, but like the other day, all were camera shy. Or boat shy. As we would get close, they would dive underwater.

After about an hour, we took another turn to port and entered the More Haven Lock where we were dropped about two feet. There was no other traffic and the lock was already at our level so this was a quick and easy process.

We were now in the Caloosahatchee Canal. We passed through an open railroad bridge and under a high rise highway bridge and through the small town of More Haven. The scenery went from small town to farmland to natural. We passed what we believed to be sugar cane fields stretching as far as we could see.

Eventually, we began to see houses and civilization again. Then came the Ortona Lock. We were not so lucky with this one.

We arrived as another boat was being locked west bound. We had to wait for that boat to be lowered and exit the lock. Next, we had to wait for two eastbound boats to enter, tie up and be lifted to our level. Finally, it was our turn to enter the lock,

tie up and be lowered eight feet. Between the waiting and the actual locking, we spent about an hour at the Ortona Lock.



Waiting for the lock



More “wildlife” on the Okeechobee Waterway

We didn't have that far to go to get to Labelle, but the skies darkened and it began to rain. We did our “rain drill” where Patti takes the wheel, Captain Ron takes the Sea Dog down and takes over at the lower helm. Then Patti covers everything on the flybridge and joins the rest of the crew below.

The rain slacked off to a light drizzle just as we were approaching Labelle so Captain Ron returned to the flybridge while Patti got the lines ready.

The city of Labelle provides dockage for about five boats free of charge (including electrical power),

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

but of course it is “first come, first served” and “self-service” (no dockhands).

There were two vacant slips when we got there so Captain Ron picked one and backed HIGH COTTON between the pilings while Patti slipped the dock lines over them. A fellow boater took our stern lines and tied them on the cleats.

About the time we got tied up and set up a spring line to keep us from bumping into the dock, the rain started coming down in buckets. Captain Ron donned his rain gear and climbed onto the dock to connect the shorepower cord.

The first outlet he tried did not work so he tried another. It didn't work either (it was pouring down rain during this fiasco). Finally, the third outlet he tried worked and we could turn on the air conditioning.



HIGH COTTON at the Labelle City Docks

We couldn't walk the K-9, of course so we ate leftovers for lunch.

Once the rain let up, we hooked the leash to the puppy, climbed up onto the dock and took her to do her business. The city docks are in a nice city park so after she took care of business, she explored the park, walking through every puddle she could find.



The ship's puppy finds a nice puddle to sit in

Back on the boat, the humans did “boat chores” while the ship's puppy rested from her hard day's work of watching for big fishies and small approaching boats and jet skis.

We (the humans) changed our clothes and walked to a restaurant a few blocks from the docks. It's the same place we ate when we were here a few years ago and is very good. Patti had the ribeye and Captain Ron had the salmon. We brought home leftovers.

We took the hound for another walk and she took us the long way along the waterfront and around the park. Again, she walked through every puddle she could find. (Kiki writes: *“I like puddles. They are cool and help me to cool off. It's fun to walk through them.”*)

There will be no showers tonight unless we stand on the dock in the rain (not likely), but tomorrow and the next day we have reservations at a very nice marina in Ft. Myers with nice showers and a beautiful pool. Let's hope it doesn't rain. Also, the marina is just a few blocks from a Publix grocery store and a CVS drug store so we can restock things we need. It's also just a few blocks from the downtown business district with many shops and restaurants.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain's Log, day twenty five (June 10, 2022)

We hadn't intended to get up early this morning, but apparently, an alarm set on a smart phone can be configured to sound on the same day every week. That was not Patti's intention when she set the alarm last Friday for 5:45 AM, but that's apparently what she did. We tried going back to sleep but that didn't work so we got up and began our preparations to get underway.

The ship's puppy got her walk, Captain Ron did the engine checks and we left the dock at about 7:00 AM. Another trawler left minutes before us but they were headed the other direction. We passed some beautiful homes along the river front with beautiful landscaping and manicured lawns.

We had to have one swing bridge opened for us today and pass through one lock. Captain Ron remembered that the swing bridge was slow to open so he radioed well in advance of us arriving at the bridge. Still, the bridge tender waited until we were almost there to begin her walk to the center of the bridge to open it. We had to stop and wait for it to open.

We got to the lock (the last one on the Okeechobee Waterway) and had a short wait while an eastbound boat finished locking through. Then it was our turn and we were lowered two feet back to sea level. We were now in the Caloosahatchee River which empties into the Gulf of Mexico.

As we came within sight of Ft. Myers, we came across a pod of dolphins. Today, they decided to swim along with us in our wake. There were dolphins on each side of the boat. The Sea Dog, of course, loved this and went back and forth from one side of the boat to the other, watching them and talking to them. This went on for ten minutes or so until they apparently got tired of this and went back to doing dolphin things. (Kiki writes: "I

love to see the big fishies, especially when they swim along with the boat. I wish they would do this every day.")

About the time the dolphins called it quits, it began to rain. There was little warning, it just started coming down. We did the "rain drill" and ran the boat from the lower helm for a while. The windshield wipers were not doing a very good job of clearing the glass, perhaps we need new blades. One more thing for Captain Ron to work on. It wasn't long before the rain stopped and we were able to return to the flybridge.



Approaching Ft. Myers, FL

As we approached the Legacy Harbor Marina, we called them on the radio. We got a loud buzz in return. We called again with the same result. Captain Ron replied that all we were getting was a loud buzz. Then, we got a proper answer. Apparently one of their radios is broken and they switched to another one.

We received directions to our slip, proceeded into the marina basin and docked with the assistance of two dockhands.

We got the power connected so the air conditioning would work and took the K-9 to shore for relief. Once she was done, she figured out where the office was and headed for it, expecting a treat. She walked in, walked around the counter to

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

the office lady and patiently waited for her treat. Meanwhile, Captain Ron signed in on their “newfangled” tablet with a docking keyboard that the lady was having a hard time with.



Legacy Harbour Marina

Once we were signed in and paid, we walked some more and returned to HIGH COTTON which was beginning to cool down. We decided to change into our swimwear and take a dip in the pool. It's a lovely pool and just the right temperature. We had it to ourselves.



Howdy from Legacy Harbour Marina, Ft. Myers, FL

Once we finished in the pool, we returned to HIGH COTTON, got dressed, ate lunch and walked to the Publix for food and supplies. We will go again before we leave here for last minute things.



Captain Ron pushes the "granny cart" with needed supplies

Patti put things away and then called around and made arrangements for a manicure and pedicure. It was a short walk so off she went. Captain Ron took the pooch for another walk and she mooched another treat from the dockmaster.

Patti returned from the nail salon all clipped and polished, but later than we had expected so instead of heating our leftovers for dinner, we had an apple and slices of cheese. And since we had been in the pool, we skipped the showers.

Kiki had another walk and we're all ready for bed.



View of the marina from the Captain's Lounge

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain's Log, day twenty six (June 11, 2022)

We forgot to let the Sea Dog know we were staying here today so she was up early and ready for a boat ride. Patti got up, got dressed and took her for her morning constitutional while Captain Ron rolled over and went back to sleep.

Patti and the pup returned and eventually, Captain Ron got up and got dressed. There is free coffee in the office (well, it's included in the slip fee) so we all went. Kiki got a treat and Captain Ron eventually got his coffee from the cantankerous machine. We walked back to the boat and the humans walked across the street to the breakfast/donut restaurant where for fifteen dollars, we bought six donuts and brought them back to the boat.

We mentioned running in the rain a couple times lately. Well the windshield wipers have not been working well and it's been difficult to see so after our delicious and nutritious breakfast of donuts, Captain Ron decided it was time to investigate.

Well. It turns out that the rubber blades were fine, but the metal arms were rusted and the parts that are supposed to move to put even pressure on the glass were no longer moveable. It was time for new wiper blades.

There is an auto parts store just under a mile from the marina and we wanted to check out the shops in town and have lunch so we put on our walking shoes, tied our raincoats around our waists and set out for the store. We made a wrong turn and had to back track a few blocks, but eventually made it to the store and for a mere seventy some dollars, bought three new wiper blades and a soda to drink on the way to town.

Walking to the auto parts store took us closer to the historic part of Ft. Myers, but we still had to walk an extra half mile or so to get there.

We went to a restaurant that specializes in lobster rolls and that's what Captain Ron ordered. Patti had a hot dog and french fries. As we sat eating our lunch, it began to rain, but by the time we finished, the rain had stopped.

We considered checking out the shops, but looking at the darkening skies, we decided to head back to the boat instead. Just as we neared the marina it started to rain so we put on our raincoats and finished walking to the boat. Kiki was glad to see us. (Kiki writes: *"I don't like it when Mawmaw and Pawpaw leave me alone on the boat and it starts raining. Rain scares me, especially when there's thunder and lightning."*)

One of the windshield wipers (the one on the port side that we don't usually need to use) wasn't working at all and would trip the circuit breaker if left on. Captain Ron disassembled the gearbox so he could free up the shaft and attempt to spray lubricant inside. He got it free enough that the motor would turn it without tripping the breaker.

He was able to replace two of the wiper blades, but the third one was defective and wouldn't stay attached. This means there will be another mile walk tomorrow to return it and exchange it for a (hopefully) good one. Captain Ron is thinking that it would be a better plan to work on things like this at home and not when cruising and without a vehicle.

We settled on some watermelon from yesterday's Publix shopping trip for dinner. Our leftovers will keep for another day. Patti went to take her shower and the ship's puppy wanted to go for a walk so Captain Ron took her. Actually, she gets frightened when it rains and wants to go somewhere, anywhere.

We met up with Patti as she was returning to the boat and we all got back on. Captain Ron went to

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

take his shower. Unfortunately, it started raining hard about the time he was finished so he got a second shower walking back to the boat.

We will extend our stay through tomorrow so we can do some laundry, exchange the defective windshield wiper, check out the shops in town and hopefully, get some more pool time. Then we will head west and north up the Gulf Coast of Florida.

Captain's Log, day twenty seven (June 12, 2022)

Today was a day in port so there's not much to write about. As has been the case lately, Patti woke up first, leaving Captain Ron and the Sea Dog to sleep in. She gathered up the dirty clothes and took them to the laundry room.

Once they got up and dressed the entire crew went to the office. We paid for an extra day (today), Kiki got a treat and once again, Captain Ron had to fight the coffee machine to get his free morning coffee.

The ship's puppy led us around the grounds, sniffing and inspecting things and then we headed back to HIGH COTTON where we finished off our donuts from yesterday.

We waited for the clothes to finish in the washer and the dryer and then Captain Ron gathered up his defective windshield wiper blade and receipt and we headed off to the auto parts store for an exchange. The K-9 stayed behind.

The guy at the auto parts store told us to just grab another wiper blade, but there were none left of that size. Captain Ron explained to the guy that we were on a boat and had no transportation and asked if he could take the connecting part from another sized blade. Surprisingly, he agreed, so we

left with what we hoped would be a functional, correct size wiper blade.

From the auto parts store, we again walked to the town's historic district where there are shops and restaurants on both sides of the main street for several blocks. The city has installed beautiful landscaping and artwork along this street and the businesses and restaurants seemed to be doing quite well.



Downtown Ft. Myers, FL

We stopped by "Widman Way", a street named after a Ft. Myers police officer who was killed in the line of duty a few years back. Captain Ron doesn't know if there is any relation to him.



Widman Way, Ft. Myers, FL

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

We went into several shops and Patti, as usual, found some things she really needed. As usual, Captain Ron did not. He did have his wiper blade though, a can of spray "Rain-X" and a bag of microfiber towels.

We checked the menus at every restaurant along the street and settled on BBQ. Patti had the brisket plate and Captain Ron had pulled pork and sausage. We both had extra for another meal.

Once we returned to the boat, Patti took the hound for another walk and Captain Ron installed his windshield wiper blade. It seemed to fit. Then he began working on our itinerary for the next few days. Tomorrow we will anchor at a Florida State Park and we have a reservation for Tuesday night in Punta Gorda, FL. He called three marinas for Wednesday night but two were fully booked and the third did not return his call. We can anchor again if we can't get a slip.

Kiki had another tour of the marina grounds and played in all the puddles. She also entertained the night security guard and the group of pre-teen girls who apparently live with their families at the marina.

Patti took her shower, followed by Captain Ron. It's time for bed; tomorrow will be a boating day.

Captain's Log, day twenty eight (June 13, 2022)

Flexibility is a must when boating; there is no doubt about it. We finished up yesterday with "It's time for bed; tomorrow will be a boating day." Here's what actually happened:

Captain Ron went to bed about 9:00 PM. Patti took Kiki for a walk and she had diarrhea and seemed to be straining to have a solid bowel

movement. Patti wiped her butt and they both came to bed.

About 10:00 PM or so, Captain Ron woke up with severe acid reflux. His throat was burning and he couldn't lie back down. He tried propping himself up in the bed to sleep but this wasn't working.

Then Kiki started throwing up. Patti grabbed her and got her off the bed and onto the floor before she actually threw up. Between the fact that she had been having diarrhea on and off for the past couple of days and the fact that we were scheduled to leave the next day and be anchored with no access to a veterinarian, we decided that she needed to be seen by a vet as soon as possible.

Patti called the closest all night vet, but they didn't have a doctor on duty so they referred us to another one further away. She heard boaters on the dock so she went out and asked them if Uber was available in this area. One of the boaters offered to drive us to the emergency veterinarian facility.

We got the pup's harness on her and headed for the vet. We had been advised that this could take three to four hours so the boater dropped us off and said to call him when we were finished.

So, to make a long story short, for just a bit less than Captain Ron paid for his first brand new car, the ship's puppy got a battery of tests including X-rays. The diagnosis was pancreatitis, something that she has had in the past. She was given medicine and sent home.

It was about 5:00 AM when we called the boater to come and get us. He did and we were back on board and very tired by 6:00 AM or so. Our benefactor, Brent, wouldn't even accept gas money. What we didn't realize until today is, he and his family are well known boating cruisers and writers with a website, www.MomWithAMap.com.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

They have done the Great Loop and have been at this marina for eight months. Today was their scheduled day to leave for more adventures. They will probably not see this, but we want to thank them immensely. Hopefully we can help out another boater someday to pay their kindness forward.

Captain Ron slept in until about 10:00 AM. He didn't even get coffee when he got up. Patti walked to Publix to get some chicken breasts to poach and mix with rice as recommended for Kiki by her doctor. She liked the chicken but was not happy having to take medicine orally.

Patti warmed up our leftover BBQ for lunch, but we weren't really in the mood for that so most of it went back in the refrigerator.

We walked the reluctant puppy and then went to the office to pay for today. Kiki got a treat and ate it so she must be feeling better. Captain Ron fought with the coffee machine again but this time one of the office people came to his rescue and he got a cup. The Sea Dog found a nice cool spot on the tiled floor and was really enjoying it when it was time to go back to the boat. Patti carried her.

Our new found friends were finally ready to cast off (their plan had been 10:00 AM and it was now 4:00 PM) so we walked over to say goodbye and thank them again for their generous help.

Dinner tonight was leftover steak (for Patti) and salmon (for Captain Ron), accompanied by buttered noodles and creamed spinach. Even boiling noodles heats up the boat when it's ninety nine degrees outside.

We walked the ship's puppy around the marina grounds (actually, she walked us), returned to the boat and it's time for bed. That lack of sleep last night is catching up with us.

Our plan is to stay put here for one more day to make sure the K-9 is responding to treatment.



The sun sets over the Caloosahatchee River

Captain's Log, day twenty nine (June 14, 2022)

Captain Ron is still trying to make up for his lost sleep so he slept in until 9:00 AM or so. The rest of the crew got up earlier and went for a walk. Once Captain Ron was up and dressed everyone walked to the office. Kiki got her treat (they have a rule here, one treat per day) and Captain Ron got his coffee (again with some difficulty). We paid for one more day, talked to the staff about marinas along our proposed route and left.

Patti suggested that we walk to the donut shop and get more donuts so we did. We walked back to the boat and enjoyed our "breakfast of champions (donuts).

Captain Ron began working on our destinations for the next few days, a task complicated by the fact that not all of the marinas have vacancies when we plan to be there. Patti decided that she would like to walk back to town and do some more shopping. Captain Ron decided to stay with the ship's puppy and work on our plans.

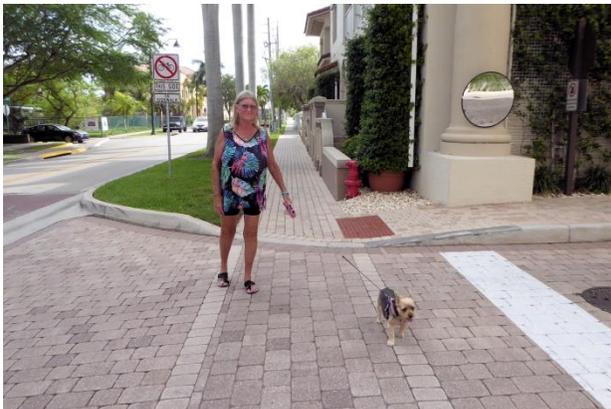
The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Eventually, Patti called and said she was at a “deli” and wanted to know if Captain Ron wanted a sandwich. He replied that he would like a pastrami sandwich. It seems this “deli” does not offer pastrami. Captain Ron settled on roast beef.

Patti returned with lunch and we dined on HIGH COTTON. It was early afternoon by this time so once we finished lunch we changed into our swimwear and headed for the pool. Once we got in, we began talking to another couple about boating destinations and got some good suggestions from them.

After they left, we found some pool toys and floated around in the pool until the sun went behind a cloud. That was our signal to leave.

Back at the boat, we got changed into our street clothes and took the K-9 for a walk. She walked us almost to the grocery store before we turned her around facing the other direction.



Patti walks the ship's puppy

Back at the boat, Captain Ron got out the dedicated drinking water hose and filled HIGH COTTON's two water tanks. It's been several days since he filled them and running out of water is not something we want to do.

We had sliced apples and cheese for our evening meal and took turns walking to the marina

showers. We love everything about this marina except for the showers. They are modern and clean, no complaint there, but the shower heads are the new, “low flow” type. Regardless of what the government says, 1.2 gallons per minute does not produce an adequate shower.

Captain Ron transferred the routes for the next three days to the chart plotter. Our trip tomorrow should take between six and seven hours so we plan on getting an early start.

Captain's Log, day thirty (June 15, 2022)

Our plan was to get an early start today to beat the worst of the heat. With an alarm set for 6:00 AM, we got dressed, walked the hound, did our engine checks, uncovered the flybridge and were out of the slip by 6:45 AM.

Fort Myers isn't really at the end of the Okeechobee Waterway; we still had an hour or so until we reached the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GICW). There is a section often called the “miserable mile”, where there is a “minimum wake” restriction and usually a lot of boat traffic. Since it was about 7:45 AM when we got there, there wasn't a lot of boat traffic, but there were several boats heading in both directions.

From the west end of the miserable mile, channels branch off north and south, as well as continuing the GICW and most of the other boats went off to the north and south while we continued west. Eventually of course, the GICW channel turned to the north as we headed towards our goal of Tarpon Springs. We passed Cabbage Key, the northern most point of our previous west Florida cruise.

Because of the confusion of what day we were to actually leave Ft. Myers and the fact that several of the marinas we called were either booked or failed

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

to call us back, we ended up with a slip at Burnt Store Marina, a place we had heard of but never been. Actually, we have never been this far north on Florida's west coast so every marina we stay at will be a place we have never been.

Unfortunately, Burnt Store marina is about nine miles off the GICW so that's close to an hour and a half out of the way. And of course, another extra hour and a half tomorrow when we head back to the GICW.

Burnt Store Marina is actually a very large marina nestled in a large condo complex. There was a bit of confusion when the lady on the radio said we would have a "lateral" tie up. This turned out to be what we would have called a "side tie", and we got tied up and settled in without difficulty once we saw where we were to dock.



HIGH COTTON at Burnt Store Marina

The first thing we saw when we got off the boat was a large sign saying "NO DOGS ALLOWED". Fortunately, the sign was on one of the condo lawns and the restriction did not apply to the marina itself. Kiki was welcomed into the office, petted and given a dog treat.

We walked the puppy for a while, got menus from the restaurant and deli and walked back to the boat. There is apparently a pool, but they drive

you to it and pick you up when you're through so we didn't bother.

We walked the puppy again and sat and talked with some of the other boaters for a while.

While walking past the restaurant, we smelled hamburgers cooking so that's what we decided to have for dinner. Neither of us could handle an eight ounce hamburger so we have leftovers again. There was "live music" on the deck of the restaurant but we were not impressed. We ate inside in the air conditioning.

We took turns walking to the showers. They were not nearly as nice as the ones at Legacy Harbor, but they did have good water volume and pressure.

Tomorrow, we will leave early again for what should be a five hour boat ride.

Captain's Log, day thirty one (June 16, 2022)

We set the alarm for 6:00 AM. Patti woke up a bit early and got dressed and went to the head. When the alarm sounded, the K-9 knew it was time to get up. Captain Ron got up and shut off the alarm. He got dressed, made his coffee and checked the oil and coolant level in the engine. We knew before we started our trip that the engine's coolant circulating pump had a slow leak. We couldn't arrange to get it fixed before we left so our plan was to place a container under the front of the engine to catch the drips and just top off the coolant level as necessary.

At the beginning of the trip, Captain Ron had to add a few ounces of coolant every couple days. For some reason, the leak seems to have stopped and he hasn't had to add coolant for more than a week. Go figure! And knock on wood!

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

We were ready to depart a little after 6:30 AM so off we went, back the way we came. It was another hour and a half before we were back on the Gulf ICW. So an hour and a half out of the way and another hour and a half is three hours. That translates into about six gallons of diesel fuel at \$6.59 per gallon so that is almost \$40 that he should have spent to stay at a more expensive marina that wasn't out of the way. "Live and learn", they all say, but one would think that as many years as Captain Ron has lived, he should have learned just about everything by now!

We travelled for a little over five hours and saw lots of small boats, but no cruising sized boats. We saw a few dolphins and Kiki saw some of them. She tried to get them to swim with the boat but they were apparently too busy doing dolphin things. (Kiki writes: *"I don't know why the big fishies wouldn't swim with the boat today. I'll bet it's fun for them and I like to watch them and talk to them."*)



The ship's puppy takes a break from her watch duties

Much of our trip was just a short distance from the Gulf of Mexico and there were many fine homes with a view of the Gulf out the front windows and the GICW out the back windows.

As we neared Venice, FL, we found ourselves on a canal with parks on both sides. There were walking

and bicycle trails along the canal and even a small beach with people in the water.



Two pelicans monitoring boat traffic on the GICW

We came to the Fisherman's Wharf Marina and called them on the radio for docking instructions. It turned out that we were to be on the face dock and we had already passed it so we turned around and docked with the assistance of a young lady who seemed to do it all.

We got the power connected so the air conditioning would begin to cool the boat and then walked to the office to check in and pay. The Sea Dog walked directly behind the counter to check for treats. The same lady was behind the counter and gave her a treat and fussed over her. The puppy, of course, was loving every minute of this.



Historic Venice, FL

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

We walked around the marina for a bit and then went back to the boat to cover things up and put things away. Captain Ron got on the phone trying to make arrangements for our next several days. Tomorrow is already confirmed, but when he called the St. Petersburg Municipal Marina, the lady who answered the phone said she didn't know anything about transient slips; it was all done through "Dockwa". In case we haven't mentioned it before, Dockwa is a website where boaters can request slip reservations at many, but not all marinas. The key word here is "request", because unlike the hotel booking sites, a boater can only request a reservation and then has to wait up to several hours for confirmation (or denial). This, of course, can make it very difficult to plan a trip.

Captain Ron figured out where we should be for the next few days and then called the Tarpon Springs City Marina. Unlike St. Petersburg, the person who answered the phone checked and found that a slip would be available for the days we wanted. We reserved it. Captain Ron created the routes for our destinations and transferred them to the chart plotters.

We walked back up to the office for a treat for the pup and ice cream for the humans. Of course, the ship's puppy got some of Mawmaw's ice cream anyway. Captain Ron asked the lady if there was anything worth walking to from the marina and she said that if we walked over the bridge, there was the historic downtown section of Venice with lots of shops and restaurants.

We took the hound back to the boat, changed clothes and began our walk to town. As we neared the center of the bridge, the gates went down and we had to wait for the bridge to open and let a sailboat through. Walking down the other side of the bridge we were almost run over by a guy on a bicycle riding fast on the sidewalk. The road has a

bicycle lane, but this guy thought it would be better for him to ride on the sidewalk.



The tables are turned and we wait for a boat to pass through

We stopped in several shops and as usual, Patti did her part to bolster the local economy. For the first time this trip, Captain Ron ended up with something – two souvenir T-shirts from the ten dollar store (everything in the store is priced at ten dollars).



Captain Ron chats it up with one of the locals

The "feels like" temperature this afternoon was above one hundred degrees so eventually, we were hot and tired. We found a restaurant and each had a salad and we shared a half pound of delicious spiced Gulf shrimp.

Walking back, we saw two bridges and had to figure out which one would take us back to HIGH

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

COTTON. It seems the canal makes a sharp turn near the marina so there are two bridges. We picked the correct one and made it back to the marina.

The showers here have just been renovated and are very nice, but there is only one for the men and one for the women. Patti went to take her shower but it was in use so she returned to the boat.

Captain Ron was able to take his and then Patti took hers.

Tomorrow's run should be only two hours and fifteen minutes so we will stick around here a while so as not to be too early at the next marina.



HIGH COTTON at Fisherman's Wharf Marina

Captain's Log, day thirty two (June 17, 2022)

We got a little extra sleep in this morning, but not much. By the time we were ready to go, with the engine checks and shore power disconnected, the office was open so we took the ship's puppy to say goodbye and to buy a bag of ice for the cooler. It was about 8:15 AM when we finally got off the dock and underway. By the time the engine was warmed up and we were ready to speed up to our cruising speed of seven knots, we came to a "slow speed" zone. While the other states we have boated in have either "no-wake, idle speed" zones

or no restrictions at all, Florida has the "no-wake, idle speed" zones and "slow speed, minimum wake" zones which allow for a bit more speed. They also have speed limits in some areas (we can't go that fast so the speed limits don't affect us). And to complicate matters, in many places, the ICW channel is exempt from the restrictions, but in others, it is not.

At any rate, we had to slow back down for a few miles and watch for manatees. We saw none.

We rounded a bend in the waterway and saw a low bridge that would have to be opened for HIGH COTTON to pass through. Captain Ron had neglected to research the low bridges on this route so we didn't know the bridge name to call and request an opening (Captain Ron is getting a bit lax in his old age). Fortunately, the bridge was being opened for another boat a quarter mile or so in front of us so he called and asked the bridge tender if she would hold the bridge open for us. She agreed and asked us the name of our boat. Apparently, they keep records.

Later on, we came to another bridge that we had to have opened, but Captain Ron was able to find the name in time to call it. There were a few more bridges that we were able to pass under without them being opened.

We arrived in Sarasota at Marina Jack at about 11:00 AM. We were given docking instructions and two competent dock hands met us at our slip and guided us in. This is a very big (and expensive) marina and we are one of the smallest boats here. While we were in the office checking in, a boat came in for one thousand gallons of diesel fuel. Yes, one thousand gallons. At the going rate, that is six thousand, four hundred dollars' worth of fuel!

The ship's puppy got a dog biscuit from the dockmaster and played with it before eating it.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

We walked the puppy around the marina for a few minutes and then returned to the boat to get everything “shipshape”.



HIGH COTTON takes her place among the "big boys"

We changed our clothes and walked to town. Patti had seen a restaurant menu on-line and thought that would be a good place to eat. It turns out it was, but it was also back in the park where the marina is so we ended up walking back in that direction.

After our meal, we walked back to the business district. There were a few shops and Patti did her best to find a way to support the local economy, but in the end, she found nothing. Captain Ron thought he might find an interesting book in the bookstore, but was unsuccessful.



Captain Ron waits in the "husband chair" while Patti shops

The business district seemed to be mostly bars and restaurants and we decided that we might have been a bit premature eating at the first restaurant we came to. There were a lot of interesting possibilities, but we were no longer hungry.

We walked back to the marina. Captain Ron went to the boat while Patti checked out the gift shop and then returned to the boat.

We rested for a bit and then roused the K-9 for a walk. We mentioned that this marina is in a park. Well, it's a big marina and an even bigger park. The only problem was, we had to walk a long way to get to the good part of the park on the waterfront.

Kiki found a spot where she was able to get to a very small sand beach so she jumped down and ran into the water for a swim. She snooped around on the beach for a bit and swam some more.

We walked back to the boat (the pup had to be carried part of the way) where Kiki got her usual shower before going inside the boat.

We took turns going to the showers. Unlike our last marina, there are several showers in individual rooms so either men or women can use any of them. They were clean and relatively new. Everything at this marina is first class. Each dock has a gate, operated by a key fob. You don't even have to push the gates open, they are powered and open and close by themselves.

We have reservations in St. Petersburg for the next three days so we will leave here when we get up, but not too late.

Captain's Log, day thirty three (June 18, 2022)

We got up and got ourselves dressed. It's a pretty long walk for the K-9 to reach a grassy area, but

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

she made it and took care of business. We got the boat ready for departure. There was a larger trawler docked next to us and Patti talked to the two guys on board. They said they were hoping to make it to Tarpon Springs today. They left a few minutes before we did.

We eased out of Marina Jack and headed across Sarasota Bay (actually, the length of Sarasota Bay). There were a few small boats on the water to keep us alert. We saw a sailboat in the distance and an hour or so later we caught up with it and passed it.

A couple hours into today's voyage we saw a trawler on the side of the channel near a bridge. As we got closer, we got a call from them wondering if we were the boat that was next to them at Marina Jack. We were, of course and it turned out that they needed the bridge opened and had to wait.

We did not need that bridge opened so we went on through. The bridge opened a few minutes after we passed through and our Marina Jack buddies went through and followed us for a while. They would have caught up with us but we turned towards Tampa Bay and they kept going straight towards Tarpon Springs.

We could see a cargo ship heading out from Tampa Bay and when we looked at our chart plotter screen, we could see another cargo ship heading for Tampa Bay. It was going close to three times our speed but didn't present any danger to us. The name of the cargo ship was "Del Monte" (probably a banana boat). The ship passed us shortly before we went under the Sunshine Skyway Bridge and headed for the other side of Tampa Bay from St. Petersburg.



The "banana boat" heading for Tama, FL

We continued north east and then north until it was time to head west into the marina basin.



St. Petersburg, FL from the water

We have never been to the St. Petersburg Municipal Marina before so we called on the radio for directions to the fuel dock (we needed diesel fuel). We tried several times and got no answer. Finally another boater came on the radio and told us that they never answer the radio, we might as well call them on the phone (note, this is not some small time backwoods marina, it's owned by the city and has six hundred and fifty slips).

By this time we were in the middle of the entrance to this large marina and other boats were passing us left and right while we were trying to contact the marina.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Patti went below and got Captain Ron's phone. The marina phone number wasn't in it so he had to look it up. He called and when a lady answered, he explained that we were HIGH COTTON, we had a reservation, but we needed fuel first. This seemed to confuse her so she put Captain Ron on hold. We were still drifting in the entrance channel with boats passing us on both sides.

Eventually, a young man came on the line. Captain Ron explained the situation to him and he said "just pull up to the fuel dock". Captain Ron explained to him that we were not familiar with the marina and didn't know where the fuel dock was. His response was "It's right here."

We finally noticed the fuel pumps on a dock (there were no signs) and swung around and tied up. We took on sixty eight gallons of diesel and got a three percent discount for being BoatUS members.

After paying for our fuel, we were directed to a spot on a long face dock. The dockhand said he would meet us there but he had to drive around and might be held up by traffic. We beat him there and were tied up by the time he got there.



HIGH COTTON in St. Petersburg, FL

We got the shore power cord plugged in and took the Sea Dog for her walk. We had to get our key card first so we could get back in.

Like Marina Jack, the St. Petersburg Municipal Marina is in a large city park. Unlike Marina Jack, this park has a city pier (for people, not for boats) with several restaurants, a gift shop, a splash park and even a sandy beach on the water where people (but not dogs) can swim.

Once we walked the pup and the boat cooled down a bit, the humans walked to town for a meal. We passed several restaurants with inside and outside dining. Patti and Captain Ron both wondered why anyone would want to eat outdoors on the sidewalk when the temperature is over ninety degrees and the "feels like" temperature is one hundred and five degrees. We ate inside.

After our meal, we walked around the business district and checked out a couple shops. We returned to the boat and took the ship's puppy for a walk.

We (the humans) took turns showering. The facilities here are a bit old, but they are clean and functional. There is plenty of hot water and plenty of pressure.

Then, of course, it was time to hit the sack.

Captain's Log, day thirty four (June 19, 2022)

Patti woke up before Captain Ron. She got dressed, dressed the Sea Dog and took her for a walk. She returned to the boat, left the puppy and took the dirty clothes to the laundry room. Captain Ron woke up to find himself alone with the pup. The gate key and Patti's purse were still on the boat and the dirty clothes were gone so he figured out what happened.

Patti returned and cooked breakfast for the crew. She had to go back to the laundry room to move the clothes to the dryer and again to retrieve them.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Once the laundry was put away, we all walked to the beach. Unfortunately, there was a sign prohibiting dogs on the beach and explaining how dirty dogs are and how they spread disease. Captain Ron's thought was, just posting "No Dogs on Beach" would have been enough without the additional comments.

We walked over to the food stand and got ice cream. Kiki got her share of course. Next we walked over to the splash pad where children were playing in the water. There were no signs prohibiting dogs so Captain Ron walked the K-9 through the splash pad. She did not seem interested so we all sat on one of the lounge chairs surrounding the splash pad.



The K-9 gets her ice cream fix

A man walked his dog to the splash pad, but a security officer showed up and told him dogs weren't allowed in the splash pad. He then drove his golf cart over to us and told us the same thing. We had read the posted splash pad rules twice and there were no posted rules about dogs.

Kiki got petted by several small children and then we walked towards the end of the pier. Patti and the puppy stopped on a bench in the shade while Captain Ron walked out to the end. He came back with a souvenir St. Petersburg shot glass for Patti.

There is a tram that ferries people back and forth on the pier (it's a very long pier) so we caught a ride back to the marina.



Kiki entertains the local children

We heard a lot of fire sirens and then noticed several fire trucks on the other side of the marina. We were getting ready to walk the hound when we overheard a lady in the marina building talking on the phone saying that the fire trucks were on the wrong side of the marina. It turns out, there had been a small fire on her boat (actually just melting wires and no actual fire). She had to get the address for this side of the marina and relay that to the fire trucks. They turned around and came to our side, went on the dock and examined the boat. They stayed until the electrical panel cooled down and there was no danger of a fire. Fires in marinas can be a serious thing, with gasoline filled boats and fire jumping from one to another. Fortunately, this was just a minor incident although she will have to have the electrical wiring repaired.

We rested for a while and then Patti and Captain Ron walked back to a restaurant on the pier for dinner. It was a crowded and extremely noisy place, but the food was pretty good.

Back at the boat, the ship's puppy got her evening walk and Patti took a shower. Then we all went to bed.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain's Log, day thirty five (June 20, 2022)

Patti beat Captain Ron out of bed again. Actually, the puppy's stomach was gurgling so Patti got up and took her for a walk. Captain Ron got up and made his morning coffee, but when Patti got back, she suggested that we walk to town for breakfast and then to Publix so we could get more chicken for the hound.

We got to the restaurant and ate breakfast. Then we walked to Publix and got what we needed. By this time, we had walked more than a mile and were a bit tired.

Captain Ron had seen something in the brochure we were given at the marina about a free downtown trolley. He asked the lady at the Publix customer service counter and she knew nothing about it but sent him to ask one of the cashiers. She knew nothing about it either and asked some other employees about it. Eventually, he talked to four Publix employees and none knew anything about a free trolley.

We started walking back towards the marina but looked over one street and saw two trolleys, one going in each direction. Since that street would also take us to the marina, we walked over and saw a sign for the downtown trolley. Of course, we had just missed it. Captain Ron looked it up on the Internet, but the website was confusing and no help.

After a few minutes a local citizen showed up at the trolley stop and we asked her about it. She assured us that this was the downtown trolley stop and that it would take us to the pier where the marina is located.

After a few minutes, she decided not to wait and walked off towards her destination. A few minutes later another local came by and we talked to him.

He was going the same way we were and waited for the trolley with us.

The trolley finally came and we were able to ride back to the pier with our groceries in air conditioned comfort (well, on wooden seats, but at least the trolley was air conditioned).

Patti cooked chicken and rice for the ship's puppy. The puppy loves chicken and rice.

Once the puppy was fed, Patti decided to walk to the gift shop at the end of the pier. Captain Ron elected to stay with the puppy and watch a bit of TV. Although the scan showed sixty eight available channels, by the time the infomercials, home shopping channels, religious channels and Spanish language channels were eliminated, he had a hard time finding anything worth watching and eventually fell asleep.

Patti returned from her shopping trip and we walked back to the same restaurant we ate at last night for a light meal. Just before we left the boat we heard thunder and saw lightning so we took our raincoats with us.

It didn't rain, but when we got back to the boat, Captain Ron took his raincoat when he walked to the shower just in case. Once he came back, Patti walked to the showers.

Our trip to Clearwater tomorrow should take about four and a half hours so we will shoot for an early start.

Captain's Log, day thirty six (June 21, 2022)

We had an alarm set for 6:15 AM but we woke up a little before that and got up. We got dressed and the K-9 got her customary morning walk. Patti dropped the key card in the slot and Captain Ron did his engine checks. We uncovered the flybridge,

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

disconnected the shorepower cable and were away from the dock just after 7:00 AM.

The first thirty minutes or so of our trip this morning was retracing our route back towards the Sunshine Skyway Bridge. Then we turned and headed for the northern end of the causeway where there is a smaller (but still pretty big) bridge.

We came to a point where the computer generated route pointed us in one direction while the GICW route on the chart plotter pointed a different way. Since we could see that both routes joined together a few miles away, we took the computer generated route. We were fine but we did have to pass under a fixed bridge with just seventeen feet of clearance. We were able to make it through by lowering our radio antenna.

There must be a lot of manatees in this part of Florida, because much of our trip was made at "Slow Speed, Minimum Wake" speed. Actually, our wake is pretty small at five knots so we are only losing two knots under these conditions.

As we were a half hour or more from Clearwater, Captain Ron's phone rang and it was the marina in Clearwater wondering if we were still coming. We told them we were and they said to call them back (on the phone) when we got closer. Then the phone rang again and it was the marina in Tarpon Springs asking if we were still coming. Captain Ron told the guy "yes" and he asked what time we would be arriving. Captain Ron told him sometime before noon and the guy said to call him before we got to the marina.

We got to the marina in Clearwater and called them on the phone. The person on the phone wasn't very clear about how to enter the marina and get to the slip, but we made it. She and another boater caught our lines and tied us up.

From there, things got strange. The girl said we needed to install an app on our phones to unlock the gate to get back to our slip. We gathered our dog and phone and headed for the office which according to the sign on the dock was three hundred yards away.



HIGH COTTON at the Clearwater, FL City Marina

We got to the office where the dockmaster (is it "Dockmistress" if it is a female?) kindly took Captain Ron's phone and spent about fifteen minutes installing and configuring the app. Keep in mind, this app only works at this particular marina and we won't be coming back. The app is also needed to get into the showers and restrooms.

There were no treats for the ship's puppy, but the dockmaster played with her and petted her. We learned that there was a big construction project going on behind the marina and the only land access was the three hundred yards towards the office or about two hundred yards the other way. Access to the business section of town was a three block detour.

We walked back to our dock and used the phone to unlock the gate so we could get back to HIGH COTTON and straighten things up.

Captain Ron spent some time trying to figure out our stops on the way back after Tarpon Springs.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

We looked on-line at the various restaurants in town and decided that a Thai restaurant would make a nice change. We changed our clothes and made the trek after walking the Sea Dog one more time. It's two hundred yards to get her to a grassy area.

The Thai restaurant was pretty good. The décor was traditional and they even had the low tables where people sat on the floor to eat. We didn't try that and nobody else that was there while we were there tried it either.

There was "live entertainment" at the outdoor area of one of the other restaurants, a guitar player and a drummer with a full set of drums. There was another guy with them who was apparently banging on something, we couldn't see what. To Captain Ron, that seemed like an odd combination of instruments.



Patti makes a new friend in Clearwater, FL

We stopped in a very strange convenience store that had a wide variety of seemingly unrelated items for sale. Artwork, scarves, several varieties of peanut butter, ball point pens and phone charging cords, etc.

Back at the marina, Captain Ron set off walking to the showers with his phone. Attempting to unlock the door, the app said the door was unlocked, but it wasn't. He tried several times to unlock the door without success. Finally, he pushed some buttons on the app and saw an option to "lock" the door. He chose that option and the door clicked.

At this point the app gave him the option of unlocking the door and this time it worked and he got in. He undressed, turned on the shower and waited for it to get warm. Once it got warm, he got in and started to shower. The water turned cold and he got out. About the time he was ready to try the other shower, the water got warm again. This happened several times.

Back at the boat, it was Patti's turn to shower, but of course she had to take Captain Ron's phone with here. Captain Ron told her of his experience, just in case.

Captain Ron was tired by this time and went to bed. Patti and the pooch followed sometime after.

Captain's Log, day thirty seven (June 22, 2022)

Captain Ron finally got to sleep in this morning! The sun was well over the yardarm (9:00 AM) by the time he rolled out of the sack. Patti and the pup had already completed their morning walk and done their business by the time he was awake. He got dressed and we all walked to the marina office for a bag of ice. We talked to the dockmistress while she petted the Sea Dog. She told us about

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

the other city marina on the beach side and how it compares to this one.

We have had a financial advisor who has taken care of our investments and retirement plans since the 1990s, but have never actually met her in person, just talked on the phone. Since she and the company are based in Clearwater, we had made arrangements to meet her and her assistant while we were here. We changed into our best “business clothes” and they picked us up and drove us back to their office where we had lunch and went over our finances. The good news is, we don’t have to sell our boat. The bad news is, we won’t be buying a mega yacht anytime soon. Or a waterfront mansion. We had a nice and productive chat, signed some documents and then they brought us back to the marina.

We had been gone for a while so we gathered up the ship’s puppy and took her for a walk. Once we returned to the boat, Captain Ron spent quite a bit of time trying to line up our marina stops from Tarpon Springs back to Ft. Myers where we have reservations for the Independence Day weekend. Unfortunately, some of the marinas could not be reached so we won’t know until tomorrow if our reservation requests will be accepted or denied.



“Guard bird” on the sailboat next to us

Dinner tonight was leftover Thai food. After dinner, it was time to walk the hound again. It’s good exercise for all of us. Tomorrow should only be about a two and a half hour ride so we won’t have to get an early start.

Captain’s Log, day thirty eight (June 23, 2022)

We made it to Tarpon Springs! More on that later.

We did the usual, got up, got dressed and walked the ship’s puppy. Captain Ron made his morning coffee and did the engine checks while Patti uncovered the flybridge and carried the cameras, binoculars and drinks up the ladder. The Sea Dog watched, but did nothing to help. When you are cute, you can get away with that.

We got underway about 8:15 AM. Unlike yesterday, it was already hot and getting hotter. Breakfast was consumed underway and consisted of an English muffin with jelly for Captain Ron and a protein shake for Patti. The hound had dog treats as usual.

For the first part of our journey, we were pretty much protected from the Gulf of Mexico waves by islands but as we went further north, the gaps between the islands became larger and we were exposed to some waves which caused uncomfortable, but not dangerous rocking. Captain Ron tried to convince Patti that he could see Mexico in the distance but she was having none of that.

We turned to starboard and followed the channel into the Anclote River. Tarpon Springs is further up the river than one might think, about two and a half miles.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



Heading in to Tarpon Springs on the Anclote River

We called the dockmaster on the phone as requested and received docking instructions. We arrived at the marina and Captain Ron stopped and backed the boat into the slip. The dockmaster embarrassed him by complimenting on his docking performance. Captain Ron figures he ought to be able to dock the boat by now.

The dockmaster gave us a set of keys and showed us where everything was. They don't sell ice so Patti had to go across the street to the gas station for ice.

Patti decided to take a shower so off she went. Captain Ron was going to take a shower, but realized that it was time to change the oil in the engine and transmission. This is best done when the oil is hot, so he got out his oil change pump, fresh oil and filters and began the task. Fortunately, he had two oil filters, because the first new one he got out was missing the rubber gasket and unusable. This may be a problem when it comes time to change the oil again.

He got the job done with minimal spillage and headed off to take his own (much needed by now) shower.

Captain Ron's daughter Robyn and her husband Wally drove to Tarpon Springs from their home in The Villages and we walked down the main street

looking for a place to eat. The first restaurant we saw had no inside dining, only outside and with the temperature at about ninety five degrees, none of us thought that would be a good idea.



Captain Ron, Patti, Kiki, Wally and Robyn

We found a place that looked like it had a decent menu and went in and got a table in the air conditioned dining room. A waiter in a white shirt and tie came and took our orders. The food was good and we had a nice conversation.

After our meal we walked along the main street which is filled with restaurants and tourist shops. Robyn bought a hat and Patti bought some trinkets. Wally and Captain Ron stood by and watched.

Robyn and Wally had an hour and a half drive back to their home so they said goodbye and left. Captain Ron, Patti and the Sea Dog retired to the boat to cool off. Later, about 8:00 PM when it had begun to cool down, we all went for a walk and ended up at the ice cream shop where we all had our favorite boat treat, ice cream.

It was past 9:00 PM when we returned from our ice cream expedition so we got undressed and hit the sack. Tomorrow, we explore the town.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain's Log, day thirty nine (June 24, 2022)

As so often happens, Patti and the pup beat Captain Ron out of the sack and had already taken their morning stroll by the time he got up. He fixed his morning coffee and ate the baklava we brought back from the restaurant yesterday for breakfast. Patti had a protein shake and the puppy had chicken and rice.

Captain Ron had to add some oil to the boat's transmission because he had neglected to allow for the new filter. It's a bit finicky getting the right amount of oil in the transmission and overfilling it is not good.

We hadn't gotten responses from two marinas we've been trying to contact so Captain Ron tried contacting them again and spent some time looking for alternatives.

We decided to head for a restaurant at the other end of the block for lunch. We stopped in several of the shops along the way. Patti was able to find a few dresses and blouses she liked and amazingly, they weren't overpriced as is so often the case in tourist towns.



Patti wearing out the credit card

We got to the restaurant and decided to split a Greek salad. It was big and delicious. On the way back, we stopped in several more shops and

Captain Ron got a Tarpon Springs souvenir T shirt at the \$5 store.



Greek salad (with potato salad) in Tarpon Springs, FL

The Sea Dog was happy to see us when we returned and she got another walk. She headed for the ice cream store, but since we hadn't brought any money with us, we had to turn her around and walk the other way.

After the pup's walk, Captain Ron retired to the V berth to watch TV, but soon fell asleep. TV reception here is very poor with only a few stations to watch.

Captain Ron tried again to contact the marinas and finally got a call back from the one we will hit on Tuesday night. That leaves Sunday night still uncertain. We have never had this sort of problem in all our years of cruising and it is very frustrating.

The dockmaster had recommended a particular restaurant as the "best" for Greek food around here. There are approximately a dozen Greek restaurants within walking distance of the marina so we decided to try his recommendation even though we weren't very hungry.

The restaurant was about a two block walk so we left under sunny skies. We ordered pita sandwiches, a gyro for Captain Ron and a pork souvlaki for Patti. Captain Ron would have liked to

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

try one of the more exotic dishes, but he wasn't that hungry.

The food was delicious, but as we sat there eating, the skies outside darkened, the wind started blowing and we heard thunder. By the time we were done, there was a full-fledged thunderstorm going on.

We delayed our walk back to the boat as long as we could, but realized we had a puppy back on the boat who needed comforting. Finally, we decided to just "do it". The rain had slackened a bit by then, but the streets were flooded.

Back at HIGH COTTON, the ship's puppy was very happy to see us and we were pretty wet.

Eventually, the rain stopped and Patti took the hound out for a walk. As she normally does, she walked through every puddle she could find and had to get rinsed and dried before she was allowed back inside the boat.

The shower (there is only one) here is very nice and recently remodeled. Water temperature and volume is decent. After feeding the hound, Patti went to take hers. Captain Ron was next in line. Tomorrow, we explore and shop some more.

BTW: It took us thirty eight days to get from Charleston, SC to Tarpon Springs in HIGH COTTON. According to the internet, it would take about seven hours to make the same trip by car! We did spend extra time in a few places, but in actual travel hours, the boat ran for one hundred and eighteen hours from Charleston to Tarpon Springs. Boating is not for the impatient.

Captain's Log, day forty, (June 25, 2022)

Today was another day in port and we were pretty much tourists today. Patti fixed breakfast for the

crew to use up the rest of our eggs and an opened can of corned beef hash.

Captain Ron topped off the water tanks so we will have water for the next few days. Then he spent more time trying to reach the marina where we were supposed to stay tomorrow night. Phone calls and emails have gone unanswered.

Patti walked back to the main street for some more shopping. She returned with a few bags and told Captain Ron that she wanted to buy him a shirt but wasn't sure what size to get.

We decided to walk back to the store so Captain Ron could try on the shirt, but Patti mentioned "ice cream". The Sea Dog's ears perked up so of course we had to take her with us. We got ice cream and sat in the chairs along the sidewalk. The K-9 got her share.

Once we finished the ice cream, we walked to the store where Captain Ron tried on the shirt and determined his correct size. He also saw some "Tilley" (a brand name) hats and tried some on. Tilley hats are supposed to be high quality hats and are popular among boaters because they have a guarantee, are washable and shield the head, neck and ears from the sun. They are expensive, though.

Captain Ron put the hat back on the rack, Patti paid for the shirt and we walked back to the boat.

Captain Ron gave up on the marina that wouldn't return his calls and emails and found another that had room for us. Not quite as great a location, but not that far out of the way. The other marina in question called so now we are set through July 4.

Captain Ron looked up the Tilley hat on the West Marine website and it was ten dollars more than at the local shop. He decided to go ahead and get it. All the other cruisers have Tilley hats, why not

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain Ron? Kiki had shown an interest in an alligator head (apparently a real one, but dried and preserved) when we were in the store with the hats so we stopped in and bought both on the way to dinner.

We each got a great meal and we each have enough to eat tomorrow night. It was good, authentic Greek food. On the way back, we stopped in the store again and Patti bought Captain Ron another shirt. He will have to find places to go when we get home so he can wear his new shirts!

Back at the marina, Patti took her shower and then walked the hound while Captain Ron took his.

Tarpon Springs is the end of the line. Tomorrow morning we begin our journey back to Charleston. It took thirty eight days and one hundred and eighteen hours actually underway to get here. Of course, we did stop in a few places for a few days along the way. At our cruising speed of seven knots, that's eight hundred and twenty six nautical miles or nine hundred and fifty statute miles. And approximately two hundred and fifty gallons of diesel fuel.

It's been great, but it's not over by any means. We will stop at places we skipped on the way here.



Tarpon Springs City Marina



Sunset in Tarpon Springs, FL



A sponge boat unloads its cargo on the city dock

Captain's Log, day forty one, (June 26, 2022)

We wanted to get an early start today to get across the open water before the winds picked up and to be in port before any afternoon storms. So, at oh-dark-thirty, we rolled out of bed, got dressed and got ourselves ready. We walked the hound, unplugged the power, untied the boat and eased out of the slip as quietly as possible. People were sleeping on the other boats.

Surprisingly, we were not alone. Several smaller boats joined in a boat parade, apparently headed out to the fishing grounds. It was Sunday, after all.

The voyage today was pretty uneventful. We saw a lot of smaller boats, especially pontoon boats and

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

we saw dolphins several times. The Sea Dog saw the big fishies also and talked to them. One swam with us for a short distance. (Kiki writes: *"I really like when the big fishies swim alongside the boat. That makes my day."*)



The Sea Dog on the lookout for big fishies

As we reached the location of our destination, The Madeira Beach City Marina, we saw a marina, but no identifying signs. We called several times on the radio but got no response. There was a boat leaving the marina so Captain Ron called out to them and asked if this was the City Marina. They responded that it was.

Patti ran below and got the phone and called them. They sent a guy to wave us towards our slip and another to the slip to help us dock. It was a weird docking situation that required swinging HIGH COTTON one hundred and eighty degrees in a very small space and then backing in, but we made it just fine.

Once we got tied up and the power connected, we took the K-9 for a walk to do her business and then walked to the office to check in. The puppy got a dog treat and enjoyed lying on the cool floor.

After checking in and paying, we walked outside where several of the local boaters were sitting and relaxing. We talked to one for a while. Apparently, most of the boats here are owned by locals and

since this was the weekend, many had come to take their boats out.

We walked the Sea Dog around the grounds and she found a boat ramp so she went for a swim. Then she found a better boat ramp so she went for another swim. Once the pup was done swimming, we walked back to HIGH COTTON and went inside to cool off and rest. Kiki had to have a shower first before she was allowed on the boat. She knows this and waits patiently near the shower.

This marina is about a half mile from any restaurants and about a mile from shops so since we had leftovers for our dinner, we decided not to go anywhere.

As we were eating our leftover Greek food, the skies darkened, it began to thunder and then the rains came. Heavy rains. This was not a problem for the humans, but the four legged crew member was very scared and nervous.

Eventually, the rain stopped and it was time to walk the dog. That's when we realized that the tide had dropped about three feet and of course the fixed dock had not dropped at all and Patti was unable to get off the boat.

So, Captain Ron got off and took the pup for her walk. She found a large puddle, walked to the middle and sat down in it.

Eventually, it was time to head back to the boat. Captain Ron had to sit on the dock to get back on the boat, but he made it just fine. We just have to hope we don't have problems like this in the morning when it's time to leave.

It didn't seem worth the trouble to get off the boat to take showers so we'll skip this tonight. Our marina tomorrow has good showers.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Tomorrow will be another early start. It's a longer ride than today and we want to beat the heat and possible storms.

Captain's Log, day forty two, (June 27, 2022)

The oh-dark-thirty alarm sounded again this morning so we dragged ourselves out of bed. We got dressed and walked the Sea Dog. The water level was up from last night's level so we were able to get on and off the boat fairly easily. Water was pooled on the flybridge from last night's rain so that had to be swept off. At least we got a free boat wash.

We got the boat unhooked and untied but had to wait for a small boat to back out of the fairway before we were clear to leave. As we returned to the GICW, we had a beautiful sunrise to the east.



Sunrise on the GICW

After about forty five minutes, we passed the marina where we were originally going to stay. It looked more like condo docks than a marina, but we weren't close enough to really tell. Maybe next time.

We passed through densely populated areas, followed by natural areas and then more densely populated areas. There were canals everywhere,

giving everyone "waterfront property". There were opulent mansions and modest bungalows. All sharing the same Florida sunshine.

Eventually, it was time to cross the entrance to Tampa Bay. This was an hour and a half or so of open water, but the seas were fairly calm this morning so it was not a problem. And we saw no big ships.



The Sunshine Skyway across the entrance to Tampa Bay

We saw a couple pods of dolphins and stopped so the ship's puppy could get a good look. She loves to watch the big fishies.

We encountered a surprising amount of boat traffic out today, especially since it was a Monday morning. It's possible, of course, that many of these boaters were in Florida on vacation from somewhere else. Mostly, we saw pontoon boats, center consoles and bow riders. No cruising sized boats like ours. We did see another Camano Troll but it was docked. We remembered seeing it when headed north several days ago.

As we approached our destination in Sarasota, Marina Jack, we called on the radio and got an answer with docking instructions. Two uniformed dockhands met us at our assigned slip and caught our lines. They also connected our shore power. This is a well-run, professional marina. It's not cheap, though.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

The ship's puppy got off the boat and remembered which way to go to find grass. Then she led us to the office where, of course, she got treats and lots of attention.

Patti decided that this would be a good time to do a couple loads of laundry so we each took showers and then Patti took the clothes to the laundry room where there are three washers and three dryers.



HIGH COTTON and her larger slip neighbor at Marina Jack

It began to rain and the ship's puppy wanted to get off the boat. She walked for a while and then took us to the office again so she could get another treat and lie on the cold floor. The dockhands took this opportunity to convince us that we really needed a pair of Marina Jack long sleeve T shirts so we bought them.

We eventually convinced the K-9 that it was safe to go back to the boat. Once there, we left her with a dinner of chicken and rice and walked to downtown Sarasota for dinner at an Italian restaurant. It turned out to be so good that we ate all but two slices of Patti's pizza. No leftovers for tomorrow.

We got back to the boat and Patti took the pup for yet another walk. Captain Ron was watching the news on TV and it looks like a storm is heading this way. We shall see.

Tomorrow's voyage is only two hours and fifteen minutes so we will probably take our time leaving here. At least we can get up at a civilized hour.

Captain's Log, day forty three, (June 28, 2022)

Well, Captain Ron screwed up! Not a bad or serious screw up, but he had reservations at Royal Palm Marina but drew his route to Fisherman's Wharf Marina. More on this later.

Thinking we had a very short voyage today, we slept in and took our time getting underway. We were still fairly early at about 8:15 AM.

We slipped out of the marina and followed the channel to the GICW. Turning south onto the ICW channel, we again travelled through the rich neighborhoods and the not so rich neighborhoods. And of course, we passed many condos and hotels. Much of the trip was at "Slow Speed, Minimum Wake" speed which is actually just a couple knots below our normal cruising speed of seven knots.



Leaving Marina Jack, Sarasota, FL

There was a surprising amount of boat traffic for a Tuesday morning, but again, we saw no cruising size boats actually on the water. There were some out there though, because we heard them on the VHF radio requesting bridge openings. We had to

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

have two bridges opened ourselves, but fortunately, they were not on a set schedule, they opened on our request.



A bridge on the GICW opens for HIGH COTTON

Eventually, we came to what we thought was our marina for the night and tried to raise them on the radio. When we got no response, we tried the phone, but got only an automated response and the opportunity to record a message.

That wasn't going to help so we pulled up to an empty spot on the face dock, tied up and walked towards what we took to be the office.

Patti saw someone on one of the boats and asked him if this was Royal Palm Marina. Fortunately, the guy was able to tell us that this was not Royal Palm marina, but he knew where Royal Palm Marina was and told us that it was about ten miles further south.

We thanked him, walked back to the boat, untied it and headed back on the GICW. The problem now was, we had no route to follow on the chart plotter.

It's pretty hard to get lost on this portion of the GICW, just stay between the shores and between the navigational markers. There is also a faint line on the chart plotter showing the GICW and there

are the "bread crumbs" showing our path when we were headed north a couple weeks ago.

Still, we at least needed to know where Royal Palm Marina actually was so Captain Ron handed the wheel over to Patti and went below to create another route for the chart plotter.

Without going into all the details, this is harder than it used to be and involves using three different programs and emailing a route from the tablet to the computer, but he got it done and uploaded the new route to the chartplotters.

So, an hour and a half after our first stop, we got to Royal Palm Marina. We called them on the radio and surprisingly got a response. They told us where to dock but didn't offer any help. That's OK, we do pretty well by ourselves.



HIGH COTTON tied up at the Royal Palm Marina

We saw dolphins today and a couple manatees at a distance, but as Captain Ron was stepping off the boat with the shorepower cord, he saw three manatees directly under the stern of the boat. Of course, they swam away before he could go back inside for his camera so there are no photos.

We got the ship's puppy off the boat and walked around towards the office. For some reason, she seems to know which way to go for land, even at a new marina. There was no grass, just gravel so she

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

took care of business and we went to the office to check in and pay. There were no doggie treats, but there was a cool floor to lie on.

We walked back to the boat to cool off and rest. Captain Ron found a few channels on TV and watched a bit.

We got the hound off the boat and walked out of the marina to the neighborhood where we saw our first actual grass. The marina here is a working boat yard as well as a marina and most of the land is covered in gravel. The parking lot for the on-site restaurant/bar is also covered in gravel. Kiki did manage to find some puddles to walk through and gravel to roll in so she got rinsed off before getting back on HIGH COTTON.



The ship's puppy relaxes in the grass after a long voyage

There is a town here, Englewood, FL, but we decided that it was too hot to walk the mile or so to the business district so we walked to the on-site restaurant for dinner. It was "Taco Tuesday" so Captain Ron had tacos. Patti had nachos and a side salad. The food was decent and not overly expensive. But, it was all outside on a porch. There is no inside, air conditioned seating. The restaurant (it's also a bar with entertainment) is popular with the locals. Walking back to the boat, we could see dark clouds approaching from the

east. We got to the boat and could hear thunder and see lightning. The Sea Dog was not happy.

The storm either broke up or changed direction because it never got to us. Apparently, this is normal for Florida.

We walked the puppy again and she walked through the puddles and rolled in the gravel again so she got a shower again before going inside HIGH COTTON.

The docks at this marina are fixed, and as was the case a couple days ago, the water level is not fixed, it goes up and down with the tide. HIGH COTTON was sitting a good ways below the dock and it was difficult to get on and off.

Patti went to the restaurant to take her shower. Yes, the heads and showers are in the restaurant and you walk through the crowd, past the bar, with your shower bag.

Once she returned to the boat, it was Captain Ron's turn. By the time he was finished, the restaurant was about to close, but the heads and showers are open all night.

Tomorrow, we will be in a nice resort marina. We're looking forward to that.



The sun sets in Englewood, FL

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain's Log, day forty four, (June 29, 2022)

We were in no real hurry to get underway this morning, but we still wanted to beat the afternoon heat and chance of storms. We have the procedure down to between a half hour and forty five minutes, so we pulled out of Royal Palm Marina at about 7:20 AM. Again, we were surprised at the number of boats out at that hour and later in the day. We had boats coming at us, boats overtaking us and boats heading from the mainland to the Gulf of Mexico through the various breaks in the islands. At one point, we passed three or four large cruising sized boats heading north.



One of many abandoned, derelict boats we saw in FL

We caught a glimpse of a manatee directly in front of the boat so Captain Ron took the boat out of gear to glide over it. We didn't see it again and other boats were coming the other way so we resumed our cruising speed.

We also had a dolphin swim alongside the boat for several minutes. The Sea Dog was happy about that. (Kiki writes: *"Yes, I really like it when the big fishies swim alongside the boat. I always talk to them when they do this."*)

It took us about four and a half hours to get to 'Tween Waters Marina, but we got there just a

couple minutes after two other boats so we had to wait while they got docked. Then it was our turn.

We headed for the office to check in, but the Sea Dog spotted the beach and the lagoon. She headed straight for the water, waded out to just above her head and swam back and forth. She came out of the water, sniffed around a bit and headed back in for another swim.

With a wet dog in tow, we headed for the office, where the pup immediately went behind the counter expecting a treat. She got one.

Captain Ron checked us in while the pup continued to beg for, and receive, treats.

We walked the pup around the complex for several minutes and she swam again. She had to get a shower before she got back on HIGH COTTON.



HIGH COTTON at 'Tween Waters Marina

Captain Ron did a scan on the TV, found something to watch and fell asleep. Eventually, he woke up and we changed into our swimwear and walked to the pool area. 'Tween Waters has two pools now, a regular pool and a "serenity pool" (no ball playing, jumping, yelling, etc.) The serenity pool is the one we chose. The resort furnishes towels for the pool, no need to bring our own.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain Ron spent some time in the hot tub between dips in the regular pool.



If you don't have your own boat you can stay here

Eventually, we went back to the boat and finished up our leftovers from last night. Patti walked across the street to the beach while Captain Ron took his shower. The K-9 wanted to go for a walk so Captain Ron took her out to walk and sniff. Patti returned from the beach and we both walked the pup back to the boat.

Patti took her shower and then the entire crew walked across the road to the beach to watch the sun set over the Gulf of Mexico. It was a beautiful Florida sunset.

We talked with some of the other guests while they petted the ship's puppy. Then we returned to HIGH COTTON for a well-earned night's rest. We will be here another day before moving on to Fort Myers on Friday.

Captain's Log, day forty five, (June 30, 2022)

The Sea Dog decided she needed to get up early this morning so Patti got up, got dressed and took her for a walk. Captain Ron rolled over and went back to sleep. It was past 9:00 AM when he rolled out of the sack.

The restaurant at this marina is open for breakfast and dinner, but not for lunch (the snack bar at the pool is open during the day, though). We decided to go for breakfast so off we went. It turns out that 'Tween Waters Resort has been in existence since the 1930s. Of course, the buildings are not that old and there have been many additions and renovations.

We ate our breakfast and got an order of scrambled eggs to go to take back to the ship's puppy.

Back at the boat, the pup had her scrambled eggs and then we took her out to swim and hunt lizards. She did both and explored the grounds. There are apparently lots of interesting smells at this resort (for dogs, the humans smelled nothing out of the ordinary).

There was a ninety foot, three story boat that spent the night last night at the fuel dock. The generator ran all night so apparently, the marina was not able to supply sufficient power to run all the boat's systems. The boat was probably bigger than our land home in total square feet. It pulled out shortly before noon, stirring the mud with its props.

Captain Ron wanted to swim in the Gulf of Mexico and Patti wanted to search for interesting sea shells so we dressed appropriately and walked across the street to the beach. 'Tween Waters owns this section of the beach and it's reserved for guests of the resort.

The Gulf waters were calm and warm and Captain Ron waded out to where the water was shoulder deep and swam a bit. Patti took her shell net and walked north along the beach. Then she turned around and walked south. She found a few shells to add to her collection, but the shelling wasn't great.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



Captain Ron wades in the Gulf of Mexico



Patti searches for seashells in the Gulf of Mexico

We returned to the boat, stopping off in the shower facility to rinse off the salt and sand. The puppy was glad to see us when we returned and wanted to go for a walk so Patti took her.

There are normally three choices for food at 'Tween Waters, but one is currently closed for renovation so that left us the choice of the high end restaurant where we ate breakfast this morning or the snack bar at the pool. By this time, it was past 5:00 PM and the pool snack bar's menu had changed. There is also no inside, air conditioned dining and a pretty annoying guy sitting on a stool and playing guitar and singing louder than he needed to.

We chose a burger for Captain Ron and a salad for Patti and got them "to go". It looked like a storm

was coming so Captain Ron went back to the boat and walked the K-9 while Patti waited for the food to be prepared. We should mention here that, for the second time in fourteen years or so, we managed to lock the boat up with the key inside so part of the reason for Captain Ron to return to the boat was to get the hidden spare key and unlock the boat.

Something happened to the storm. It got very windy for about ten minutes and the sky got dark, but then it all went away. No rain at all. There was a rainbow later on so apparently it did rain somewhere nearby.

We ate our food (it was OK, but nothing to brag about) and Patti walked the pup again. The pup went for a swim in the lagoon so she had to get rinsed off. Actually, she has gone for a swim in the lagoon just about every time she has gone for a walk here. She loves to swim where there are no waves.

Patti went to take her shower, followed by Captain Ron. They have really nice showers here.

Tomorrow we leave the resort and return to the "big city" (Fort Myers) for the holiday weekend.

Captain's Log, day forty six, (July 1, 2022)

Somehow, the Birthday Bunny snuck into the locked boat overnight and left birthday cards for Patti.

So, we had planned our departure so we could check out when the marina office opened at 7:00 AM and get ice (which is free here) and coffee (which is also free). Unfortunately, the lady couldn't get the computer up so she couldn't check us out. Hopefully, we will get an email receipt. We did get ice and coffee before we left.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Leaving 'Tween waters, we had to travel about two and a half miles north east before turning south towards Ft. Myers. Pretty much the entire trip today was in wide open water with a dredged channel and the rest of it only a couple feet deep.



Crabbers working the water off the GICW

As the day wore on, boat traffic increased and there were times that we had three or four boats heading towards us and three or four more catching up and passing us from behind.



Boat traffic on the GICW

We went through the "Miserable Mile", a narrow channel with a speed restriction and then turned northeast into the Caloosahatchee River towards Ft. Myers. We could see a large boat approaching a bridge and our AIS showed that we would meet while passing under the bridge. Captain Ron called the other boat on the radio and told them to come

on through, that we would wait for them to pass. Better safe than sorry.

We got to our destination for the weekend, Legacy Harbor Marina and called them on the radio. We were directed to a different end of the marina from where we stayed a few weeks ago and the dockhands were there to catch our lines and connect our power cord. This marina is a first class operation all the way.



A different slip this time

Patti decided to strip the beds and wash the bedding. She put it all in the laundry bag and since Captain Ron was headed that way, he carried it to the laundry room and put it in the washing machine. Yes, among his many talents, Captain Ron knows how to load a washing machine.

As much as we love 'Tween Waters, it is a beach resort and walking anywhere involves walking in sand. The result is, sand gets tracked into the boat.

Patti decided that it was time to vacuum the boat so when Captain Ron returned, he found her hard at work vacuuming up the Captiva Island sand.

Once she was done vacuuming, she walked to the laundry room to get the bedding out of the washing machine and put it in the dryer. Along the way, she met one of the boaters who keeps her boat here. They got to talking and when Patti

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

mentioned that we had no car, the lady handed her her car keys and said they were taking their boat somewhere else for a couple days and we could use their car in the meantime. So now, we had a car (actually, a jeep) to get around in!

We normally walk from this marina to Publix with our granny cart, but of course, having a car makes it easier. We got ready to go, but it started raining. Not just rain, it was a downpour with thunder and lightning. The Sea Dog had to get a tranquilizer to calm her down, something we really don't like to do.

Eventually, of course, the rain stopped so we drove to Publix to get groceries and something for tonight's dinner. Much of the power was out in Publix so they couldn't sell things that had to be weighed and labelled. As we shopped, the power came back on long enough for us to get some fried chicken parts from the deli counter.

We checked out, loaded the car and drove back to the marina. It started to rain again but we got everything from the car to the boat in a dock cart.

Dinner was fried chicken, creamed spinach and leftover black beans from a few days ago. The ship's puppy had chicken and rice for her dinner.

One thing Patti learned from the "car lady" was, there is a second set of heads and showers, laundry room, captain's lounge and a workout room closer to our slip than the ones we knew about from our previous visits.

As usual, we took turns showering after dinner. By this time, it was time for bed so we turned in for the night. We are docked directly in front of Joe's Crab Shack (which, by the way, does not serve crabs, at least the blue crabs we Maryland natives associate with a "crab shack") and were concerned about noise, but there is no outside dining so it wasn't a factor.

Captain's Log, day forty seven, (July 2, 2022)

We accidentally left out a few things for the past few days. Patti had made appointments with the nail salon near the marina for "mani-pedis" for herself and Captain Ron so we had to be at the nail salon at 9:15 AM. Of course, this was going to be easier with the car.

Patti got up and walked the hound. Then she walked across the street to the donut shop and came back with three donuts for breakfast.

We mentioned a while back about having a defective oil filter in our "spares" box. Captain Ron had only packed enough oil filters for the length of our trip so now we were short one oil filter. He spent considerable time yesterday trying to figure out how to get another oil filter. Amazon prime should have been an option with free two day shipping, but when it came time to place the order, the estimated arrival date was six days away and we would be long gone by then.

The oil filter for our diesel boat is not a common one and he called several auto parts stores in town and they either didn't stock the one he needed or they would have to order it.

Finally, Captain Ron went to the filter manufacturer's website and looked up "where to buy" (their products). He called the closest two stores on the list and was put on hold. He eventually called the third store and the counter person said he didn't have one in stock but he could have one by the next day (Saturday) at 8:00 AM.

True to his word, he had the filter in at 8:00 AM and called Captain Ron to come and get it.

We drove to the nail salon. Captain Ron got his "mani-pedi" from a young lady who apparently spoke little or no English. Once he was done, he

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

jumped into the jeep and drove about fifteen minutes to the auto parts store and got his filter. He called Patti to see if she was finished at the nail salon but she wasn't so he returned to the boat and took the K-9 for a walk. The pup lead Captain Ron to the marina office where she plopped down on the cool floor.



Patti gets her nails painted for Independence Day

Back on the boat, Patti called and asked Captain Ron if he wanted a sandwich for lunch. He said "yes" so she brought back lunch from a restaurant near the nail salon.

Once we finished lunch, Patti worked on getting some prescriptions filled at the local CVS. Captain Ron caught up on his home improvement and cooking shows on TV.

Of course, the Sea Dog needed to be walked a few times. We stopped and talked with another boater at the marina who was walking her dogs. Our experience has been that a lot of cruisers cruise with dogs.

The skies darkened and it looked like rain, so we headed back to the boat. We didn't quite make it, but the rain was light and didn't last long.

We didn't feel like a full meal so we settled on apple slices and cheese. The puppy had another walk and it's time for bed.

Captain's Log, day forty eight, (July 3, 2022)

Our plan for today was to take the car we had borrowed and go to Walmart and Publix. We got dressed and walked the puppy. We put the hound back on the boat and walked to the parking lot to find the car gone. We decided that since we were already out, we might as well go to the donut shop for donuts. It may have been because this was a holiday weekend or it may have been some other reason, but their selection was pretty minimal this morning.

We did get donuts though and headed back to the boat for our "breakfast of champions". After breakfast, Patti did a little sleuthing and found out that the people who had loaned us the car had returned from their boat weekend a day early because of a water leak and generator problems. The guy had gone to Home Depot for parts.

Once he returned with the car, it was our turn. As we were heading for Walmart, Patti spotted a pet store and since she wanted to find pro-biotics for the ship's puppy, we pulled into the shopping center where the pet store was.

Low and behold, right next to the pet store was a Harbor Freight store (Harbor Freight sells cheap tools for those who may not know).

Captain Ron perked up and Patti suggested that he go to Harbor Freight while she was in the pet store.

This is Florida, of course, and many of the signs in Harbor Freight were in Spanish, but Captain Ron managed to find a small hand pump (for when he accidentally puts too much oil in the transmission) and a new handheld work light (to replace the one that no longer works because the battery connections corroded).

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Patti got what she needed at the pet store so we hopped back in the car and continued on to Walmart.

Shopping in Walmart on a holiday Sunday was probably not the best idea we ever had, but we did find some clothes Patti needed and some more that she didn't really need but were on sale. And sodas and sandwich bags.

On the way back, we stopped in CVS to pick up one of Captain Ron's prescriptions. Using CVS for prescriptions works out well because there is a CVS in nearly every town we visit and they can access our prescriptions from any store.

Next, it was on to Publix for more sodas.

Back at the marina, we had a full dock cart of bags to load onto the boat and put away.

The K-9 was glad to see us and of course, she needed a walk. People often ask us what we do for exercise while cruising on our boat. Walking the dog is probably a big part of it.

We thought about dinner and where to go. Chinese food sounded like a good option, but when we checked, all the nearby Chinese restaurants were closed because it was Sunday. We considered walking to town but settled on the Joe's Crab Shack directly behind our boat. Once seated, we could see HIGH COTTON out the window. The staff sang "Happy Birthday" to Patti even though it was two days late.

Walking back from the restaurant, we found several of the resident boaters in chairs on the dock having "docktails" (cocktails, but on the dock). They invited us to join them so we did. After a few minutes, Captain Ron walked to HIGH COTTON for the Sea Dog and brought her back to the party.

A few more minutes passed and it began to rain so the entire group moved to the covered party area next to the pool. There was much thunder and lightning and heavy rain, something fairly normal for south Florida in the summer. We stayed dry though, under the thatched roof.

Eventually, the party broke up. Captain Ron and Patti took turns showering, but by the time they were done it was past their bedtime!

Captain's Log, day forty nine, (July 4, 2022)

Today was a day in port so there's not much to write about. Of course, it was Independence Day, the celebration of the birth of the United States of America.

So, we got up. Kiki got her morning walk. Patti fixed a "homemade" breakfast for the crew. After breakfast, we took the pup for a walk again. This time she chose to walk around the block and through the residential area. She found several puddles to walk through.



A cute cottage near the marina in Ft. Myers, FL

We returned from our walk and Captain Ron and the ship's puppy went to the V berth to rest with the fan's cooling breeze. The air conditioning on HIGH COTTON is good, but it struggles with an

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

outdoor air temperature of ninety five degrees and a water temperature nearing that. Boats have no insulation.

Eventually, Captain Ron and the Sea Dog fell asleep watching TV so Patti walked to the shaded area near the pool and talked to some of the other boaters.

Once Captain Ron woke up and Patti returned, we (just the humans) changed into our swimwear and went to the pool. It was pretty crowded, but still refreshing.

The marina put on a party with a DJ and catered BBQ. We had a seat with some of the liveaboard boaters that we have been hanging out with and were surprised when we were allowed to go through the food line first because it was our fortieth wedding anniversary. Did Captain Ron forget to mention that?

The food was good, the company was good and even the music (a DJ) was good. Captain Ron recognized a song that he hadn't heard in fifty years or so. Kiki even got to attend after we finished eating.



Independence Day party at Legacy Harbour Marina

After the party, we returned to the boat and took turns showering. We wondered when the city's fireworks would start, but they finally did at about

9:15 PM. They were not far from the stern of our boat and we had a good view of them.

Then it was time for bed.

Captain's Log, day fifty (July 5, 2022)

The Sea Dog was groomed shortly before we left, but after seven weeks at sea, she is beginning to look like a Sea Bear! Patti had talked to the marina people about a dog groomer and found that there is one across the street from the Publix. She called as soon as she found out about it but they couldn't take Kiki until this morning (we stayed here an extra day because of this).

So, we got up, walked the dog, and then asked her if she wanted to get a haircut. We don't know what goes on during these haircuts, but she apparently enjoys it and she was excited and ready to go.

It was about a three block walk to the grooming salon and we took our granny cart so we could stop at Publix on the way back and get some last minute food and supplies.

We left the pup and walked over to Publix and got most of what we needed. They were still out of Captain Ron's soda water. We wheeled the granny cart back to the marina and put stuff away.

Captain Ron got out the potable water hose and filled HIGH COTTON's potable water tanks which were nearly empty by now.

Just before 1:00 PM, the groomer called and said Kiki was ready to come home so we walked back and got her. She got a nice close cut and should be more comfortable for the rest of the trip. Captain Ron is thinking he should have gotten groomed as well. Maybe he will the next time we stop in a city.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



Kiki showing off her new haircut

We changed into our swimwear (the humans, that is) and headed to the pool. Dogs are not allowed in the pool or on the pool deck.

Today's experience was different from yesterday's. We had the pool to ourselves. It was a bit warm, but still refreshing and we found some pool toys and just floated around for a half hour or so.

We mentioned a couple days ago about Chinese food (people in China just call it "food"). The Chinese restaurant was open so we changed back into our street clothes and walked to town and to the Chinese Restaurant. Once we were inside, we recognized it as a place we had eaten back in 2017 when we first cruised to the Gulf Coast. The food was excellent but now we have probably two more meals of it.

Walking back to the marina, we met two couples heading from the marina towards town for dinner. We told them of our experience. Maybe they went there, maybe not.

We returned to the boat where an excited ship's puppy was waiting to see us. Patti took her for a walk.

The skies turned dark and it looked like rain but the rain stayed away. We could see on TV that there was rain south of Ft. Myers.

The humans took showers. Tomorrow, we have to leave this wonderful place and head back towards home.

Captain's Log, day fifty one (July 6, 2022)

"On the water again, I just can't wait to get on the water again". Well, it just doesn't roll off the tongue like the Willie Nelson song!

But, we are back underway and cruising after another extended stay at Legacy Harbor Marina in Ft. Myers, FL.

We got up, got dressed and walked the puppy, of course, and we checked the engine and bilge for problems. We unhooked the shorepower cord and docklines and worked our way out of our slip to the main channel.

Our first stop was the Ft. Myers City Yacht Basin for fuel, which was about a mile away. We arrived shortly before they opened at 8:00 AM, but one of the employees kindly caught our lines and tied us up. We had to wait until 8:00 AM to take on fuel.

Fifty seven gallons of diesel and three hundred and forty six dollars later, we were underway again. The Sea Dog got some treats from the attendant.

Two other boats left Legacy Harbor this morning a little later than us, but they were a little faster than us as well. We could see them in the distance getting closer and closer.

They caught up with us after about two hours at the Franklin Lock and locked through with us. We were raised a foot or so.

Knowing that the two bigger boats (they were travelling together) were slightly faster than HIGH COTTON, Captain Ron called them on the radio and

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

suggested that they pass us as soon as we all cleared the lock.



HIGH COTTON and two other boats in the Franklin Lock

They both passed us and we followed them until they were out of sight.

Later, we came up behind a trawler, somewhat larger than HIGH COTTON, but travelling very slowly, a bit more than half our speed. We passed it and soon forgot about it.

We were approaching a drawbridge (actually, a “swing bridge”) that we needed to have opened. We had heard the other two boats going through it several minutes before us. We called the bridge tender and requested an opening. Surprisingly, we heard the slow boat that we had passed also calling for an opening.

Both of us went through the bridge and then the “slow boat” called us and asked to pass us.

It went on past us and got nearly out of sight. Captain Ron could see it on the chart plotter because it was transmitting an AIS signal (just as we do). He noticed it slowing down just before the next bridge where the LaBelle town docks are (this was our destination for today and it’s free, but first come first served.

Sure enough, when we got to the docks, the other boat was in one of the slips.

Fortunately, there were still two vacant slips so we started backing into one of them. A guy came running out and said that we needed to take the other slip, that this one was “reserved”.

Captain Ron knows that these slips cannot be reserved, but to ease any potential issues, he went back into the river and docked HIGH COTTON in the other vacant slip.



HIGH COTTON returns to the LaBelle town docks

We remembered the power connections being a bit “flaky” at this slip when we were here a few weeks ago, but Captain Ron managed to get the power working so the boat could cool down.

The K-9 wanted to get off the boat and go for a walk, but Patti determined that the docks were very hot so she got carried to the grassy area.

We walked the puppy for a bit and then sat on a bench with the breeze helping to cool us off. These free docks are in a lovely town park along the river front. There are even restrooms but they are about two blocks away. We can just use what we have on the boat. We will probably even shower on the boat tonight.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain Ron mentioned getting “groomed” (a haircut) the other day and while searching the Internet for a restaurant, he somehow came across a hair salon that offers men’s haircuts. He called, but they could not take him today so that’s the end of that idea. He found another salon, but the website was in Spanish and the photos showed some really strange (to normal people) haircuts so he didn’t call them. People on one of the other boats offered Patti the use of a pair of clippers in case she wanted to cut Captain Ron’s hair, but she declined. Captain Ron thinks that was a good decision.

The skies darkened and we expected a storm, but the storm never came and the sun came back out.

We walked the few blocks back to the restaurant we had eaten at a few weeks ago when we were here and ordered the salad bar. This is a good restaurant and seems to be doing well. It was crowded for a Wednesday night. As she did the last time, Patti brought back some boiled eggs for the Sea Dog.

It’s very difficult to get on and off our boat here (but remember, it is free including power). Captain Ron suspects that whoever designed the dock had never seen a boat before.

Captain Ron sat on the dock and jumped to the boat’s swim platform. He got the puppy off, climbed back up onto the dock and we all walked around the park. We saw two kids sneaking up on a cat so Captain Ron walked over to make sure nothing bad happened to the cat. The cat spied the kids and took off running. Later, it came back. Kiki saw it, but of course, she was on her leash and could only bark at it. The cat was not impressed.

We managed to get back on the boat without falling in the water. Tomorrow’s voyage will take

five hours so we will probably leave early to beat the heat and possible storms.



Patti negotiating the high dock and low HIGH COTTON

Captain’s Log, day fifty two (July 7, 2022)

We mentioned that the last time we were here the electrical power seemed a bit flaky. Well, Captain Ron woke up at 11:00 PM to dead silence. Now silence might be golden, but he would rather have heard the air conditioner running. He waited a few minutes to see if it would cycle on but it didn’t.

He got out of bed and checked the power panel. The boat was not getting electrical power from the dock pedestal.

So, he put on a pair of shorts and his boat shoes, asked Patti to monitor the panel and climbed onto the dock to troubleshoot the power issue.

The circuit breaker on the dock pedestal was tripped so he reset it. The power came back on for about two minutes and the breaker tripped again. Time for plan “B”.

Fortunately, Captain Ron had anticipated power issues and used one of the long shorepower cords here. He was able to move the cord to the pedestal behind the adjacent slip and get power.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Back on the boat, we now had power and air conditioning again, but Captain Ron had a hard time getting back to sleep. Eventually, he did manage to drift off.

We rolled out of bed at about 6:15 AM, hoping to get an early start and beat the heat and any storms. Because of the difficulty Patti had been having getting on and off the boat here and because Captain Ron had to get off anyway, Captain Ron took the Sea Dog for her morning constitutional.

We looped all the lines back to the boat so we could undo them from the boat and left the cute little town of LaBelle, FL at about 7:00 AM.

After about an hour underway, we came to the Ortona Lock where we would be lifted about eight feet. We called the lockmaster and got a reply that "We'll get you through as soon as we can."

We could see that the lock chamber was already at our level and we could see people walking around, mowing the grass and such, but we drifted around for about twenty minutes before the doors opened and we got the green light to enter.

The doors finally closed and we began our rise. Patti could see at least three manatees in the lock with us.

The front doors eventually opened and we were able to continue eastward. A couple of good sized boats came from the east and we could hear them calling the lock to be lowered. A little while later, a large, fast boat caught up with us and we executed a "slow pass". It was soon out of sight.

We passed a sister ship to HIGH COTTON, another Camano Troll docked along the canal.



Another Camano Troll docked on the Okeechobee Waterway

Captain Ron and Patti exchanged places at the helm and in another hour or so we were at our second lock of the day, the Moore Haven Lock.

Captain Ron took the helm and we executed our locking procedure where Patti takes the bow line and Captain Ron takes the stern line.

We were raised another two feet to the lake level and exited the lock. No waiting this time.

We had about two more hours to go in a canal paralleling the shore of Lake Okeechobee. There are high dikes on one side and trees on the other. We could see the actual lake on the chart plotter, but not visually. We saw a couple of small alligators along the canal.

We neared Roland Martin's Marina and called them on the radio. We were given docking instructions (it's just one long dock and we were put on the far end). Captain Sam, the dockmaster was there to take our lines as he has been each time we stayed here.

The hound was in a rush to get off the boat so Patti took her. She went for the grass, took care of business and went straight to the office for treats and petting. Captain Ron followed, checked us in and paid for our stay. He did not get petted.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Having skipped showers yesterday, we were both in need of getting cleaned up so we returned to HIGH COTTON and then, one by one, went to the shower facility. The restrooms and showers here are best described as “rustic” (and not air conditioned), but there’s plenty of water and plenty of pressure.



Wildlife at the Roland Martin Marina

Captain Ron picked out a stop for us for tomorrow night and he called to make a reservation. It turns out that this is a Federal Park and reservations can only be made on-line

He went to the website to make a reservation and found that he had to create an account first. Making the account required that he acknowledge and automated email, but when it showed up on his computer, it was scrambled and he had to wait for it to show up on his phone and then finish creating the account on his phone.

Back on the computer, he was able to reserve a slip, receive a “geezer” discount and pay for the slip. The last time we stayed here was a few years ago and all we had to do was pull into a vacant slip, walk to the office and hand the lady a credit card. That was much simpler. Sometimes, technology is more trouble than it’s worth.

Captain Ron and Kiki watched TV for a bit and then the humans walked to the on-site Tiki bar/restaurant. Captain Ron remembered having an excellent club sandwich when we were here a few weeks ago, but unfortunately, it was on the lunch menu and not available by the time we showed up. He had a fish basket and Patti had a Quesadilla and a salad.

After dinner, Patti took the hound for a walk and Captain Ron started talking with a couple on the boat in front of us. Eventually Patti and the Pup showed up and we talked a bit more. They seemed impressed with our cruising. Maybe talking to us will get them started on the cruising life.

Thursday is karaoke night at the Tiki hut and we are not far away enough to ignore it. Hopefully, it will end at a reasonable hour.

Our plan for tomorrow is to get an early start for the four hour lake crossing. The total trip tomorrow should be about six hours so we need our sleep.

Captain’s Log, day fifty three (July 8, 2022)

East bound and down, loaded up and boatin’! Actually we are headed more north east than east, but tomorrow we will begin heading north towards Charleston, SC.

We set the alarm again this morning for oh dark thirty to get an early start across Lake Okeechobee. Patti walked the puppy in the dark and saw two large toads. The hound missed seeing them which is good because they can be toxic to dogs. Captain Ron did the engine checks and readied the boat for departure.

The part of this marina that is used for larger transient boats is actually a dead end canal with a

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

dock along one side. It's perhaps forty feet wide and larger boats have to back out to a turning basin. A smaller boat like HIGH COTTON can actually turn around in the canal if it is done very carefully.

Captain Ron decided that because there were several boats behind us, it would be simpler and safer to turn around so he wouldn't have to back down the canal with all the large, expensive boats.

He looped a line from a stern cleat around a dock cleat and back to the boat so Patti could release it at the proper time. Using the bow thruster, he did a one hundred eighty degree turn. Patti released the dock line and we were ready to go.

The only problem was, another boater a few spots behind us did the same thing at just about the same time. Fortunately, he saw us coming and brought his boat back to the dock so we could pass. We thanked him and headed out into the lake.

There are two ways to get from one side of Lake Okeechobee to the other, across the lake or around one side. Larger boats usually go across because it is deeper and a shorter distance, however, in bad weather, the lake can be very rough and uncomfortable.

Crossing the lake (the route we take) is about twenty two miles. Today, it was as smooth as a piece of glass. For the first hour or so, we were travelling directly into the rising sun. This was fine when the sun was behind the clouds, but it eventually rose high enough in the sky that it was a problem. Staring into the rising sun makes it very difficult to make out the channel markers and see the chart plotter. It was a nice sunrise, though.



Sunrise on Lake Okeechobee

It took a little over three hours to cross the lake and we entered the Port Mayaca Lock. As we were entering, a large fishing boat called to go through in the other direction. The lockmaster told him he would have to wait and to move to the side to give us room to exit. There was a manatee in the lock with us.

Normally, the lake is the highest point and the canal is lower, but the lockmaster told us that today the canal was higher than the lake because of recent rains. He was letting excess water from the canal into the lake and this produced some strong side currents that made it difficult to control HIGH COTTON when entering the lock.

We now had another three hours on the St. Lucie Canal to get to our reserved slip at the St. Lucie Lock Campground.

The first railroad bridge (the lift bridge) was open and we cruised on through. As we approached the Indiantown railroad swing bridge, we noticed that it was closed, blocking the river. This bridge is normally open unless a train is coming.

We called the bridge tender on the radio and were told that a track inspector was on the bridge and it would be opened shortly.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

The bridge started to open and we started heading slowly towards it. All of a sudden, it started raining! Not drizzle, hard rain. We didn't have time to do our normal rain drill, Captain Ron had to be at the helm to steer the boat through the bridge. He remained at the helm and got wet while Patti took the pooch below. Unfortunately, the result was that our towels and seat covers got soaking wet (as did Captain Ron). Once we were through the bridge Patti steered the boat from the lower helm while Captain Ron covered the instruments and came down to take the helm. The good news is, we found out that Captain Ron's earlier windshield wiper repairs were effective.

The rain stopped after ten minutes or so, so we went back to the flybridge. Of course, we had to remove the seat covers and sit on the vinyl.

A half hour or so later, it began to rain again but we had time to get below the right way with minimum soaking.

Again, this was a short rain and within ten minutes we were back on the flybridge looking at sunny skies ahead.

Eventually, we spotted the lock and the campground/marina. We had been required to reserve a specific slip, but of course, we were not able to see the slips before we reserved them. It turned out that the one we reserved was not the best slip for HIGH COTTON, but it would do. As we were backing in, a lady from the only other boat came over and gave us a hand. She was a lot of help because if you back into these slips too far, you hit rocks.

The K-9 was anxious to get off the boat so Patti took her for a walk while Captain Ron finished positioning the boat and connected the power.

He went looking for the rest of the crew and found Patti talking to some of the campers while the

ship's puppy was lying in the shade on a cool concrete pad under a camper.

Captain Ron found one of the campers admiring HIGH COTTON so they talked for a while. Later, the camper's wife walked down to tour HIGH COTTON.

Somewhere along the way today, probably early in the morning when we had our running lights on, we picked up some insects. Hundreds of insects. They were all over the cockpit and some got inside when we opened the door to go in or out. So after we got the boat cooled off and rested up a bit, we got out our water hose, hooked it up to the dock spigot, and sprayed the bugs away. We even had them in the hatch to the lazarette.



Bugs on the boat

This place is a Federal Campground with eight boat slips and several campsites so there is a building with restrooms and showers. No air conditioning and only one shower for men and one for women, but they are showers with plenty of water. Patti walked over and took hers. Captain Ron followed but had to wait for someone to finish.

We remember this place from a few years ago; there are lots of lizards including some that are much larger than the ones we normally see. Kiki loves to chase lizards, but we make sure she doesn't actually catch any.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Dinner tonight (this campground is not near any restaurants or businesses) was leftover Chinese food from a restaurant in Ft. Myers. Dessert was pie from Publix.

Tomorrow, we go through our last lock and will be let down to sea level. We head northeast for a few more miles and then north.



More "wildlife" on the Okeechobee Waterway



HIGH COTTON at the St. Lucie Campground

Captain's Log, day fifty four (July 9, 2022)

We didn't have to get up early today because the lock wouldn't be staffed until 7:00 AM, but somebody forgot to tell the Sea Dog. As soon as it began to get light, she was up and ready to go.

We got up, got dressed, walked the pup and got the boat ready to move on. We pulled out of the slip and called for the lockmaster (the lock is in the park where we stayed). It was about 7:05 AM, but we got no response. We called again and still got no response. We could see a guy in a yellow reflective vest walking across the dam and then back towards the lock. Eventually we heard the words on the radio "Stand by, starboard tie." "Starboard tie" means we use the lines on the starboard (right) side of the lock as we are looking at it from our boat.

It was another twenty minutes before the doors began to open and the light turned from red to green. We entered the lock and grabbed the lines.

It was about another twenty minutes to drop ten feet to the river level. There was at least one manatee in the lock with us.

We had already spent the better part of an hour and were less than a quarter of a mile from where we started. And it was already getting hot.

We headed down the St. Lucie River through the suburbs of Stuart, FL. We saw lots of nice homes and some more modest, but well-kept homes. We passed the spot where we had anchored a few weeks ago and saw the house that had been struck by lightning and burned that night. We could see that people were working to repair it.

We got to the drawbridge about 8:45 AM and found that the next opening would be at 9:00 AM. We asked the bridge tender how much clearance there was under the bridge and his reply was "I am not allowed to give navigation advice."

Internet sources suggested that the clearance was fourteen feet and by taking down our Bimini top, we would be able to clear that, but the tide boards at the bridge showed ten feet so we decided to wait for the opening.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

There was some pretty strong current near the bridge and boats were going every which way and this made it difficult to wait for fifteen minutes, but we did. Just before 9:00 AM, we heard a boat call the bridge tender on the radio and say he would be going through on the 9:00 AM opening. We could not see the boat, but just before 9:00 AM, it came into view from another branch of the river, jumped in front of HIGH COTTON and went through the bridge. A third boat, a sport fish, followed HIGH COTTON through the bridge. It remained behind us for several minutes and then took off at full speed, passing us with an uncomfortable wake.

Even though it was just after 9:00 AM, it seemed like everybody who owned a boat near Stuart, Florida had it out on the water going somewhere in a hurry.

We continued seaward down the St. Lucie River, dodging boats right and left until we came to where the river crosses the ICW. We had the choice of turning south and heading towards Miami and Key West, heading out into the Atlantic Ocean towards Spain or turning north and heading for our home port, Charleston, SC. Patti selected north towards Charleston.

We did see two sting rays (well, some sort of rays) jumping out of the water in front of us. Otherwise, our voyage

was uneventful except for dodging boat traffic. We reached the Fort Pierce City Marina at a little past noon. They have a very nice farmers market in the park next to the marina every Saturday morning, but of course, we missed it by an hour or so.

We did get a nice slip on a sturdy floating dock and were helped in by a competent, professional dockhand (perhaps he was the dockmaster).



HIGH COTTON docked at the Ft. Pierce City Marina

We walked the puppy of course and she went to the marina office for dog treats and petting.

We needed ice for the cooler so Patti asked what sized bags they had. The lady said ten pound or sixteen pound. Thinking the sixteen pound bag would be a better deal, that's what she chose. It turned out to be \$8.00 (with tax). Ten pound bags were \$3.50 each.

Patti went back and questioned her, but it was too late, the ice had been paid for. Later, the lady gave her an extra discount at the gift shop to make up for the confusion.

The marina gave us a twenty percent off coupon for one of the restaurants so after our showers, we walked there for dinner. They had no indoor seating but we were given a table under the roof and there was enough breeze from the fans that it was not uncomfortable.

The food was good, but there were two guys playing guitars and singing who weren't quite ready to be out in public (that was Captain Ron, the retired musician's opinion anyway). Fortunately, they were around the corner from us and the noise of the fans partially drowned out their "music".

We walked back to the boat, got the puppy off and went for a walk. We walked around the park and

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

she chased lizards. Eventually, we ended up near another restaurant and got ice cream. Kiki got her share.

We were “tired but clean” (as the late soul singer, James Brown used to say) so we took our pills and hit the hay.



The park next to the Ft. Pierce City Marina

Captain’s Log, day fifty five (July 10, 2022)

This morning, at about 3:30 AM, the people on the boat next to us turned on their radio and began talking on the dock. We have no idea why, but it woke us up. Captain Ron got up and turned the light on in the head and we guess they realized they woke us up so they went into their boat and shut the door.

We went back to sleep, but the Sea Dog got up at about 6:45 AM so we got up with her. We did what we had to do and got underway just a bit before 6:30 AM. Unplugging HIGH COTTON, Captain Ron apparently turned off the circuit breaker for the boat next to us and they had to get out and turn it back on. Captain Ron swears it was not intentional, that he turned off the one for our cord.

It is often said that “everything on your boat is broken, you just don’t know it yet”. Captain Ron wouldn’t say that is true, but it is true that something may fail or break at any time and you either have to be prepared to fix it, prepared to pay someone to fix it, or do without it (that is not always an option).

So, we were tooling along shortly after leaving the marina and Captain Ron noticed that there was no depth reading on the chart plotter. No blinking as sometimes happens when a big boat passes us with a large wake, it was blank.

Captain Ron handed the helm over to Patti and went below to see what he could do. Unplugging everything and then plugging it back in often solves these problems, but it didn’t this time. Then, he got an error message saying that GPS reception was lost.

Eventually, he got things back to where they were this morning (with GPS but no depth sounder) and decided to leave it this way until we reached our destination. As long as we stay in the channel, depth would not be an issue.

Our navigation system consists of two “Multi-Function Displays” (commonly referred to as a “GPS”) that are networked together. A depth sounder module and an AIS transceiver are connected to one MFD and it shares information with the other via the network.

One of the MFDs is thirteen years old and the other is eleven years old (because it was replaced under warranty). The older one has been acting a little flaky and Captain Ron suspects that was the problem today. Unfortunately, the company (Garmin) no longer makes or supports this model.

We ran for six hours today on the Indian River with no depth sounder. It was easy staying in the channel. Again today, there was a lot of boat

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

traffic. Just north of Vero Beach we saw a large boat in the distance being towed by a TowBoatUS boat. We followed it for a mile or so and then the tow boat let it loose and it continued on its own power. It was travelling ever so slightly faster than us. It was still in sight four hours later as we pulled into Melbourne Harbor. We can't figure that one out.

We called the marina and were met and assisted by the dockmaster into an easy to enter slip. We got tied up and hooked up and walked the hound. She went to the office but there were no dog treats. We walked the puppy some more and headed back to the boat.

Captain Ron swapped the two MFDs on the two helms, putting the newer one at the lower helm where everything else connects. He turned everything on and it seemed to work, but intermittent problems are never easy to troubleshoot. A replacement (but used) MFD can be had on eBay for about \$500 or everything can be replaced with modern, up to date electronics for \$2,500 or so. Neither can happen until we get home however. It's often said that "BOAT" stands for "Break Out Another Thousand"!

The docks and office at Melbourne Harbor Marina are first class, but the heads and showers are in a separate building and leave a bit to be desired. There is air conditioning (sort of) in the main part but not where the showers are. Patti found a lizard in her shower. We did take much needed showers though. The water was fine with plenty of volume and pressure.

Captain Ron had been looking forward to returning to Melbourne so he could try the Cuban restaurant we missed the last time we were here. Unfortunately, it is closed on Sunday so it's on to "Plan B".

The marina gave us a discount coupon for the on-site restaurant so we walked the several steps from our boat to the restaurant and had hamburgers. They were decent.

Twice since we docked here, the skies have darkened and the winds have kicked up, but so far it hasn't rained. We walked back to the boat, got the K-9 off and walked around the park and around the condo building.

It's time for bed again. We have a short run to a nice marina in a nice town tomorrow and we are expecting visitors.

Captain's Log, day fifty six (July 11, 2022)

What's a day on the water without a little drama, right?

We did all out pre-departure chores, got dressed, walked the dog, checked the oil, etc. Captain Ron started the engine and turned on the chart plotter to make sure everything was working correctly after yesterday's problems and reconfiguration. He got a shallow water alarm because our slip had less than five feet of water, but that was expected. He cancelled the alarm, Patti untied the lines, stepped onto the boat and we pulled out of the slip. We had travelled thirty feet or so when Captain Ron looked at the chart plotter display and it was blank! Dark as a dungeon. No amount of button pushing would bring it to life.

We had no chart plotter, no chart and no depth alarm, but we did have the red and green channel markers marking the deepest water from Melbourne Harbor to the ICW so Captain Ron followed the channel. He called Patti to the helm and went below to check things out. The chart plotter at the lower helm was working as it was

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

supposed to with the chart, boat icon and depth reading.

He returned to the upper helm and while Patti was guiding the boat towards the ICW, he got down on his back and slid under the helm to see if he could find the problem.

Using the training and experience from his career as an electronic technician to the fullest advantage, he determined that the power cord to the chart plotter had fallen out. He also determined that this was because the person who had connected it yesterday (that would be Captain Ron) had neglected to tighten the locking ring on the plug.

He plugged the cord in, tightened the locking ring, slid out from under the helm and pressed the power button. Low and behold, the chart plotter came on, booted and displayed what it was supposed to display. We were now one hundred percent operational.

Of course, we are not certain if the original problem has been corrected or if it will show up again. Captain Ron is leaning towards replacing all the navigational equipment with new, "state of the art" equipment before our next cruise. There have been a lot of improvements in the years since our systems were designed.

All of this occurred in the first twenty minutes today and by now, Captain Ron was fully awake and alert.

For the next two and a half hours, we saw only three boats on the water. One was a small jon boat anchored and fishing. One was a jet ski that was apparently broken down or out of gas because it was not moving and the other was a small bow rider on its way to assist the jet ski. Contrast this to the dozens of boats we saw on the water Saturday and Sunday. Apparently, many people had to work today.

After only an hour, we could see our destination for today, Cocoa, FL in the distance. We could see the tall condos that the marina is a part of.

Seeing is not the same as being there or even nearly there. It was another two hours before we approached the marina. We finally did see a couple more boats on the water as we neared Cocoa.



Approaching Cocoa, FL

We called the marina on the radio and got the dockmaster who guided us into a slip in a different section of the marina than where we had stayed on our previous visits. The docks are lower in this section and it's better suited for a smaller boat like HIGH COTTON.

The last time we were at this marina, dogs were not allowed in the office, but the dockmaster said it was OK for Kiki to come so once we got settled in, we got her off the boat and headed for the office. She stopped to take care of business first, of course.

The marina office is on the second floor so we took the pup for an elevator ride. She seems to like to ride in elevators.

Once we got to the nice, air conditioned office, the ship's puppy got treats and got petted by the dockmaster. The humans got some fresh cold

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

water and watermelon. And got to cool off from a hot boat ride.

After several minutes, the office door opened and in walked our expected visitors, Bruce and Patty Goulet from our home town, Charleston, SC. They have a boat in Daytona, FL and have been staying on it for a few days and decided to drop by and visit us.



Captain Bruce, Patty, Patti and Captain Ron

They have been searching for a replacement pump for their boat and when they mentioned it, the dockmaster helped them find a place to order it from. That's service!

We put the K-9 back on the boat as a guard dog and hopped into Bruce's truck. We stopped by a marine store but didn't find anything we couldn't live without. Captain Ron considered the stainless steel cup holders with built in lights, but decided against them. After that, we headed for a restaurant and had a nice meal and conversation.

We stopped at Publix on the way back to the boat, forgetting that the bed of Bruce's truck was filled to the brim with tools and other stuff. While we were in the store, we could hear thunder and rain but it was over by the time we checked out. We left Publix with a cart full of groceries and had to ride back to the marina with bags between our legs and in our laps.

We said our good byes, rolled the groceries to the boat and Patti put everything away.

Patti's plan was to do a couple loads of laundry so Captain Ron took his shower so his clothes could be washed. Patti took her shower and then put the clothes in the washer. She took along a clean dress to wear back to the boat.

The ship's puppy wanted to get off the boat so Patti took her when she took the second load of laundry.

Tomorrow will be a day in port in this lovely town of Cocoa, FL. We will explore the town, visit the shops and hopefully eat at the German restaurant we liked so much the last time we were here.

Captain's Log, day fifty seven (July 12, 2022)

As has been happening often lately, the Sea Dog and Patti got up at the break of dawn and went for a walk, leaving Captain Ron asleep in the bed. Eventually, they returned and this woke Captain Ron so he decided to get up as well.

Patti was in a cooking mood this morning so she fixed Captain Ron a poached egg over corned beef hash. The rest of the crew got scrambled eggs and sausage.

After breakfast, Patti stripped the bed and took the bedding to the laundry room. The marina has a really nice laundry room with four washers, four dryers, an ironing board and an iron. Patti did not use the ironing board or iron. She did take the Sea Dog with her and they sat in the office while the clothes were in the machines. Captain Ron stayed on the boat planning our next stops and researching replacements for the navigation equipment.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Once the laundry was done and the beds made up, everyone walked over to the little beach next to the marina. The ship's puppy was the first to run out in the water and swim. Actually, she was the only one to run out in the water and swim. Or even get into the water. The humans stayed on the beach.

While the hound swam and rolled in the sand, Patti looked for shells and sea glass. She vowed to come back later alone and search some more.

It was a dirty dog that returned to the boat with us and as usual, she got a thorough rinsing before she was allowed back inside the boat. She and Captain Ron took a short nap in the V berth.

Cocoa Village has some nice shops and restaurants and along with the nice marina, this is one reason we make it a point to stop here every time we cruise south. We left the K-9 to guard the boat and walked to the village. Our first stop was Travis Hardware, a very large old hardware store that has been in business since 1885. Captain Ron wishes this store was near Charleston, SC. It has some of everything, even nails sold in bulk by the pound and wrenches so big he would have a hard time lifting them, much less using them. Patti bought some post cards and a free puzzle. Unfortunately, Captain Ron didn't see anything he really needed right now.



Nails by the pound in Cocoa, FL

We moved on to the clothing and gift shops where Patti, as usual, did her best to support the local economy.

We finished shopping and decided to have dinner at the German Restaurant. What we had forgotten was, it's all open air. Part of it is under cover with fans, but there is no inside dining.

We got our food and it was OK, but not as great as we had remembered it from our last visit. We have leftovers though. We stopped for ice cream after dinner. The servings were larger than we expected and Captain Ron had to bring part of his back to HIGH COTTON. The boat freezer is not that great so he may be drinking his ice cream tomorrow.

We stopped to talk with a couple sitting at one of the outdoor dining spots with their multicolored dog. Apparently, they are dog groomers and their dog is their four legged billboard.



Multicolored dog in Cocoa, FL

Once we got back and got the food put away, Patti took the Sea Dog for a walk. The Sea Dog got stung by a bee on her foot and got carried back to the boat. She got some Benadryl and seems to be doing fine. Captain Ron watched her while Patti went back to the beach to search for shells and sea glass.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Eventually, the puppy indicated that she wanted to go for a walk again so Captain Ron hooked her to the leash and put her on the dock. She led Captain Ron straight to the elevator that goes to the office and laundry room.

They got in and went to the second floor where Captain Ron found a chair and the hound found a cool floor to lie on. And of course, the place was air conditioned.

Several minutes later, the door opened and Kiki's mawmaw walked in.

We went back down the elevator, walked the pup a bit and then all walked back to the boat. Patti got her shower bag and headed for the showers. Once she returned, Captain Ron did the same.

Tomorrow we continue north towards Charleston.

Captain's Log, day fifty eight (July 13, 2022)

We mentioned yesterday that Patti walked back to the beach to search for sea glass and shells. Well, she did come back with some and cleaned them off in the galley sink. She put most of her finds on a paper towel to dry but left the larger shell in the sink. After a while, Captain Ron began noticing a metallic sound like something hitting metal. He ignored it but he kept hearing it.

As he went down the stairs to prepare for bed, he noticed one of Patti's shells walking around in the galley sink! Back in the water it went. We don't need a pet crab on the boat.

It seems to be the routine now, the Sea Dog wakes up at the crack of dawn and she wakes Patti. They both get dressed and go for a walk while Captain Ron contemplates the coming day.

We got ourselves unplugged and untied and headed out of the marina at approximately 7:45 AM.



Leaving Cocoa, FL

Unlike yesterday, we hadn't even gotten out of the marina channel when we saw boats. Two smaller boats were heading south towards us on the ICW at high speed. Further observation determined that one was pulling a water skier and the other appeared to be taking a video.

The boats swerved out of the ICW towards shore and that seemed like a good idea. Then the boat circled back and crossed the ICW at ninety degrees. That would have been fine except that that's where the skier fell and the boat had to stop to pick him up out of the water.

Of course, this was all directly in the path of HIGH COTTON and we had to swerve out of the channel to avoid the boats and the skier.

One would think that boaters and skiers would have the common sense not to "play in the road", but our cruising experience has taught us to expect stupid behavior on the water and to be prepared to take evasive action.

That was our excitement for the day, we didn't see any other boats until we got to our marina for the night, the Titusville City Marina. We did see some

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

big fishies and the Sea Dog saw them, but they apparently had better things to do than to swim with us today.

We decided that we should fill up on diesel today, rather than worry about having enough to get to our next stop where they sell diesel (not all marinas sell fuel). We were directed to the fuel dock where for the mere sum of \$ 382.08, we took on 60.5 gallons of diesel fuel.

The dockhand gave us directions to our slip for the night and began walking over to that location so he could grab our lines. Patti moved the lines to the other side of the boat to get ready for our slip.

As we began to turn into the fairway to reach our slip, a sailboat in a slip began backing out. Captain Ron put HIGH COTTON in reverse and backed up and out of the sailboat's way. As soon as the sailboat was clear of the fairway, a small boat came into the marina and we had to wait to see where it was going.

Once everyone else was settled, we proceeded down the fairway and backed into our assigned slip.

Once we got settled in and the air conditioning running, we took the ship's puppy to the grassy area to do her business and then to the office. The staff remembered her from her last visit and she got treats and everyone fussed over her. We paid for our fuel and slip and sat talking to the staff while HIGH COTTON cooled off.

Eventually, it got busy in the office so we walked the dog a bit more and retired to the boat.

Patti wanted to go back to the diner where we had eaten on our previous stop so we put on our "good" clothes and walking shoes and made the nearly one mile walk in the ninety five degree Florida sun.

We went in, sat down and Patti ordered a chef's salad. The waitress said "I'm sorry, we are out of that." We are a bit puzzled as to how a restaurant can be out of salad, but there's not much point in arguing about it.

Patti decided on a BLT. Sandwiches come with a "side" so she chose French fries. Captain Ron ordered a club sandwich. The menu didn't list potato salad as a side, but the blackboard on the wall showed it as a "side". Captain Ron selected potato salad as his side.

A few minutes later, the waitress walked over to the blackboard, erased "potato salad" and came over and told Captain Ron that they were out of potato salad. He chose cottage cheese instead.

The food was good, but it would have been better if we had been able to order what we actually wanted. The waitress explained that the truck didn't show up today.

The walk back to the marina was hotter than the walk to the restaurant. We stopped at the "Save a Lot" grocery store looking for fresh green beans (for the hound) with no luck. Then we stopped in CVS for a few things. Patti shopped while Captain Ron found a chair in the pharmacy and rested.

Back at the boat, Captain Ron headed for the comfort and coolness of the V berth. After putting things away, Patti and the pooch joined him. Eventually, Patti and the pooch went for a walk to the office where the four legged one got more treats and petting.

Patti took her shower, but Captain Ron had to return and wait because both men's showers were occupied. Eventually, he got his shower.

He came back to the boat and finished his ice cream from yesterday which actually was still frozen.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

We head for New Smyrna Beach tomorrow.

Captain's Log, day fifty nine (July 14, 2022)

The alarm was set for 6:00 AM, but the hound decided we should get up earlier so we did.



Sunrise at Titusville, FL

She got her walk, the engine and bilge got checked and we were underway by about 6:30 AM. It was a short ride to the normally open railroad bridge that goes to Cape Canaveral and as expected, it was open. A few minutes later, Patti turned her head and was surprised to see a fairly large trawler about to overtake us.



HIGH COTTON is overtaken by another trawler

There was no call on the radio for a slow pass, but the trawler did swing wide and there was not a big

wake. Once it passed us, Captain Ron steered HIGH COTTON to ride directly behind it in the smooth water and it continued on.

It took a little over an hour to motor to Haulover Canal where manatees are known to congregate. It's a "slow speed, minimum wake" zone and of course we slowed down. We saw lots of manatees and actually stopped to let one pass in front of us. We also saw a sailboat that obviously spent the night at the dock we were run out of by a park ranger a few years ago.

At the end of Haulover Canal was a small boat drifting and fishing in the center of the channel. There were manatees behind it leaving us no place to go. The guy in the boat managed to start his outboard and move out of the way so we could pass safely. We have to wonder why he didn't do this sooner as he could have seen us coming for the entire length of the canal.

By the time we exited the canal, made a sharp turn to port and reached the end of the slow speed zone, the other trawler was quite a ways in front of us.

We continued for several miles up the Indian River. We saw dolphins, manatees, a turtle and stingrays. We saw several manatees just before we entered the very long "slow speed, minimum wake" manatee protection zone, but none while we were in the zone.

We got to New Smyrna Beach and called the marina on the radio. The guy who answered said that we would have to tell him what to do as he was the manager and not the guy who normally docked boats. Captain Ron did actually have to direct him as to where to cleat each line. Communication was difficult with loud music coming from a nearby waterfront restaurant but we got it done.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Once we got all the lines adjusted and the power connected, we all headed for the office. The puppy stopped to water the grass on the way.



The New Smyrna Beach City Marina

The manager took our payment, but knew nothing about dog treats. He had cat treats, but not dog treats. A few minutes later, the dockmaster came in and he knew where the dog treats were. Kiki got what she came for.

We walked the ship's puppy around the marina grounds and she chased some lizards. Then, we went back to HIGH COTTON to cool off. Captain Ron ate half of the half sandwich (do the math) he brought home from the diner in Titusville yesterday. He suggested that Patti go shopping in the town while he and the puppy rested. Patti grabbed her purse without questioning him and took off.

Captain Ron and the Sea Dog watched TV and napped while Patti tested the credit card to make sure it wasn't maxed out.

Captain Ron had the bright idea to see if there was a place within walking distance where he could get his hair cut. He lucked out and found one about three blocks from the marina. He called and made an appointment and Patti arranged to meet him there. Now, both he and the puppy are neatly groomed.



Captain Ron gets "groomed" in New Smyrna Beach

A lady in one of the stores told Patti about a free concert in the town park tonight. It was billed as "R&B" (rhythm and blues). Back at the boat, Captain Ron looked it up on the Internet and determined that it was not "R&B" as he knows it so we decided not to bother going.

For dinner, Captain Ron had leftover German food and Patti had country ham from the diner in Titusville. The Sea Dog had chicken and rice and dog food.

Captain Ron went to take a shower while Patti walked the pooch. Then she took her shower.

We learned today that a rocket was to be launched today at 8:44 PM from Cape Canaveral. Ideally we would still be in Titusville, across the river from the launch, but the dockmaster told us we should get a pretty good view from here.

So, at 8:30 PM we climbed to the flybridge to wait. Sure enough, at about 8:45 PM, we saw the rocket going over the nearby condos and across the sky, headed for space. We saw the booster rocket detach and head back towards earth. It was pretty neat. We didn't get to hear it though.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



Rocket launch from Cape Canaveral

Patti took the pup for another walk in the hopes that she wouldn't wake us as early as she has been. Tomorrow, it's a short trip to Daytona Beach.

Captain's Log, day sixty (July 15, 2022)

It was to be a lazy morning this morning, but it didn't quite work out that way. The pup let us sleep in for a half hour or so, then she wanted to get up and go for her walk. The marina doesn't sell ice and it wasn't open anyway so Captain Ron walked next door to the bait store and bought a bag to refill the cooler.

We got all our chores taken care of and got underway at about 8:00 AM. For some reason, the ICW is a "slow speed minimum wake" zone all the way through New Smyrna Beach, a distance of nearly four miles so it seemed like it took forever to get to where speed is not restricted.

Actually, for us, "slow speed minimum wake" is not a whole lot slower than our normal cruising speed, perhaps two thirds as fast, but it was already getting hot and the sun was beating down on us and the slower speed meant less cooling breeze.

We did see several different pods of dolphins in New Smyrna Beach and the Sea Dog took notice. She was on high alert and calling out to them.



The Sea Dog showing off

As the morning wore on, boat traffic increased. One would normally think of Friday as a work day, but perhaps some of these people are in Florida for vacation and some may have taken off from work for an extended weekend. Whatever the reason, it wasn't a problem except for one sportfish that was heading straight for us. He did get back onto his side of the channel before it became a problem though.

As we neared the Halifax Harbor Marina in Daytona Beach, there were a dozen or so small boats apparently casting for bait directly in the channel and taking up the entire channel. The Halifax River is very wide here, but very shallow except in the manmade channel. Captain Ron sounded a warning with HIGH COTTON's air horn and they scattered.

We called the marina on the radio and were directed to our slip for the night. We were met by a dockhand who helped us with our lines and power cord.

Halifax Harbor Marina is one of the largest marinas we have stayed in with five hundred and fifty boat slips. It is so big and spread out that the dockhands use small motorboats to get around!

We have been here several times in the past on HIGH COTTON and twice on our friends' boat

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

“Pearl 1”, a sailboat. We have always been on the other side of the marina, this is the first time we have been on the side near the office.



HIGH COTTON at Halifax Harbor Marina, Daytona Beach, FL

The dockhands are able to check boaters in remotely, but we decided to walk to the office. Of course, this allowed the ship’s puppy to entertain the office staff and get dog treats. On the way back to our slip we passed the boat ramps so of course, the K-9 had to go for a swim. The water was pretty clean but she still got rinsed off before she went inside the boat.

It was before noon when we arrived, but we were hot so we rested on the boat for a while (we actually fell asleep on the bed watching TV).

There’s a nice, casual and inexpensive Italian restaurant in town and fairly close to the marina. Captain Ron has problems sleeping after eating tomato based food (although he is very fond of it) so we decided to have an early dinner. We actually shared a salad and an order of spaghetti and meatballs and still had leftovers to bring home.

Captain Ron walked to the bathhouse and took his shower, followed by Patti. Tomorrow, we return to Palm Coast to visit Captain Ron’s brother Dick and his wife Teresa. Hopefully, Captain Ron’s daughter Robyn will drive up from the Villages where she lives with her husband Wally.

Captain’s Log, day sixty one (July 16, 2022)

This morning, it was Captain Ron, not the puppy who woke everybody up. He was having a dream where he was trying to renovate a church, but couldn’t figure out how to support one corner so he woke himself up to get out of the dream. This probably had something to do with the Italian food last night.

Anyhow, it was 6:30 AM and the weather forecast was calling for rain in the morning. He figured it would be nice to get underway before the rain started.

We have had the canvas windshield cover on for the last few days. This helps to keep the boat cooler, but of course, makes it impossible to drive the boat from the lower helm.

We removed the cover and did all our other pre-departure tasks and got underway at about 7:15 AM. The ICW in Daytona Beach is a “slow speed minimum wake” zone so we only used a few of our engine’s two hundred horses for the first several miles of our trip.

Eventually, we left the restricted speed zone and were able to rev the engine up to our normal speed. The current was against us though and we traveled at less than our usual breathtaking seven knots.

Although the weather forecast had called for rain this morning, it was a pleasant ride. The clouds kept the sun at bay and it was not overly hot.

North of Daytona Beach, the ICW channel runs close to land and some nice waterfront homes. Many are really close to the water, some have no real rear yards at all. We imagine the folks living in these homes have a nice view of the water and the boats travelling by.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



A "not too shabby" home along the ICW near Daytona Beach

We came to a low clearance drawbridge and called on the radio for an opening. The bridge tender obliged and it was open by the time we got to it.



Low bridge ahead



Open Sesame

Later in our trip we looked behind us to see a boat following along behind us. It was slowly gaining on us and eventually passed us. About this time we entered another slow speed zone so we slowed down and pulled into its wake (there should have been no wake, but there definitely was a wake). About this time it began to rain so we did the "rain drill" and moved our operation to the lower helm.

When the slow speed zone ended, the other boat did not speed up so we eventually passed it. It stayed behind us for several minutes and then suddenly sped up and passed us and was soon out of sight. As we rocked in the boat's wake, the depth sounder began to flash and we no longer had a working depth sounder. Not a problem, the ICW is plenty deep in this section.

It was raining as we neared the Palm Coast Marina, our stop for the next two nights. We called the marina on the radio and luckily were given an assignment on the face dock, not in one of the slips. Of course, we were still going to get wet, one way or another.

A dock hand came out to grab our lines and we got tied up. He left without connecting the power cord so that was left up to Captain Ron. One might wonder about connecting the power cord in a driving rain, but the trick is, you connect the cord before turning the power on. No problem. Captain Ron knows about these things.

We got the puppy and the credit card and headed for the office. The Sea Dog got petted and got a dog treat. She played with it and then ate it. We checked in, paid and got two bags of ice to fill the cooler.

Captain Ron did a scan on the TV and found only three or four stations and even these were dropping in and out. We did see part of a rerun of "The Price is Right" where a contestant won a

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

brand new 1962 Chevrolet station wagon by guessing the retail price at \$3200. Times have changed!

Captain Ron heated up the remainder of his spaghetti and meat balls and Patti ate the rest of her Greek salad. Captain Ron's daughter Robyn called and said she was on her way.

Captain Ron turned on the chart plotter and depth sounder and still had no reading. Electronically, everything checked out OK so he looked at the transducer. The transducer (the thing that sends a sound signal to the bottom of the water and listens for its return) sits in a reservoir of antifreeze. This is sealed by a rubber O ring and the level should never drop, but historically, this has been a problem for us. Captain Ron added a bit of water and the depth sounder began to show the depth again. Hopefully, this will take care of it for now. He cannot figure out how the fluid is getting out.

Robyn showed up at the marina and drove us to Captain Ron's brother Dick and his wife Teresa's house. We had a nice visit and a lovely dinner. We shared stories and photos.

Eventually, Robyn had to leave for the two hour drive home. She has a horse show tomorrow to participate in.

Dick brought us back to the marina where we walked the puppy and took showers. We get to sleep in tomorrow (we hope).

Captain's Log, day sixty two (July 17, 2022)

Today was a day in port. We woke up on the boat, we ate breakfast on the boat and we went to sleep on the boat, but we didn't do any actual boating.

Patti and the puppy got up early and went for a walk. Then they went to the marina office for treats. Only the Sea Dog got treats, not Patti.

Captain Ron woke up at about 8:00 AM all alone. He got dressed, made his coffee and went looking for the rest of his crew. He found them in the marina office and everyone went back to the boat.

Patti decided to cook the remaining three eggs and because there was no objection from the rest of the crew, she did, along with a package of sausage links. We had breakfast on HIGH COTTON.

We piddled around on the boat, working on our itinerary and such and then called Captain Ron's brother Dick to come and get us.

He did just that and took us to his house. Patti and Teresa went to the store to get groceries for dinner. They brought back lunch as well.

After lunch, Patti took Kiki for a walk. She found a small baby turtle in the street. Patti thought it was dead so she left it alone. During their next walk she saw the turtle moving so she picked it up from the street and released it near the pond in Dick and Teresa's back yard where it will either grow to be a full sized adult Florida Leatherback Turtle or become a meal for the resident alligator. At least it won't be run over in the street.

Dick and Teresa have a semiformal "nap time" each day so we all took naps. Captain Ron had no problem with this.

Dinner was pork chops, scalloped potatoes and asparagus. It was delicious.

After dinner, Dick drove us back to the marina. We stopped to talk with some of the liveaboard boaters we met the last time we were here. Patti had purchased some supplies at Publix so she put them away, we took our pills, and went to bed.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain's Log, day sixty three (July 18, 2022)

Captain Ron woke up at about 6:30 AM and decided it would be a good idea to go ahead and get up and get underway. Patti got dressed and took the hound for her customary walk. Captain Ron made his coffee and did his engine checks. The coolant leak has completely stopped. Captain Ron's brother Dick explained that seals in engines can dry out from disuse and then leak. Once the engine is put back in service, the seals soak up the liquid and swell and stop leaking. Captain Ron is fine with that explanation and is relieved to not have to replace the circulating pump. He will just have to start and run the engine every few weeks if we won't be actually cruising somewhere.

We had the shorepower cable and one line undone and were about to pull away from the dock when a dockhand showed up and helped us. It was unnecessary, but nice. Palm Coast Marina is not the most modern marina we have seen, but the folks are very nice and helpful. It's the sort of place you want to return to.

Just as we began to exit the canal onto the ICW, we saw several dolphins. We stopped to let the ship's puppy watch them. Dolphins and manatees fascinate her. The humans enjoy watching them as well.

We passed some nice neighborhoods on both sides of the canal. We also passed some natural areas and a couple of nice parks. We have been impressed with the number and quality of the waterfront parks and boat landings Florida provides for its residents and visitors.

It wasn't long before we passed Marineland Marina, a nice, but isolated marina we have stayed at in the past. Shortly after Marineland, we came to a wide, but shallow area of the ICW that's pretty well known by cruisers as a trouble spot.

The water depth went quickly from over ten feet to under five feet. The alarm sounded and we actually touched bottom for an instant even though we were between the markers and following the route.

There was some small boat traffic, but not enough to be a problem. As we approached St. Augustine, we passed an area with a lot of boats anchored. Many were in disrepair and some were grounded in shallow water. Apparently, this is a "boat graveyard".

Next, we saw two law enforcement boats together in the distance. We thought they might be lying in wait for us, but before we got to them, they sped off. Being boarded and inspected is inconvenient and stressful, not to mention, intrusive.

We got to the St. Augustine Municipal Marina and contacted them on the radio. We were directed to our slip and a dockhand was there to meet us. Unfortunately, because of strong wind and current, it took multiple tries to back into the slip, but in the end, we got in and tied up with no insurance claims.



HIGH COTTON at the St. Augustine Municipal Marina

As usual, the Sea Dog was anxious to get off the boat and explore. Captain Ron took her while Patti was covering things on the flybridge. Then she walked up and took the K-9 while Captain Ron

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

walked to the end of the dock to the marina office and checked us in and paid for our dockage.

Captain Ron walked back to land searching for his wife and dog. He found them in the ship's store (a souvenir shop that also sells tickets to the pirate cruise. It does not sell boat supplies). The hound had begged for a treat and was playing with it and entertaining the lady who worked there.

We left the ship's store and the pooch led us straight to the lounge/laundry room, so we went in and sat in the cool lounge and talked to some of the boaters.

Eventually, we left, walked the pup some more and headed to the boat. We rested for a bit and then decided to explore the town and get something light to eat.

We got as far as the building where the lounge is when it started to rain so we went back into the lounge and talked to the boaters some more.

After a half hour or so, it stopped raining so we walked around St. Augustine for a bit and then went looking for a place to eat.

Captain Ron remembered seeing a Spanish Bakery that served empanadas and other Spanish dishes. It had been closed when we were in St. Augustine a few weeks ago so we walked to it today in the hopes of finding it open.

Well, it was open, but they have no inside, air conditioned dining space, only outdoors in a courtyard. With the temperature in the mid-nineties, that didn't seem appealing.

We walked back to a restaurant we had passed that had a sandwich menu that seemed good. As we entered the place, it seemed to be more of a bar and the music was loud. Nobody acknowledged us so we found a table and sat

down. Nobody seemed to notice us so after several minutes, Captain Ron suggested that we leave and go somewhere else. We stood up and were about to leave when a waitress came with menus so we sat back down.

We ordered our food and it came. It was OK, but not great. We finished and paid the check and left the waitress a tip. Patti checked the receipt and noticed that the restaurant had added a 20% tip to the bill without asking!

Patti went to the bar and asked for an explanation. The waitress returned the cash tip Patti had given her. Our thought was, it's pretty dishonest to add charges to someone's bill without posting this policy prominently on the menu. In effect, the menu lists a burger at \$10 but they are charging \$12. We should have just eaten the empanadas outdoors and been done with it. We won't be back to that restaurant.

Back at the boat, the Sea Dog was ready for a walk so we hooked her up and let her lead. She decided that she wanted to walk over the Bridge of Lions (the bridge next to the marina). We went halfway across and then turned her around. It's a long bridge and she may have forgotten that she would have to walk back.



Forget Waldo, where is HIGH COTTON?

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



Kiki meets one of the lions

The humans took turns showering and then we all went to bed.

Captain's Log, day sixty four (July 19, 2022)

As usual, Patti and the pup were already awake and on their morning walk when Captain Ron woke up. Actually, it was rain hitting the boat that woke him. Fortunately, it was a light and very short rain.

He got dressed, did his daily engine checks and walked to the marina office for his free coffee and to turn in the restroom keys. The coffee isn't really free of course, it's included in the cost of dockage, but Captain Ron wasn't about to leave without this "amenity".

Leaving the marina wasn't nearly as difficult as entering it and we were soon passing under the Bridge of Lions. HIGH COTTON can clear the Bridge of Lions without having it opened.

A shrimp boat was entering the St. Augustine inlet just as we were about to make the turn north on the ICW so we had to avoid it. Next, we had to avoid a large research vessel heading south. It turned in front of us towards a dock and we passed behind it.



A shrimp boat nearing St. Augustine

After a while, Patti looked back and saw a rather large boat approaching us at a high rate of speed. When it got to us, there was no radio call but it pulled up beside us and slowed down. Captain Ron slowed HIGH COTTON to as slow as it would go while maintaining steerage and the boat passed us. Captain Ron pulled in behind the faster boat (to be in the smooth part of its wake) and it picked up speed and was soon out of sight. Later, another fast boat approached us from behind but this time the captain called on the radio for a "slow pass".

We passed through a long, straight stretch of the ICW with nice houses and docks on the east side and wilderness on the west side. There were several pieces of dredging equipment along this stretch. We saw thirteen feet of water depth so we have to wonder why they are dredging this section when we recently passed through a stretch with barely three and a half feet of water. Perhaps we were travelling in the part that had already been dredged.

Eventually, we turned into the entrance channel of Palm Cove Marina and called them on the radio. It's a big marina so we requested a slip near the pool and showers. We ended up in a slip just a few feet from the pool.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



HIGH COTTON in a slip "close to the pool"

By the time we got tied up, hooked up and checked in (dogs are not allowed in the office), the skies had darkened and we could hear thunder in the distance. We decided to postpone our pool time.

We walked the pup some more and then retired to HIGH COTTON to rest.

It never did rain and the thunder stopped so we changed into our swimwear and walked the thirty feet or so to the pool. The water was a pleasant temperature, but with the lowered air temperature and a brisk breeze, it was a bit cool in the pool. It was empty except for us.

Once we got tired of floating around in the pool, we went back to the boat, changed into our "good" clothes and walked to the "Shrimp Shack" restaurant. We have eaten there before and enjoyed it. The Shrimp Shack is like a Captain D's or Long John Silver, but on steroids. The Tuesday special (that we both got) was thirty fried shrimp, hush puppies and two "sides". These weren't tiny shrimp either. Once we saw what we had, we realized that we should have ordered just one dinner and extra sides. We brought about twenty eight shrimp back to the boat. We also got pineapple upside down cake for dessert.

From the Shrimp Shack, we walked to Publix for a few things and then walked back to the boat. The

walk isn't bad, but crossing the six lane highway is not easy. We made it though.

By the time we got back to the boat, the Sea Dog was ready for a walk so Patti hooked her up and took her. She rolled in the dirt and sat in a puddle so she had to get a bath when she got back.

Once the hound was clean, Patti went to take her shower. Actually, she had to wait a few minutes for the rain to stop. Once she returned, Captain Ron went to take his. This is a pretty nice marina, considering the swimming pool and walking distance to the Shrimp Shack and Publix. There is also a drug store across from the Shrimp Shack and a West Marine a couple blocks further.

Tomorrow, we head for Fernandina Beach, our last stop before the Georgia line.

Captain's Log, day sixty five (July 20, 2022)

We decided it would be best to get underway early this morning because of the weather forecast. With an alarm set for 6:15 AM, we were waked, checked, unhooked and underway by 7:00 AM.

It took us about an hour to get to where the ICW crosses the St. Johns River. The tide was going out and the current helped us along until that point. Crossing the St. Johns River on the ICW is done at an angle and that put us travelling against the downstream current of the river for a bit. We slowed to about four and a half knots, two and a half knots off our seven knot cruising speed. This was only for a few minutes, though.

On the northern shore of the St. Johns River, next to the ICW crossing is a shipyard that sometimes works on US military vessels. The military doesn't like civilians getting too close to their ships so they

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

had two patrol boats scurrying around making sure we didn't get too close.



A US Military ship being repaired

A couple hundred yards north of the intersection on the ICW is a nice Jacksonville city park with boat ramps and free docks where overnight stays are permitted. We have spent the night there several times before, but not this trip. It appeared that people were setting things up for a fishing tournament.

Since the tide was still going out and we were now on the other side of the river, we were travelling against the current and lost any advantage we had.



White pelicans on the ICW

We continued north on the ICW and eventually reached the area where the outgoing current was

headed towards Nassau Sound so we were travelling with the current again.

As expected, once we crossed Nassau Sound, we were again fighting the current. It was nearly low tide and the current was weak, but now we had to deal with shallow water. The depth alarm sounded in several places and we actually touched bottom once for an instant.

There was another very shallow, tricky place just south of Fernandina Beach, but we made it through.

We called the marina on the radio and received our docking instructions. Two dockhands met us, tied us up and plugged in our shorepower cable. The temperature was in the nineties and the sun was shining so we were glad to get our air conditioning going. As we were docking, Patti saw a large turtle in the water in front of us, apparently eating growth off the dock.



A turtle in front of HIGH COTTON

We had already paid on the phone and the dockhand gave us the electronic key card so we hooked up the pup and went for a walk. We soon decided to head for the air conditioned captain's lounge. The dockhands were in the lounge cleaning up so they petted the ship's puppy.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

It started raining and there was some thunder and lightning so we stayed in the lounge until it stopped. Then we walked back to the boat.

As we walked past the fuel dock, a large boat had just finished filling its fuel tanks. It took 397.87 gallons of diesel fuel at a cost of \$2583.87. That's more than Captain Ron paid for his first brand new car. Of course, that was many year ago.



Not our fuel bill

It began to rain again and there was a clap of thunder that shook the boat. Captain Ron thought that a boat had hit the dock, but it was just the thunder. Later on, he was walking to the lounge and saw a flash of light followed by what he thought was an explosion. It was thunder again.

Patti went to the gift shop and bought a few things to remember our visit by.

We debated eating our leftover shrimp, but decided to go to the restaurant adjacent to the marina for a light supper. By this time, the rain had dropped the temperature significantly and it seemed almost cold.

We returned to the boat and took the Sea Dog for a walk. She led us across the street and into the town. She may have expected ice cream, but we forgot to take money with us. She did get petted several times by different people.



The ship's puppy makes some new friends

Back at the boat, Patti and the puppy went to bed. Captain Ron decided he needed a shower so off he went. Once he returned, he went to bed also.



HIGH COTTON returns to Fernandina Beach, FL



Sunset in Fernandina Beach, FL

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain's Log, day sixty six (July 21, 2022)

Captain Ron had not planned to leave early today but Patti and the pup woke up at about 6:15 AM and in the process, woke Captain Ron so we decided to go ahead and get underway.

There was a Keurig coffee maker (the kind that uses coffee "pods") in the captain's lounge and it was free so Captain Ron walked to the lounge for his free coffee. He inserted the pod, pushed the buttons and the machine began making clicking and gurgling noises. Eventually, it spit out about a half cup of very strong coffee. Captain Ron brought it back to the boat, added a half cup of water and reheated it in the microwave. It was OK and he continued to ready the boat for departure.

There was a strong current in the marina that made leaving a bit tricky, but by looping a bow line around a cleat and back to the boat and releasing it last, we were able to let the current help us out of our slip. Luckily, there were no other boats behind us.

It was just a short distance travelling with the current to the St. Marys River, but once we crossed the river (and the state line into Georgia), we were fighting a very strong current.

We continued up Cumberland Sound past the Kings Bay submarine base where a security boat was running back and forth making sure that we weren't terrorists hell bent on blowing up a submarine. We didn't see any submarines.

We were looking for the famous wild horses on Cumberland Island. We had seen them up close when we actually visited the island several years ago, but the ICW is not near the island. Finally, we did see two horses in the distance, grazing near the shore.



One of the feral horses on Cumberland Island

From Cumberland Island, the ICW enters St. Andrews sound and goes out near the ocean before doubling back to Jekyll Creek. In any sort of wind, this can be a very uncomfortable ride, but today it was fairly smooth.

As we entered Jekyll Creek, we encountered a sightseeing boat on our side of the channel. Captain Ron sounded the horn signal for a port to port pass and the captain responded in kind. He moved to his starboard and all was well.

We called Jekyll Harbor marina and were met by two dockhands who tied us up at the fuel dock where we took on forty five gallons of diesel fuel. Once our tanks were full, they pulled HIGH COTTON up behind another boat to clear the fuel dock for the next customer.

Once we were tied up and had the air conditioner running, we walked to the office to check in and pay. Kiki walked behind the counter and found the dog treats. There is a free golf cart for transient boaters to use so we reserved it for 1:00 PM

Captain Ron changed into his swimwear and walked to the pool area to use the hot tub. Patti and the pup waited outside in the shade.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



Captain Ron washes away his aches and pains in the hot tub

We got the golf cart at 1:00 PM and headed straight for the Dairy Queen for ice cream. For some unknown reason, this particular Dairy Queen seldom has chocolate ice cream, just vanilla. This was the case today. We had two cups for the three of us. The ship's puppy got her share though.



The Sea Dog gets her ice cream treat

We got back into the golf cart (Kiki likes riding in a golf cart) and rode to the gift shops in the historic area. Patti bought souvenirs and the Sea Dog got a large dog treat. Captain Ron got nothing. He did get to drive the golf cart though.

Boaters only get the golf cart for an hour and a half so we had to return it. We changed into our swimwear and leaving the K-9 behind to guard the boat, we went back to the pool. It was a bit chilly, but we swam and soaked. Captain Ron got in the

hot tub again to sooth his aching back. (Kiki writes: *"Yea, they always say they are leaving me behind to guard the boat, but what am I going to do if someone tries to break in, dial 911 and bark? I think they are out somewhere having fun without me."*)

After the pool, we changed into our good clothes and walked to the restaurant which was surprisingly crowded. We had to wait for about a half an hour. Patti ordered a hamburger and Captain Ron ordered a crab cake. Unfortunately, they were out of crab cakes. He ordered a cheese steak sandwich instead. It was not great.

The service was slow and while we were waiting for the check, Patti suggested that Captain Ron walk to the boat and get the puppy. He did and Patti was still waiting for the check when he returned. Kiki sniffed around looking for dropped food but Patti kept her on a short leash.

Once we got the check and paid, Patti took the pup to the swing at the marina office while Captain Ron walked to the boat and got his shower bag. One thing a bit weird about this place is, to get to the showers, boaters have to walk through the outside dining area of the restaurant. Captain Ron did just that, took his shower and walked back through the dining area.



Patti and the pup on the porch swing

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

The whole crew walked back to the boat where Captain Ron and the hound rested while Patti went to take her shower.

We are not sure where we will stop tomorrow. It will be over six hours to get to a really basic (“rustic”) marina where we would have air conditioning. If we get that far and they have room, we will stop there. If not, we will anchor.

Captain’s Log, day sixty seven (July 22, 2022)

We did end up continuing on to Kilkenny Marina (the “really basic” marina we mentioned yesterday), but due to a calculation error and some unfavorable currents, it took us nearly nine hours to get here. More on that later.

Patti and the pup woke up at 6:30 AM and went for their walk. Captain Ron rolled over and tried to go back to sleep without success. He got dressed, made his coffee, checked the engine and topped off the potable water tanks, knowing that there was a possibility that we would want to shower on the boat.

We got everything unhooked and untied and left the marina at about 7:20 AM. Jekyll Creek is a narrow and shallow part of the ICW and we had to be careful to stay in the channel. Jekyll Creek leads to St. Simons Sound. We could see something large in the distance which turned out to be a large barge being pushed by a tug. We eventually met at a sharp turn in the channel. Captain Ron called the tug for passing arrangements, but the tug captain, without acknowledging our call, barked out instructions to pass starboard to starboard with the comment that “there’s plenty of water over there”.

We altered our course and passed starboard to starboard and went on our way north on the ICW.

A half hour or so later, we heard a sailboat that we had seen anchored near the marina call the tug with concerns about passing. After some discussion back and forth, the tug captain barked “You all just stay out of my way, you hear?”

While this was going on, a guy claiming to be from the Coast Guard kept interrupting them and telling them that they should not be on channel 16. Of course, this interruption simply meant that they had to repeat their conversation.

Presumably, the sail boat and the tug and barge got past each other with no difficulty, because we heard no more about it.

We continued north, although in this part of the ICW, the channel follows winding creeks and at any moment we would have been going north, east, west or even south. We saw a few small boats with people fishing or heading somewhere to fish, but no cruising sized boats.



The elusive pink Roseate Spoonbill on the ICW

It was a long, hot day and Captain Ron had to turn the helm over to Patti for a couple of breaks. The navigation software on the tablet can show the ETA to a given destination, but the estimate kept getting later and later as currents slowed us down.

Finally, we reached Kilkenny Creek and made the turn for the two mile run to Kilkenny Marina, our

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

destination for the night. Kilkenny Marina is best described as “quaint” or “rustic”, but when the temperature is in the nineties, it’s a place to tie up the boat and plug it in to have air conditioning.

A guy met us at the dock, grabbed our lines and tied us up. When we say “tied”, we really mean tied. The marina has no cleats on the dock, just short pieces of 2X6 lumber to tie the boats to. The docks are floating docks, but instead of the purpose built dock floats other marinas use, these docks float on what appear to be used fifty five gallon plastic drums. It’s best to walk on the middle of the docks and not get near the edges.

We walked up the ramp towards the office to pay and saw a lot of commotion. There were four large bull sharks swimming between the dock and the shore. “Large” like in eight to ten feet long. One of the marina employees was teasing them with a dead fish on a fishing line. He would toss the fish into the water and when the sharks came after it, he would reel it in just fast enough that they couldn’t get it. They said the marina had been there for sixty years (we have no difficulty believing that) and that they had never had sharks there before.



Bull shark in the marina

The marina store and office is not air conditioned so Captain Ron paid as quickly as possible. Even

though there was no air conditioning, there are a couple swings and there was shade and a relatively cool breeze so we sat on the swings and watched the shark show for a while as the boat cooled off. The Sea Dog found the new “big fishies” interesting. She got carried when we walked the dock, though.

Kilkenny Marina is in a beautiful “old south” setting with large shade trees, but there is only one restaurant within walking distance. It’s only open in the evenings and only four days per week, but it was open today so we walked over and had a light supper.

We have stayed at Kilkenny Marina before and know the condition of the heads and showers. Captain Ron jokes about turning on the lights and watching the raccoons scatter. They are probably not that bad, but we decided to shower on HIGH COTTON tonight. It had been a long day and we were all ready for a good, cool night’s sleep.



The sun sets over Kilkenny Creek

Captain’s Log, day sixty eight (July 23, 2022)

If nothing else, we did get a good, cool night’s sleep last night. True to form though, the Sea Dog was ready to go as soon as daylight seeped into the boat. Patti got herself dressed and took the hound

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

for her morning walk. Captain Ron got up, got dressed, made his coffee and did his engine checks. It was just before 7:00 AM when we unplugged our power cord, untied our lines and headed back towards the ICW. Locals were already getting into their fishing boats for a day of fun on the water.

Getting underway early has the advantage of cooler temperatures and the advantage of arriving early at the destination before the afternoon thunderstorms, but it has the disadvantage of often facing into the low morning sun. This makes it hard to distinguish the channel markers and hard to read the chart plotter. There are no sun visors on a boat.

As usual, we saw many small fishing boats today and we did pass a sailboat headed south and a slow one headed north. Captain Ron tried to contact the northbound sailboat to arrange a slow pass, but as seems so common for sailboats, there was no response on the radio. We just went ahead and passed. We saw dolphins several times and stopped to watch them. Kiki keeps a sharp lookout for the big fishies.

Approaching Thunderbolt, GA (a suburb of Savannah), there are a few "no wake" zones including one that curiously applies only to boats over twenty six feet in length. Smaller boats can go as fast as they want to but the larger ones are forced to slow down.

We called Thunderbolt Marina on the radio and the dockmaster questioned our reservation. Possibly, the person Patti spoke to had forgotten to write it down. He said it was fine. We told him we needed diesel fuel and he told us to pull up to the fuel dock. We tied ourselves up and he came out and hollered "The green one is diesel and it's ready."

Most marinas, of course, have an employee or two to assist with docking and fueling. For whatever reason, Thunderbolt Marina no longer does this. It's pretty much "self-service" anymore. Captain Ron even had to roll the fuel hose out and roll it back when he was finished fueling HIGH COTTON. We paid the highest price of our trip so far, \$6.91 per gallon. Supposedly, this was the BoatUS discount price.

We were then told to move our boat back along the dock to clear the fueling area for other boats. We had to wait for a sailboat to leave so we could tie up HIGH COTTON in its place for the night and connect the power cord so we could cool the boat down.

It seems odd that it worked out this way, but we had to change the oil here on our way south and again here on our way north. Captain Ron got started on the oil change. Patti and the hound went to the air conditioned laundry room to wait.

Once the oil change was done, Captain Ron grabbed his shower bag and headed for the showers. He was already wet with sweat; he just needed to exchange the sweat for cool, clean water (and soap).

Captain Ron returned from the shower and Patti gathered up all the dirty clothes and headed for the laundry room and to take her shower. Captain Ron and the ship's puppy napped on the boat.

It rained for a short while and there was some thunder. Once the rain stopped, Patti took the Sea Dog for a walk. Captain Ron followed with the used oil and filters to dispose of them properly (the marina has a collection place for used motor oil). As Captain Ron closed the door to the collection shed, he saw out of the corner of his eye what he thought was a new building. He turned around to see that it was actually a boat!

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Yep, somebody's boat! This boat (Amaryllis) is five decks high, 257 feet long (just one Tom Brady pass short of a football field) and is worth one hundred and twenty million dollars! It turns out, one can charter (rent) it for a mere seven hundred and seventy thousand dollars per week (plus expenses).



Our slip neighbor at Thunderbolt Marina

We talked to one of the crew members for a few minutes in the marina lounge. She thought our life cruising in our little boat was interesting.

Once Captain Ron got over his boat envy, we put the pup on HIGH COTTON and walked to Tubby's Tank House for a light supper.

Back at the boat, the ship's puppy went for her evening walk, and then it was time for bed.

Captain's Log, day sixty nine (July 24, 2022)

"Nothing could be finer than to be in Carolina in the morning." South Carolina, that is. We'll get back to that later.

The plan wasn't to get an early start because we had Krispy Kreme donuts coming to the boat when the marina opened. Unfortunately, Patti woke up at 6:00 AM and when the hound saw her awake, she figured it was time to get up as well. Captain

Ron didn't have a chance so he got up and got dressed.

The girls went for their morning constitutional and Captain Ron made his coffee and checked on his oil change of yesterday to make sure he had done everything right.

The marina opens at 7:00 AM and we expected our donuts then. Unfortunately, the way this works is, the employee arrives at 7:00 AM, looks at the list of which boats want donuts and then gets into his car and drives to the donut store, picks up the donuts and returns. One has to wonder why the dockhand on duty the day before couldn't just call him and tell him how many boxes of donuts to pick up on his way to the marina.

Anyway, the donuts showed up eventually, but it was now close to 8:00 AM and we had been piddling around for close to an hour. The donuts were delicious, though!

From Thunderbolt Marina north through the town is a no-wake zone which gave the engine a chance to warm up gently. It was ready to go by the time we reached the end of the no-wake zone.

We passed the well-known Bonaventure Cemetery and thought about stopping, but it looked dead.

It took us about an hour to get to the crossing of the Savannah River. The river is the border between Georgia and South Carolina so once we crossed the middle, we were back in our home state of South Carolina.

We continued north, passing Daufuskie Island and Hilton Head Island on the inland side. Again, we saw lots of small boats and a couple of the ferry boats that take people to and from Daufuskie Island. We also passed Parris Island where men (and women) are turned into marines.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

All weekend we had been hearing warnings on the VHF radio from the US Coast Guard about the Beaufort Water Festival and about a security zone. We expected a lot of activity, but once we got to Beaufort, we could see vendor's tents in the waterfront park, but very little boating activity in the area of the festival. There were just a couple of boats at the free dock. We did see dozens of boats anchored near or beached on the large sandbar just south of the Lady's Island Bridge. There was a big party going on.



Party on the sandbar in Beaufort, SC

There used to be a heavily enforced no-wake zone in Beaufort from one bridge to the next, approximately three miles. Apparently, this is no longer the case as all the signs and buoys are gone and most of the boats were going full speed. We slowed down in front of the Port Royal Marina as a courtesy. Once we got to the Beaufort Downtown Marina, there were actual no-wake buoys so of course, we slowed down there as well.

Once through the Lady's Island Bridge, we made a sharp turn to starboard into Factory Creek and motored to Lady's Island Marina where we had a space reserved on the T head.

We were met by a gentleman who was apparently either the manager or the owner who tied us up and connected our power. He declined a tip.

He already had our information and credit card number so we didn't have to go to the office, but Kiki decided that we should go to see if they had dog treats. They had no treats but the man offered Kiki a piece of dry dog food (he had his dog with him in the office). Kiki declined the dog food.

We talked for a while in the air conditioned comfort. Apparently, the group that recently bought our home marina had tried to buy this marina as well. They weren't successful.

We walked the pup a bit and then walked back to HIGH COTTON which had cooled off a bit. We decided to take our showers early and then go to the restaurant because the restaurant didn't open until 4:00 PM. We relaxed on the boat until 4:00 PM and then walked to the restaurant (it's just behind the marina). Even though we arrived shortly after it opened, we had a thirty minute wait. We sat at the bar with other people waiting for seats.

We have eaten here every time we stopped at Lady's Island and never had a bad meal. It's one of Captain Ron's favorite restaurants. Patti had the ribeye and Captain Ron had the seafood dinner with lobster tail, scallops, shrimp and crab legs. It was good and there is enough left over for a second feast tomorrow night.



Patti had the ribeye

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



Captain Ron had the seafood dinner

This is something that has been brewing for a while: Our home marina has started a boat club where people pay a set fee each month in exchange for taking out marina boats for half day cruises. They had purchased ten boats when we left on our cruise and were planning on buying more. The rumor was that they would take our slip for the boat club and move us.

We had reports from friends that they had done this but had heard nothing from the marina about it. We didn't want to show up tomorrow and find a boat in our slip so we have been trying to contact the marina for the last couple days. Patti contacted the dockmaster who said she would call back but she never did. Captain Ron sent an email to the manager but got no response.

Finally, late this afternoon the dockmaster emailed Patti with a slip assignment but said it could be temporary. At least we have a place to dock our boat tomorrow.

To get to our home marina anywhere near slack current (there is a strong current through the marina because of the tides that can make docking difficult), we have to leave Beaufort as soon as we can see where we are going. This will be another oh-dark-thirty awakening and departure.

Captain's Log, day seventy (July 25, 2022)

We are home, safe and sound (but a little more tanned). More on that later.

As planned, the alarm sounded at the ungodly hour of 5:00 AM. Back when Patti and Captain Ron were working (Captain Ron wasn't a captain back then), that was normal, but since retirement, we rarely keep such hours.

It was dark, of course, but we got dressed and Patti took the hound for a walk while Captain Ron did his mechanical checks.

We were ready to leave at 5:45 AM, but with just a sliver of a moon, it was too dark to see where we were going. We did get underway a little after 6:00 AM when there was enough light to see anything that might be in our way.

We had the current with us, helping us along for a while, but then we found ourselves going against the current. The ICW between Beaufort, SC and Charleston, SC goes up one river, down another, up another and so on so the current direction is constantly changing. It usually averages out in the end.

We saw very little boat traffic for the first few hours. Passing through Watts Cut, a man made canal between the South Edisto River and the Dawho River, we saw two small alligators, one alive and swimming, and the other belly up and not swimming. It's a rural area and we have seen alligators there in the past. As we entered the Dawho River, we passed a small trawler heading south.

We turned into the Wadmalaw River and Captain Ron turned the helm over to Patti and went below for a power nap. A half hour usually works for him and it did this time.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

We noticed a large boat behind us in the distance. It was catching up to us, but very slowly. An hour or more after we first noticed it, the captain called us on the radio asking for a slow pass. Captain Ron acknowledged his request but suggested that he wait until we passed a very narrow section of the ICW just south of the Limehouse Bridge on the outskirts of Charleston. At that point, a very wide catamaran boat appeared heading south so that put the pass on hold.

The captain of the large boat (we could now see that it was probably twice the size of HIGH COTTON) called on the radio again and said that since he would have to wait for the Wappoo Creek drawbridge to open, he wasn't going to bother passing us and having to wait for the bridge.

We made the turn off the ICW down the Stono River towards our marina. Boat traffic had picked up by then and we had to dodge several small boats as we approached the marina. We had missed slack current but not by much. We called the marina on the radio and a dockhand came out to help us into our new (and possibly temporary) slip. HIGH COTTON docks more easily into a starboard tie slip (with the dock on the starboard side) and this slip is a port tie, but after a couple tries, we got in and tied up.

Our friend Kim who had brought us to the marina seventy days ago was there to meet us and bring us home. Many thanks, Kim!

We got HIGH COTTON tied up and plugged in, unloaded two dock carts full of "stuff", loaded Kim's Jeep and headed for our "dirt home".

We had a great time on our trip, but it's good to be home. We will have to go back to the marina to get things "ship shape" this weekend and of course we have stacks of mail and packages to go through.

Kim had been checking our house every week and turned the air conditioning back down to a comfortable temperature the day before we came home. She reported hearing what seemed like a voice saying "low battery" when checking the house. Once we got everything in the house, we could hear a faint beeping sound every thirty seconds or so but we couldn't hear where it was coming from. It was driving the Sea Dog nuts so it had to be fixed.

Captain Ron finally traced it to the unfinished upstairs room and thought it was coming from a box of stuff we brought from the old house.

Eventually, he determined that it was actually coming from the smoke/carbon monoxide detector. This, of course, was brand new when the house was built so having dead batteries was not expected. He got a ladder, carried it up the stairs and replaced the batteries. Mystery solved.

Kiki was glad to be home and spent some time making sure the house was OK. Later, we took her for a walk and she led us to the clubhouse so her memory is fine.

Now to start planning our next trip!



Back home in Charleston, SC

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Epilogue

| | |
|----------------------|-------------|
| Duration | 70 Days |
| Distance | 1600 NM |
| Time underway | 228.5 hours |
| Fuel used (diesel) | 436 gallons |
| Fuel consumption | 1.9 GPH |
| Fuel mileage | 3.67 NMPG |
| Fuel cost | \$ 2,765 |
| Nights anchored | 5 |
| Nights on free docks | 2 |
| Nights in marinas | 64 |
| Marina cost | \$ 4,180 |

HIGH COTTON performed as expected during the entire trip and was pretty much trouble free. The same cannot be said about our return. As we mentioned, our marina took over our slip for their boat club operation. They assigned us a new slip and that's where we docked the boat. We plugged in the shore power cord, the power came on, along with the air conditioning, so we gathered our stuff and headed for home.

The next day, Captain Ron got a message from the wireless thermostat indicating that it needed new batteries. This happens every few months, especially if the boat has been cruising and not plugged into shore power.

He tried to access the thermostat over the Internet and got the message that it was disconnected. He figured that this was due to dead batteries in the thermostat.

As we often do, we got up on Saturday and went to the marina to spend the weekend. When we arrived at the boat, we found that the circuit breaker on the marina's pedestal had tripped and there was no power to HIGH COTTON. Apparently, it had tripped shortly after we left because the

boat's batteries were dead and the refrigerator had defrosted. Not good!

Captain Ron reset the circuit breaker, but it tripped again after a few minutes. He moved HIGH COTTON's shore power cord to the other side of the power pedestal (which has a different circuit breaker) and all was good.

Now, of course, the batteries needed time to charge back up and the refrigerator needed time to get cold again. Captain Ron reported the problem to the marina and they sent someone to replace the defective circuit breaker.

Saturday night, Captain Ron noticed that the potable water pump was turning on and off when it shouldn't have been. He turned the power off to the pump and went back to sleep. In the morning, the pump was turned back on to fix breakfast and he thought no more about it. Later, Patti asked him about a "beeping" noise. Captain Ron recognized it as a warning that the bilge pump was running. Opening the floor hatch, he could see the bilge was full of water and the pump was trying to empty it.

One of the most important things to remember about a boat is that the water is supposed to stay on the outside! Water on the inside is a problem.

He opened the other floor hatch and quickly realized that the water was coming from the potable water system's accumulator tank which was leaking. At least the boat was not going to sink.

The tank was removed and determined to be unrepairable. West Marine did not have one in stock so one was ordered on-line and we spent the rest of the day without water. The replacement tank will be installed next weekend.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

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.

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>

Navionics Chart Viewer
(<https://webapp.navionics.com/>)

Other (print) resources were:

Dozier’s Waterway Guide Atlantic ICW
Dozier’s Waterway Guide Southern Edition

Google (on our phones) makes it easy to find nearby restaurants, grocery stores and shops when staying at marinas.

The HOA dues in our new neighborhood include lawn and landscaping maintenance so that is something we no longer need to worry about. One of our neighbors brought in the mail and packages and a friend checked the house each week. 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.