

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 2.0 GPH.

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

Captain's Log, day one (May 1, 2023)

Well, we're off! There are some folks who will say that Captain Ron is always a little "off", but we will not discuss that here.

As usual, we spent last night on HIGH COTTON so we could get an early start. We were driven to the marina by Patti's good friend, the lovely and talented Kim Calhoun-Wren in her purple Jeep.

Arising at oh-dark-thirty this morning, we got dressed, had the ship's puppy walked and the boat ready for a 6:30 AM departure. We said good bye to St. Johns Yacht Harbor as we won't be returning here. Actually, we didn't really say anything; there was nobody around this early in the morning. We have a slip reserved at the new Clark Island Marina on the Stono River a few miles closer to our home. We will go there when we return from our cruise.

We pulled out of the slip and exited the marina into the river, looking both ways for traffic. About five minutes later, the ship's puppy alerted us to a shrimp boat fast approaching on our port (left) side. We don't often see shrimp boats near the marina and were certainly not expecting any boat traffic at 6:30 AM.



Leaving St Johns Yacht Harbor for the last time

We followed the shrimp boat through Elliott Cut and passed it when it slowed down to call the Wappoo Creek Bridge for an opening. Apparently, the captain did not know what channel to call bridges on in South Carolina because we heard him ask for a radio check.



Following the HENRY EARL through Wappoo Cut

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Captain Ron replied to his request and eventually advised him that bridges monitor channel nine in South Carolina. Unfortunately, the bridge tender refused to open the bridge for him because the rush hour restrictions had just begun. He had a two and a half hour wait.

As we entered the Charleston Harbor headed north, we saw a trawler about the size of HIGH COTTON ahead of us. Since the trawler was transmitting information by AIS, we could see that it was travelling just slightly slower than HIGH COTTON and that we would eventually catch up with it. We also noticed that its path was a bit erratic with some strange zig zagging and sharp turns. Captain Ron speculated that the captain was following a “track” published on the Internet and promoted on Facebook that shows the deepest water on the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW). With a boat like HIGH COTTON, the deepest water is not necessary; the water only needs to be deep enough for HIGH COTTON.

We finally caught up with and overtook this boat just north of the Charleston Harbor. That was the only boat we overtook today. One boat overtook us later in the day. (Note: We only count cruising boats, not small fishing boats and such).

We overheard the boat that overtook us on the radio overtaking other boats and we heard radio conversations from boats behind us but never saw any of them.

The winds were calm early in the morning and our ride across the Harbor and further north on the ICW was comfortable. As noon approached, the winds picked up and while they were not uncomfortable, they did tend to blow HIGH COTTON off course a bit. It was nothing we couldn't handle though.

We saw a few pods of dolphins in the morning and slowed down to watch them. Kiki is fascinated by dolphins (she knows them as “big fishies”) and often talks to them. Sometimes they swim alongside the boat but they didn't today. (Kiki writes: *“I love to watch the big fishies playing in the water but my favorite is when they swim along beside my boat.”*)

Today's voyage took nine and a half hours, which is longer than we usually travel, but there is no good reason to stop sooner unless we visit Georgetown SC. We usually skip Georgetown on our cruises because we save it for a short trip later in the year.



Low tide on the ICW

We anchored off the ICW behind Butler Island. It's a well-known ICW anchorage and there was a boat already anchored here when we arrived and a few more came later. We found that the “down” switch on the bow for the anchor does not work even though it worked when Captain Ron tested it a couple weeks ago. Patti had to use the switch on the flybridge today. Captain Ron will have to fix this.

Captain Ron's research and testing over the past two weeks resulted in a new TV set for the boat (delivered Friday and installed Saturday) that lets us not only watch over-the-air TV with the antenna, but watch our familiar “cable” TV

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programming as well as other programming over the Internet with the amazon Fire Stick. Of course, the success of this depends on Internet access, but it is working in our anchorage this evening.

Our plan for tomorrow is to continue north on the ICW to Barefoot Landing in North Myrtle Beach, stop at the free dock for lunch and then continue to another anchorage in Calabash Creek at the SC/NC state line.

In the meantime, we have a tired crew that got up early this morning and had a long day on the water. We will turn in early.



The view from our anchorage behind Butler Island

Captain's Log, day two (May 2, 2023)

We had a quiet and peaceful night at anchor last night. We got up at a more civilized 6:30 AM and were underway a bit after 7:00 AM. Running the boat from the flybridge, we were wearing coats, hats and gloves, but it soon warmed up. Later in the day, the wind kept us in long sleeves.

About an hour into our voyage we stopped at the Wacca Wache Marina where we were able to top off our tanks with about forty four gallons of diesel fuel at \$3.58.9. We have seen it advertised at other marinas for over \$5.60 per gallon.



Waiting for the Socastee Swing Bridge to open

Our next stop was at Barefoot Landing in North Myrtle Beach where we had lunch at Lulu's and met up with our good friend Bruce Goulet and his cousin Ed. Kiki met a lot of people and got petted. Patti did some shopping, Captain Ron did not.



HIGH COTTON docked at Barefoot Landing for lunch



Our lunch stop for the day

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It was another hour and a half to our anchorage at the junction of the ICW and Calabash Creek. Unfortunately, by the time we got there, one sailboat was already anchored there and another turned in to anchor just before we did. There is room for five or six boats normally, but there were crab pot floats in the way and the boat in front of us anchored in a position that made it hard for us to fit in as well. Then a couple more boats came in and tried to anchor. Some gave up and left.

Between the other boats, the channel, the shallow water near the shore and our broken windlass switch, anchoring didn't go as smoothly as it normally does, but we finally did get settled into a decent spot.



Sunset from the Calabash Creek anchorage

Captain Ron called the West Marine store in Oriental, NC where we will be in a week or so to see about ordering the windlass switch, but was told to call back tomorrow. If he can't make arrangements to get the proper switch, he will just find a normally open momentary contact switch at a hardware or auto parts store and wire it up as a temporary fix.

Between the stopping for fuel and the wandering around Barefoot Landing, it was a long day and the V berth is looking good. The folks at Southport

Marina suggested that we arrive after noon so an 8:00 AM departure should work out well.

Captain's Log, day three (May 3, 2023)

With no alarm set, we woke up about 7:00 AM this morning and got underway about a half hour later. When bringing the anchor up, the rope and then the chain kept getting stuck in the anchor roller. On close inspection, Captain Ron realized that it was bent and someone had apparently run into it with their boat at our marina and didn't bother to tell anyone or leave a note. Not cool!

We got the anchor up and secured and headed out of the anchorage and back onto the ICW. Patti cooked a fried egg and cheese sandwich for Captain Ron and scrambled eggs for herself and the Sea Dog.

We somehow pulled out of the anchorage just in front of a boat we had passed yesterday. Today it was travelling just slightly faster than HIGH COTTON so after a half hour or so, the Captain called and asked us for a "slow pass". For those who don't know, a "slow pass" is when the boat being passed slows down so the boat passing can pass at a slower speed without creating a big wake. This is a common thing on the ICW.

Later in the day, we passed a sailboat that was actually sailing on the ICW. A couple more boats passed us before we got to our marina in Southport, NC.

Knowing that he would be trying to straighten out the anchor roller, Captain Ron pulled HIGH COTTON bow first into the slip with the anchor roller hanging over the dock. This allowed him to stand on the dock and get better leverage.

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With help from a hammer and a large adjustable wrench, and three stainless steel washers from an on-site repair shop, Captain Ron was able to coax the stainless steel anchor roller into a resemblance of its former self. It should work now.

Southport Marina has always been a nice, modern and well run marina. It suffered extensive damage in a hurricane a few years ago but it was built back better. That's the good news.

The bad news is, they have expanded the marina with a "west basin" and that's where they put us. The docks are fine and the power is fine, but it's a long walk to the office and the heads and showers. A very, very long walk! It's also that much longer to walk to town.

Walk, we did though and the pooch was rewarded with dog treats. (Kiki writes: *"Every marina should have dog treats. We are cute and deserve treats when we visit marinas."*)

With the anchor roller repaired, it was time to tackle the broken switch. The on-site shop had nothing but they suggested the auto parts store in town. Of course, it was actually at the other end of town, a mile or so away.

They didn't have the exact replacement switch of course, but they did have a waterproof switch intended to control a trolling motor (this auto parts store also carries some marine parts). Captain Ron determined that this would work until we got home so he whipped out his credit card, swiped it and took the bag with the switch.

Since we didn't want to make a second trek into town, we headed for one of the well-known restaurants in town and had a nice seafood dinner.

We rested from our walk, Captain Ron installed and tested the temporary switch and then we headed for the showers. The bathhouses here are

modern and clean. This is not true of all marinas we visit.



The temporary replacement switch does the job.

We called four different marinas for a slip for tomorrow. Three had no vacancies and the fourth said their slips are "first come, first served"! It's not really a marina; it's a restaurant with a dock (although they charge as if it was a true marina). We'll either stay there or anchor and save close to ninety dollars.

We forgot to mention that shortly after we docked HIGH COTTON, another Camano Troll came into the marina and docked next to us. The couple on board are from the mid-west and are doing the Great Loop.



HIGH COTTON's sister ship, "No Rush"

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We also forgot to mention that the marina's west basin is so far from the office that the dockhands do not show up to help with docking. It's "do it yourself".

Tomorrow we will head out with no set destination in mind. Most likely we will stop somewhere around Wrightsville Beach. Maybe we will go a little further.

Captain's Log, day four (May 4, 2023)

We might have slept in longer this morning, but our Camano dock neighbor was up bright and early starting the engine and leaving the slip. Other boats were making noise as well so we got up, got dressed and walked the hound. Captain Ron did the engine checks and topped off the water tanks.

We backed out of the slip and headed for the marina entrance channel. As we were about to exit onto the ICW, two fairly large trawlers were headed north on the ICW and we had to wait for them to pass.

Once they were past the marina channel, we pulled in behind them. The captain of one of the boats called us on the radio and invited us to follow them north and join them on the radio, but it wasn't long before they were pretty far ahead of us.

Just past Southport, the ICW joins the shipping channel on the Cape Fear River for several miles. The Cape Fear River can be rough, but today it was a smooth ride.

Shortly after we entered the Cape Fear River we looked back to see a large container ship rapidly gaining on us. About the same time one of the ferry boats that takes passengers to Bald Head Island came out of its terminal and passed us going the opposite direction. Then one of the ferries that

takes passengers and vehicles across the Cape Fear River came out of its terminal.

So now we had a ferry that just passed us going the opposite direction, a different ferry to the left of the channel that would eventually cross the river and a fast approaching container ship to the rear.

We moved to the right of the shipping channel, the ferry stayed to the left and the container ship passed between us. The ferry eventually slowed down and crossed the river behind HIGH COTTON.



A container ship in the channel, headed for Wilmington, NC



The Southport-Fort Fisher Ferry

We followed the two trawlers until they were out of sight. We caught up and passed them just before Wrightsville Beach because they had to wait about a half hour for the bridge to open and we didn't. The restaurant dock we mentioned

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yesterday was open but we didn't stop because it wasn't even 11:00 AM yet and this place doesn't offer much for \$3.00 per foot. If we needed to go to a hardware store, West Marine or the grocery store (a one mile walk), it would have been OK.

Captain Ron did some figuring and determined that we could get to the anchorage at Mile Hammock Bay by about 3:30 PM so that's what we decided to do.



Captain Ron at the helm

We have been travelling with the bimini top down because it has been mostly chilly and the sun feels good. We have been wearing layers with long pants and shirts along with hats. We noticed that the backs of our hands have gotten sunburned. Just the backs of our hands! This afternoon, we put the bimini top up to keep the sun off us.



It gets shallow outside of the channel

Mile Hammock Bay is a well-known anchorage among cruisers. It is on the Camp Lejeune Marine base but civilians may anchor but not go ashore. It is sometimes noisy with Marine training activities.

As we said, it is well-known among cruisers. There were already seven boats anchored when we pulled in and several more came in afterwards.

One attempted to anchor between HIGH COTTON and another boat. The captain of the other boat came out and yelled at him for being too close to his boat (he was too close and too close to HIGH COTTON as well). The "new guy" acted like he wasn't going to move, but Captain Ron went out and suggested that he was too close to HIGH COTTON as well and the guy gave up and moved. What we don't want is boats crashing together in the middle of the night as they swing on their anchors because of changes in current or wind.

We were treated to several flyovers by one of the military vertical takeoff airplanes. They are not quiet. Hopefully, they will quit at dark.



V-22 Osprey vertical takeoff aircraft over the anchorage

We passed two sailboats today. Of course we passed the trawlers while they were waiting for the bridge but they caught up with us and passed us just before we turned into Mile Hammock Bay. They were headed for a marina in Swansboro. A

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few other boats passed us as well. HIGH COTTON is slow but economical to operate.

The replacement windlass switch worked as expected as did the anchor roller. We have leftover seafood from the restaurant in Southport and several stations on the TV.

Another sailboat came into the anchorage and tried to anchor too close to us and another boat. Apparently he realized his mistake and moved further away.

The flyovers seem to have stopped. We will leave early in the morning to catch the 7:00 AM bridge opening and avoid any ICW closure because of military training. They do that sometimes. One time we had to wait until noon to get through, a delay of four hours.

We have a reservation in Beaufort, NC for Friday and Saturday.

Captain's Log, day five (May 5, 2023)

Up again at oh-dark-thirty, we wanted to get to the Onslow Beach Bridge for the 7:00 AM opening. The bridge only opens on the hour and the half hour and we wanted to make sure we would get through Camp Lejeune before any possibility that they would close the ICW for training. That happened to us once before and we were stuck there until noon.

We were the first boat out of the anchorage but another followed right behind us and immediately asked for a pass. We let him pass of course, but he knew the bridge schedule and didn't go much faster than us.



Morning in the Mile Hammock Bay anchorage

We got within sight of the bridge at about 6:45 AM. We were second in line. Two more boats from the anchorage got to the bridge in time for the opening.



Waiting in line for the Onslow Beach Swing Bridge to open

All four boats headed north on the ICW in sight of each other for a few hours with the lead boat eventually getting ahead and out of sight and the fourth boat eventually passing the third boat and then passing HIGH COTTON. We all passed one sailboat north of Swansboro.

It seemed cooler today than yesterday, perhaps because the bimini top was up and shading us from the sun or perhaps because of the wind.

When we got to Morehead City, boat traffic increased. Not cruising boats, local boats fishing

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(in the channel) or heading out to the ocean to fish. To get to Beaufort, one leaves the ICW, heads towards the ocean and then turns into the channel to Beaufort from the ocean. Again, there was a lot of local traffic.



This boat cruising is hard work!

We have been to the Beaufort Town Docks a few times before and were always assigned a slip near the west end of the docks (close to the heads and showers). Today we were assigned a slip at the far east end of the marina, near all the tour boats. With all the traffic, we had to wait for a large sailing catamaran to enter and dock and then a smaller tour boat to exit. Our slip was difficult to back into with adjacent boats and wind, but none were hit and no insurance forms were needed. We found out later that the other end of the marina was reserved for a wooden boat show this weekend. That should be interesting.

We checked in and paid for two days. Kiki got petted and a couple of dog treats. She was happy to be on land and happy to meet people.

The Camano that we were docked next to in Southport showed up at the Town Docks just a few minutes after us. They were put a few slips away from us (in an easy to access slip). We talked with them a bit.



HIGH COTTON docked at the Beaufort, NC Town Docks

After checking in and walking the K-9, we returned to the boat and left her to guard HIGH COTTON while we went looking for a meal. We had passed a restaurant on the way to the marina office and the pizza smelled good so we went back there and ordered one. Not our usual sausage and pepperoni, this pizza had shrimp, basil, sun dried tomatoes and goat cheese. Something different, but pretty good, we thought.

After our meal, we returned to the boat and took the ship's puppy for a walk. She made friends everywhere we went and got treats at the businesses. We stopped for ice cream and of course, she got a few bites.



The Sea Dog gets her ice cream treat

Back at the boat, our home cable service (actually, streaming) posted a message that "You are not at

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home.” It now lets us record shows and watch recorded shows, but not watch “live” TV. It was fine before we left South Carolina. We still have YouTube and the other streaming apps.

As we mentioned, we are at the other end of the marina from the bathhouse. It’s a long walk. Not as bad as Southport, but still long. Patti went to take a shower and when she returned, Captain Ron took his turn.

Next to the bathhouse is a restaurant and they had two guys playing guitar and singing. Captain Ron could hear them in the shower. He hopes they haven’t quit their day jobs!

Kiki went for her evening walk and everyone is back on the boat and ready for bed. Tomorrow is a day in port but we have to decide where to go next.

Captain’s Log, day six (May 6, 2023)

Ah, finally waking at a civilized hour! Captain Ron awoke at about 7:30 AM. Patti and Kiki were nowhere in sight. He knew they were coming back because dog treats were left behind!

Captain Ron heard some commotion outside and stepped out of the cabin to watch a multi-million dollar mega yacht with a crew attempting to leave the dock behind us. Someone had forgotten to remove one of the docklines and the captain had to bring the boat back up against the dock so a crew member could step off, untie the line and step back aboard the yacht.

Patti and the puppy eventually returned from their walk and Patti and Captain Ron walked to a restaurant for breakfast. It was a six block walk away from the waterfront, but the food was good.

Then we walked another two blocks to a marine supply store. Captain Ron asked about a windlass switch but they didn’t have one. His plan was to just browse around the store but we ended up just talking to the owner and never got to browse. We didn’t really need anything anyway. Captain Ron realized later that we do, in fact, need a new American flag and deck brush. We will find them somewhere in our travels.

Back at the waterfront, Patti headed for the bathhouse while Captain Ron continued to HIGH COTTON to relieve the K-9 of her guard duty.

Patti returned to the boat and then returned to the main street to do some shopping. She returned with a sweatshirt for Captain Ron but it didn’t fit so she went back and exchanged it. When she returned, she took the ship’s puppy for a walk. There was a woman with three young girls on the dock and Kiki headed straight for them to get petted and fussed over. Then she walked on the boardwalk and met some other new friends.



Feral horses on the island across from the marina

We mentioned the wooden boat show previously. We walked back to the other end of the marina and looked at the boats. The owner of one of the boats was showing it to people (he had built it himself). We went on board and looked around and talked to him and his wife for quite a while.

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Then we realized that there were a lot more, smaller wooden boats on trailers on the street so we walked around and looked at them. Most were antiques. The show was sponsored by a wooden boat club, not the town or the marina.

Back at the boat, we checked the weather forecasts and decided to go to New Bern, NC for a couple of days. Unfortunately, we called both of the marinas within walking distance of the town and neither had any vacancies. Hopefully, we can stop there on the way back south. We thought about our options and the fact that many restaurants and stores in these small towns are closed early in the week and decided to stay here in Beaufort through Sunday and then head for Oriental, NC on Monday. Tuesday is forecast to have light winds, an important consideration when travelling on the Neuse River.

We walked to the marina office and paid for another day here. Then we went to one of our favorite restaurants in this town where they have a ribeye steak dinner for two with baked potatoes and a salad bar. The steaks have always been good and they were good today. We have leftovers for another meal.



The facilities at this marina are less modern than some others

We returned to HIGH COTTON, put the food away and asked the Sea Dog if she would like to go get

ice cream. She did of course so we walked to the other end of the marina to the ice cream shop. Kiki got her own “pup cup”.

Sitting in the park eating our ice cream, we heard what sounded like a live band playing across the street. We walked over and it was in fact, a live five piece band. They were actually pretty good from what we heard, but they were playing at a bar inside a brick walled courtyard and with the ship’s puppy in tow, we couldn’t really go inside and listen.

We walked back to HIGH COTTON where it’s now time for bed.

Captain’s Log, day seven (May 7, 2023)

This is a day in port and we’re supposed to be able to sleep in. Unfortunately, someone forgot to tell the Sea Dog! Since it is spring and the days are getting longer and we’re moving east, sunrise is earlier each day and the Sea Dog thinks everyone should get up once it’s light out. This is not part of Captain Ron’s plan!

So, the K-9 went for her morning walk with Patti while Captain Ron got dressed and made his coffee.

It is often said that “cruising” means fixing your boat in exotic places. Beaufort, NC may not be ‘exotic’, but Captain Ron noticed last night that the battery voltage indicator on the inverter control panel was showing 12.7 volts, the nominal battery voltage, and not the 13 or 14 volts that it should show when the boat is on shore power in a marina and the battery charger is on. That can only mean one thing; the battery charger is not working.

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Turning the circuit breaker to the battery charger off and noticing no change confirmed this so it was time for Captain Ron to get out his tools.

The battery charger on HIGH COTTON is in a nice, out of the way place, but not convenient for service. Normally, a battery charger would not need service anyway.

It was necessary to remove a lot of spare parts and other “stuff” to get to the battery charger. The power lights were off, another indication of a failure.

Captain Ron remembered having a problem with the battery charger a few years ago while cruising and that he had been able to repair it by replacing a blown fuse. Unfortunately, the fuse is internal and replacing it requires disconnecting the charger, removing it, and removing the cover. Of course, the boat’s batteries have to be disconnected first.

Once the fuse was located, it was checked and found to be blown as expected. The next problem was, neither Captain Ron nor Patti could read the small print designating the rating for the fuse. We don’t have a magnifying glass on board.

We set out to buy one, but there was a guy working on his boat right behind us. We asked if he had a magnifying glass and he said he did, but he had a young guy helping him and this guy was able to read the fuse, saving us the search for a magnifying glass.

So, a proper spare fuse was located and installed and the charger reinstalled and connected. It seems to be working fine now. (Update, it shut down on “thermal overload” but then started back up again. Captain Ron suspects the fan is not operating).

We did some research and found that the nearby West Marine store has a replacement battery

charger in stock (same brand and rating but a different configuration so wires may have to be relocated to install it). Since West Marine has a pretty liberal return policy, we borrowed the marina’s loaner car and drove to West Marine and bought one. If we need it, we will have it on board. If not, we can return it to any West Marine location. Kiki got to “go for a ride in the car”. She likes that.

The Beaufort Town Docks (marina) provides a 10% discount on food and free beer tokens for the adjacent restaurant. By this time, we had accumulated five free beer tokens and we decided we had better use them up so we walked to the restaurant for lunch. Since Patti wasn’t in the mood to drink five beers, she convinced Captain Ron to drink two. These are the first beers Captain Ron has had in many years.

Back at the boat, the battery charger seems to be working so Captain Ron put away his tools and replaced all the stored “stuff” (“stuff” being mostly spare parts).

We decided to take the pooch for a walk. Sometimes she walks with a purpose, but this time she stopped and sniffed every few feet. She did get petted a few times.

Back on HIGH COTTON, we decided to put the bimini top down to avoid the possibility of wind damage. The predicted winds for tomorrow morning are a bit concerning, but most of the trip will be in protected waters. Getting out of the marina might be a little challenging though.

Captain’s Log, day eight (May 8, 2023)

We got up and underway bright and early this morning to beat any strong winds or storms later in the day. Not unreasonably early, about 7:00 AM.

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Although we were worried last night about getting out of our slip this morning, it was actually a piece of cake. What wind and current we had kept us lightly against the finger pier and away from the neighboring boat so we just went forward to clear the finger pier, turned to starboard and again to starboard to exit the marina. The only issue we had was, a sailboat decided to back out of the next fairway and we had to stop to let it continue.

The sailboat was going the same way we were so once we got out of Beaufort we were able to pass it. Later, we caught up with a shrimp boat that was stopped in the middle of the channel. Captain Ron contacted it to make sure it wasn't going to start up or shift to reverse but the captain told us to just go on by, that he was in neutral.



Heading north from Beaufort, NC



The ship's puppy keeping watch for jet skis and dolphins



One of the nice homes on Adams Creek



A deer swimming across Adams Creek

The bad weather that had been forecast never materialized and we had calm winds and water until we got to the Neuse River. The Neuse River is often rough and it was moderately rough today. We only had to cross it today to get to our marina in Oriental, NC.

The last time we were in Oriental, we were assigned an awkward slip to get into, next to a concrete wall. Today we had an easy slip.

We went to the office and checked in. Kiki got to meet the office cat. Later, Captain Ron was walking the ship's puppy when she walked up the stairs to the marina's restaurant which wasn't open yet. A lady came out, saw the puppy and said she would be right back with treats. She brought several and Kiki gobbled them down.

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Patti spotted the couple from the sailboat next to us waiting for the Piggly Wiggly van and since she had planned on going to the store, she went and asked if she could ride with them. (An explanation may be necessary here; the local Piggly Wiggly (grocery store) will send a van to the marinas to pick up boaters wanting to shop there and bring them back with their groceries. That's pretty rare, but it's great for cruisers. It would be nice if this caught on with other grocery stores.

While Patti was grocery shopping, Captain Ron went to the nearby marine store for a replacement American flag and a new boat brush. The marina has a box for "retired" American flags so that worked out well. We are now flying a brand new, un-faded American flag on HIGH COTTON. Hopefully, the new boat brush will be put to use before long.



Our new American flag

Captain Ron watched some very old reruns of a cooking show on TV, then we decided to walk to the stores. We only made it to two. Patti shopped in the first while Captain Ron fell asleep on one of the chairs on the porch. The second store was a hardware store, where Captain Ron found everything he was interested in to be way overpriced. This was not Lowes or Home Depot!

We got the Sea Dog off the boat and sat on the lawn at the marina with some of the other boaters. The lady from the restaurant came out with more treats for the pup.

Back at the boat, a couple came by and wanted to talk about it. They are shopping for a boat this size. We invited them in and showed them around.

We walked to the restaurant and had dinner. Then we took turns taking showers. This marina is also an "inn" with a couple dozen or more rooms so they furnish towels, soap and shampoo in the bathhouse.

Tomorrow will be another "first light" departure so we will turn in early.

Captain's Log, day nine (May 9, 2023)

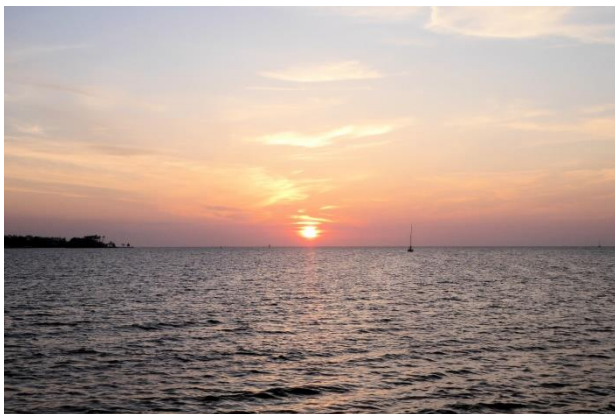
Well, it appears that Captain Ron is suffering from "CRS" (can't remember stuff)! Yesterday we not only saw a couple pods of dolphins, we saw a deer swimming across the river. (Kiki writes: "I saw the big fishies playing in the water but mawmaw and pawpaw didn't tell me in time to see the deer.")

Today was a "first light" departure. Actually, we missed first light by a few minutes or so, but that's OK. We were the fourth boat out of Oriental, closely followed by the sailboat that was next to us in the marina. Four boats passed us today, we passed none. We kept hearing a boat, "Kraken" passing other boats. Eventually it passed us at fifteen knots and pulled into Dowry Creek Marina just ahead of us. We are docked next to it.

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Patti takes care of the lines while Captain Ron is at the helm



Sunrise on the Neuse River



Patti takes the helm

The first couple of hours of our trip were on the Neuse River but the winds hadn't picked up yet. The next couple of hours were on protected waters. The last two hours were crossing the Pamlico River and going up the Pungo River. By

this time, the winds had picked up and it was an uncomfortable ride. Not really bad, but uncomfortable.

Once we pulled into the marina, we took on sixty gallons of diesel fuel and then went to our slip. Kiki was in a hurry to get off the boat and led Captain Ron to the first grassy area to take care of business. Somehow, regardless of the marina, she seems to know the way off the dock to land. We went to the office to check in and pay, but they had no dog treats. (Kiki writes: "I thought there was a law that all marinas had to have dog treats. If there isn't, there should be.")

Since laundry is free here, Patti decided to wash all the dirty clothes we have accumulated. This took two loads but now we are set for at least another week or more.

Captain Ron considered getting into the pool, but it isn't officially open yet and the heat hasn't been turned on. He changed his mind.

We were at this marina two years ago and they had started building a restaurant. Two years later, it is not finished and not open. That's OK, we have leftover steak and baked potatoes from a restaurant in Beaufort.

Captain Ron is having mixed results with his TV and fire stick. There are about twenty over-the-air stations but they break up and are unwatchable. The fire stick relies on an Internet connection and apparently neither the hot spot nor the marina's Wi-Fi is strong enough for good TV reception. We'll be gone tomorrow so it's no big deal.

The weather sources predicted a chance of storms this afternoon; that was one of the reasons for the early departure. At 5:00 PM, it began to rain and thunder. Thankfully, the laundry is finished and back on the boat.

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It only rained for a few minutes and then it stopped. Dinner was steak and baked potato with a side of green beans. It was as delicious as it was in the restaurant a couple days ago thanks to the trusty microwave oven.

It is supposed to storm again tonight but so far we have heard thunder but not seen a storm. We topped off the potable water tanks because our next stop, the Alligator River Marina has some pretty smelly water and we will most likely be at a free dock in Elizabeth City, NC with no access to potable water.

It's time to hit the hay!

Captain's Log, day ten (May 10, 2023)

Today was a busy day on the ICW! The Sea Dog got us up early, as usual, so we got dressed and got ourselves underway. We were the second boat out of the marina.



Leaving Dowry Creek Marina

A little less than an hour's cruise from the marina, the ICW enters the Alligator River-Pungo River Canal, a twenty one mile long man-made cut between the two rivers. We passed several anchored boats near the canal and entered it. There were two sailboats ahead of us that we

couldn't see, but eventually overtook. Several faster power boats entered the canal behind us, but eventually overtook us.



Traffic on the Alligator River-Pungo River Canal

Reading stories from other boaters who have transited this canal, many talk of seeing bears and other wildlife. We have never seen anything more exotic than a deer and saw nothing today.

Once we got to the end of the canal, we entered the Alligator River. The wind picked up and so did the seas. The captain and crew began to get a bit queasy.

Near the mouth of the alligator river and just before the Alligator River Marina is the Alligator River Swing Bridge. This bridge has a clearance of only fourteen feet so most cruising boats have to have it opened to pass through. Two of the boats that had passed us in the canal requested and received an opening. We were far enough behind them that the bridge closed before we got there. Two fast boats sped past HIGH COTTON, apparently trying to make this opening. They cause a big wake which was uncomfortable for us.

The bridge tender did not hold the bridge for them so they had to wait until we reached the bridge for the next opening. That made us feel better.

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We had requested a tie up on the face dock at the marina, but were told it was being reserved for several large boats and we would have to take a slip. The last time we stayed here, there was a dockhand to assist in docking. No help was offered today, but a fellow boater did come over and help us dock. Several other boats including the Camano that we have been docked near at other marinas came in later and all took slips. As of sunset, there are only two boats on the face dock and a couple hundred feet of unoccupied space.

The K-9 was glad to put her feet on solid ground and walked and sniffed. She spied the boat ramp and ran down to the water for a swim. Of course, that meant a shower for her on the boat, but she didn't mind.



The Sea Dog gets her shower

The Alligator River Marina is a combination marina, roadside gas station, convenience store and restaurant. You can get a variety of meals here, but they all are fried! We checked in, paid for our stay and ordered fried chicken meals. The meals are served in "to-go" containers but you can carry them to tables in the back with a view of the docks.

After our meal, we walked back to HIGH COTTON, got the puppy, walked her a bit more and walked back to the office for ice.

The showers here are several stars short of five-star, but we took showers anyway. We won't have that opportunity tomorrow at the free dock in Elizabeth City.

Tomorrow, we will rise early again, but we will get hot breakfast sandwiches from the marina before we shove off. The predictions are for light winds on Albemarle Sound, a fourteen mile body of water that can be very uncomfortable in high winds.

BTW: Apparently, T-Mobile has no coverage in this area, a disappointment. Fortunately, the marina's Wi-Fi works fairly well.

Captain's Log, day eleven (May 11, 2023)

We were up bright and early today, walked the Sea Dog and got the boat ready, but we had decided to get breakfast sandwiches at the restaurant and they didn't start cooking until 6:00 AM. They do a big business with construction workers and such.

We had an alarm set, but didn't need it as the crab boats were warming their engines and leaving at sunrise. An un-muffled diesel engine a few feet away works well as an alarm clock.

The other Camano Troll beat us out of the marina, apparently they didn't get sandwiches. We were second and several other boats followed soon after. After a few miles, the ICW splits into two alternate routes, the Virginia Cut and the Dismal Swamp Route. Bigger boat and those in a hurry usually take the Virginia Cut, we prefer the more protected and scenic Dismal Swamp route.

Several of the boats split off towards the Virginia Cut route and the other Camano took the official ICW path towards Elizabeth City and the Dismal Swamp. HIGH COTTON and two other boats took the "shortcut" across Albemarle Sound towards

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Elizabeth City. They eventually passed us, of course, but we caught up with them when they had to wait for an opening of the Elizabeth City drawbridge.

We passed the Weeksville Airship Hangar just south of Elizabeth City and saw one of the blimps high above the ground.



The Weeksville Airship Hangar, Elizabeth City, NC



A blimp, high above the hangar

The other Camano beat us to Elizabeth City because they were going pretty fast. They were docked at Mariner's Wharf, the city free dock where we have stayed several times. This dock is open to wind and waves and we have been annoyed by homeless people so we decided to try a different free dock, just past the bridge, but still within walking distance of downtown.



The "other Camano" speeds away from us

The Mid-Atlantic Christian University provides free dockage for about three boats. As we were docking, a young man appeared and offered assistance. While his efforts were thoughtful, he actually turned a routine docking into a messy and stressful experience. In the end though, we got docked with no damage or insurance claims.

This dock is part of the university's "Maritime Ministry". We were able to eat at the university cafeteria (\$10, all you can eat) and use the heads. We were offered showers and the use of a truck, but we declined.

The ship's puppy was happy to find a beautiful waterfront lawn to romp on. Later, she made some friends and got petted. (Kiki writes: "People like to pet me and I like being petted.")



Kiki makes new friends wherever she goes

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The other two boats continued up the river towards the canal. It's doubtful that they made it all the way through, but there is a welcome center and a couple other docks where they could spend the night.

The locks to the Dismal Swamp only open four times per day and we are thinking that the first opening will probably be crowded so we will most likely aim for the second opening at 11:00 AM. That should still get us through and to Norfolk where we have a reservation at Waterside Marina.



HIGH COTTON docked at Elizabeth City, NC

Captain's Log, day twelve (May 12, 2023)

We had a peaceful night's sleep at the Mid-Atlantic Christian University free dock. On our walk to town we saw the other Camano docked at the free town dock and it was rocking and rolling. That's where we have stayed in the past and last night's dockage was considerably better.

We walked the puppy, did our pre-departure checks and got underway at about 8:30 AM. After a half hour or so on the Pasquotank River, two larger trawlers pulled out of the channel from Lamb's Marina in front of us. We remembered these boats from somewhere else because one of the captains called us on the radio and invited us to

“chat” with them. We aren't much for chatting, but we did follow them to the South Mills Lock.

We were the fifth and final boat into the lock. The first was the other Camano that had left Elizabeth City about 7:30 AM but was too late to make the first locking of the day. They must have had a long wait.



The South Mills Lock on the Dismal Swamp Canal

We followed the other four boats out of the lock. We heard them on the radio making arrangements to stay at the Welcome Center. Our plan was to move through the entire canal and spend the night in Norfolk, VA. One of the boats, a sailboat was going to stay at the welcome Center for an hour and then get underway again.



HIGH COTTON enters state #3 on her journey north

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Once past the Welcome Center, we became the “lead boat”. Actually, we were the only boat although we did pass some kayakers.

We made it to the Deep Creek Lock in time to tie up the boat and walk to the Food Lion grocery store for a few things.



HIGH COTTON tied up on the wall for a grocery run

We mentioned “locks”, but at each lock there is also a drawbridge about a quarter mile from the lock and the same person operates both, driving between them. So we were waiting at the bridge when the sailboat that had stopped at the welcome center arrived. We both went through the bridge, but the sailboat was spending the night at a free dock between the bridge and the lock. That left us as the only boat going down in the lock.

Once out of the lock, everything was fine until we got to the Norfolk Southern #7 Railroad Bridge. The bridge was closed and according to a tugboat captain we contacted, it had been closed for twenty minutes already, “waiting for a train”. There were a couple other boats waiting and several more showed up. Eventually, a train crossed the bridge. Five minutes later, the bridge opened to let the boat traffic through.

So, with forty five minutes or so delay, we continued on to the waterside Marina in Norfolk, VA where we were pleased to find ourselves

assigned a slip nearer the walkway to land than usual. We are with the “big boys” this time.



US Navy ships being maintained

HIGH COTTON was due for an oil change so Captain Ron got to work while Patti and the pooch explored the Waterside complex. Waterside is not just a marina, there is a ferry landing, a concert area and a building with several restaurants. There are also ships that take people out on day cruises.



Captain Ron does the one hundred hour oil and filter change

Captain Ron was doing fine with the oil change until he dropped the plastic dipstick for the transmission. He could see it but not reach it so he got his long nosed pliers and retrieved it. Then he dropped it into the bilge, under the engine in a place that’s virtually unreachable. He had to work a short boat pole underneath the engine and coax it to the front where he could grab it.

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He finished the oil change, but this marina will not accept used oil so we will have to carry it with us until we find one that will take it.

Captain Ron was ready for a shower so he got all his things together and set out for the showers. One of the downsides of this marina is the distance to the showers from the docks. It's a very long way. Imagine a large shopping mall with docks at one end and the showers and heads at the other.

Captain Ron walked the distance, went in and turned on the shower and waited for it to get hot. It didn't. He tried the other shower with the same results.

He trudged back to HIGH COTTON, still in need of a shower. By this time, a band had started playing on the outdoor stage. They weren't playing Captain Ron's type of music! In fact, it would have been hard to call what they were playing "music" at all. At least they were loud!

Back at HIGH COTTON, Patti talked to the marina staff and they checked the showers and turned on the hot water (one would wonder why it was turned off in the first place). Captain Ron again trudged the quarter mile or so to the shower and this time, got his expected hot shower. Then it was Patti's turn.

By this time, the sun had set and we were both tired from a long day of boating and waiting so we skipped dinner and went to bed.

Captain's Log, day thirteen (May 13, 2023)

We had a restful sleep last night. We were so tired, the band didn't even bother us. The next morning, Patti and the puppy went out for an early walk, came back and went back to sleep. Captain Ron didn't even notice.

There is a restaurant just a couple blocks from the marina that supposedly specializes in breakfast so we walked over and had our breakfast. Patti ordered a plate with eggs, bacon, pancakes and hash browns. Captain Ron just ordered sausage gravy over a biscuit, something he normally likes. How can someone mess up sausage gravy over a biscuit? Instead of traditional breakfast sausage, this was made with kielbasa or something similar, cut in small pieces. No doubt this sounded like a good idea to someone, but Captain Ron didn't think so. He ended up eating some of Patti's pancakes. Patti's eggs came back to the boat for the ship's puppy.



Like the sign says, Welcome to Downtown Norfolk

Later, we walked to the mall. This is a large, three story shopping mall just about three blocks from the waterfront, but like many shopping malls, it is not doing well. There were as many vacant storefronts as there were open stores and even the stores that were open weren't worth going in. The exception was a jewelry store that had some sort of mother's day special with a free bracelet. There was a long line of people waiting to get in a guard limiting the number of shoppers at one time. We did buy a pretzel though. Oddly, there was a vending machine in the hall selling false eyelashes.

We came back to HIGH COTTON and took the K-9 for another walk.

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Three of the boats we followed yesterday are in the marina with us today. We didn't see the occupants though. Maybe we will meet them tomorrow.

We walked back up Granby Street to the pizza shop we have enjoyed on past visits and had pizza for dinner.

The pooch got another walk. Rain was forecast for this evening and surprisingly, it has started raining. No big deal, we are comfortable and dry on HIGH COTTON. We extended our stay through Sunday night so we'll have another day in Norfolk. We haven't figured out where we will go next, it's either Hampton, VA or Cape Charles, VA.

Captain's Log, day fourteen (May 14, 2023)

Today was a day in port with no need to get up early. Again, Patti and the pooch got up, went for a morning walk and then came back and went back to sleep.



Our home for a few days

We walked (with the Sea Dog) along the waterfront to the cruise terminal where one of the Carnival cruise ships was boarding passengers. It's just amazing how large these ships are. Of course, security people were out in force, telling everyone

where they could and could not go. Kiki made a lot of friends of the people relaxing on the benches along the waterfront. Norfolk's waterfront is a big, long park, landscaped and with dozens of benches for citizens and visitors to rest on.

We considered going back to town for dinner, but since we had a half a pizza left from yesterday, we decided to heat that up and eat it instead. After our pizza dinner we asked the ship's puppy if she would like to go for ice cream. Of course, she said yes so off we went. Well, we started out towards the ice cream store. About this time, the cruise ship sounded its horn and we knew it was about to leave its berth so we stayed to watch.

The cruise ship pulled away from its dock, moved slowly to the area in front of the marina and then turned one hundred and eighty degrees in its own length. It then headed down the river towards the Chesapeake Bay and then the Atlantic Ocean. We talked with several people during this event including a couple on another boat in the marina. Speaking of the marina, it was nearly empty when we got here Friday, but it's nearly full tonight.



The Carnival Magic turns in front of the marina

We walked to the restaurant area and got our ice cream. Kiki had hers of course. (Kiki writes: *"I love ice cream. Mawmaw and pawpaw know better than to get ice cream without me."*)

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The ship's puppy gets her ice cream treat

Back at the boat, Patti went to take her shower. Captain Ron has been fighting failing technology all day. The Internet control for the boat's heating and cooling thermostat has been intermittent, the hot spot's app had to be reinstalled and the program on the tablet (Navionics) has not been able to export routes via email. For some reason he had to set up a different email account. Once Patti returned, Captain Ron went for his shower.

We made reservations for a marina in Cape Charles, VA for tomorrow. The weather forecast indicates that we may be stuck there for more than one day.

Captain's Log, day fifteen (May 15, 2023)

We got up today earlier than we had planned so we decided to get ready and get underway. Although the marina seemed nearly full last night, several boats had left or were leaving as we were getting ready to shove off. Captain Ron checked the oil in the engine and transmission, just to double check his previous work of changing the oil and filters. All was OK.

Heading from downtown Norfolk to the Chesapeake Bay, we passed a couple dozen Navy warships at their docks, some being worked on and

some probably ready to head out if needed. There were a couple of patrol boats making sure nobody got too close. We heard conversations on the marine radio concerning warships and submarines but didn't see any other than the ones we saw docked.



The US Navy has a large presence in Norfolk, VA

Today's voyage was more or less across the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, west to northeast and all in a straight line until we got to the channel for Cape Charles. There were a couple of turns and we were in the harbor. We passed a dozen or more large ships anchored, apparently waiting their turn at the docks in Baltimore. Kiki got to see some "big fishies".



Thimble Shoal Lighthouse, Chesapeake Bay

We called the marina on the radio and a dockhand met us at our slip and helped us dock. The Sea Dog

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was in a hurry to get to land so she and Patti took off while Captain Ron finished connecting the power and bringing a few things (his camera and coffee) down from the flybridge.

He got his wallet and went looking for the female crew members. He found them on a bench at the bathhouse so everyone walked to the office to check in.

On the way back to the boat, the hound spied a boat ramp and just had to go for a swim. After a short swim and rolling on the pavement to dry herself off, she decided she wanted to walk to town. We followed her on the gravel walking path a quarter of a mile or so to the center of town. She found a real estate office with the door open so she went inside to explore. There was a lady at the desk so the pooch got petted and we had a lengthy conversation with the lady.

After several minutes, we left and walked to a restaurant with outside dining. We considered eating lunch there, but the waitress said she was the only one working and it could be a long time if we sat outside. We didn't see anything on the menu that jumped out at us so we decided instead to take the K-9 back to the boat and go back to town and look for a different restaurant. The puppy didn't think much of that idea and had to be carried partway back to the marina.

With the pooch guarding the boat, we walked back to town and found a different restaurant. Many of the restaurants in Cape Charles are closed on Mondays including the one at the marina which we remember as being pretty good.

It's been four or five years since we last visited Cape Charles and it looks like they have been working hard to improve the town. We used to have to walk through some abandoned railroad tracks to get to town but now the tracks are gone

and there an actual path to town. There are more shops and restaurants now.

We got the code for the marina Wi-Fi and were able to connect, but there's no Internet. Captain Ron called the office and reported this and they said they would work on it, but as of closing at 5:00 PM, there is still no Internet. Our hot spot is barely getting a signal so this report may or may not get posted tonight. Also, we have no good way of checking the wind forecast for tomorrow. The last report we had indicated that tomorrow would be a poor day to be travelling on the Bay. We may have to stay put. We hope they can fix the Internet tomorrow.

Our late lunch was our meal for the day so we just had snacks for dinner. The puppy got a walk and it's time for bed.

Captain's Log, day sixteen (May 16, 2023)

What should have been a "sleep in" day came to a halt when we awoke at 6:30 AM to HIGH COTTON rocking and banging against the dock. The rocking we can take, but not the banging. Once we were up and dressed, most of the banging stopped, but Patti repositioned one of the fenders to better cushion the boat ("fenders" are air filled plastic cylinders that are placed between the boat and the dock to cushion and protect the boat from the dock).

The four legged one had her morning walk as it began to rain. There was another boater on the dock and we were having a conversation with her regarding the marina's Internet not working. Captain Ron got on his computer and all of a sudden, it was working. He suspects when the dockmaster came in this morning he figured out that it wasn't working and reset it. At least we can now get weather forecasts and watch TV over the

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Internet. There are only a couple local channels available here with the antenna. Captain Ron posted yesterday's report and some random photos.

We had a "real" breakfast on HIGH COTTON, a poached egg on corned beef hash for Captain Ron and fried eggs and country ham for the rest of the crew.

Once it warmed up we walked the ship's puppy to the beach. Once she saw the sand and water, she ran as fast as Captain Ron could follow towards the water. It was low tide and there were pools of water on the beach so that's where she headed, not actually to the edge of the Bay. She played in the water and dug in the sand. She went from one pool to another running and splashing in the water and the sand. Then she rolled on her back in the sand. She had to take a shower in the cockpit of HIGH COTTON before she was allowed inside. She understands this and waits for her shower.



The Sea Dog at the beach

After a brief rest, we left the K-9 to guard the boat and walked back to town where Patti did her best to support the local economy. We also bought ice cream. (Kiki writes: "Yea, I could smell it on your breath when you got back to the boat. Not cool!")

The pooch went for another walk and then we left her again to go to dinner at the marina's

restaurant. It was OK, nothing to write home about although that seems to be exactly what we are doing.

We took turns showering and now it's time for bed. We will check the wind forecast tomorrow, but we may have to stay here another day.



Sunset over the Chesapeake Bay

Captain's Log, day seventeen (May 17, 2023)

We got up, got dressed and asked the Sea Dog if she would like to go back to the beach. She said "yes", so off we went. Dogs are officially allowed on the beach before 9:00 AM and after 8:00 PM from May to October.

This time it was high tide and there were no pools of water for her to play in. She made a short run into the surf and then came back out to dig and walk. We walked a quarter mile or so on the beach and then back to the boat past some of the historic homes. The ship's puppy got her usual bath in the cockpit before going inside the boat.

We spent quite a bit of time this morning trying to figure out the best day to continue north. We finally decided that we're leaving tomorrow morning and heading straight to Onancock, VA. It's an interesting small town that we have been to

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before, but it will be about a six hour trip on open water with the possibility of somewhat strong winds. We'll just have to tough it out.

We called the number for the Onancock Town Wharf and got a recording that they were closed for the season but would reopen on April 1, 2023. Somebody needs to change their phone message!

Plan "B" was to request a reservation through Dockwa, a marina reservation service. This is what we did. A couple hours later we got a confirmation email.

Patti has been unable to find her dental floss and decided she needed to buy some. None of the shops near the marina had any, but Captain Ron knew of a pharmacy at the edge of town. We asked the hound if she would like to tag along and of course she answered "yes" so off we went.



Crab pots (traps) waiting to be set in the Chesapeake Bay

The pharmacy turned out to be a longer walk than we had anticipated, but it was a real pharmacy with the things pharmacies are supposed to have so she found her dental floss. The puppy was tired and had to be carried part of the way back.

We stopped at the ice cream shop where the hound got her own "pup cup" of vanilla ice cream. The humans had cookies and cream and chocolate. Then it was back to the boat for naps.

After his power nap, Captain Ron got out the hose to fill HIGH COTTON's potable water tanks. He decided that this would be a good opportunity to wash the port side of the boat which was against the dock so he did. Not a "boat show" wash, but it looks much better than it did. The used oil and filters from our recent oil change are still in the cockpit so he didn't wash that part. We will be able to dispose of them in Crisfield, MD in a couple of days.

Captain Ron had to rest from his boat washing activities and then we walked to town to the restaurant we hadn't been to yet. Captain Ron had his heart set on the Cuban sandwich, but they were out of Cuban sandwiches. They were also out of onion rings. Patti had to get up and hunt for the waitress to get a refill on her iced tea.

We ate and walked back to the boat. Captain Ron had received an email from Dockwa stating that his credit card had been declined so he had to fix that (an expired card was on file) while Patti took the hound for her evening walk.

We plan on leaving early tomorrow morning so we will turn in early tonight.

Captain's Log, day eighteen (May 18, 2023)

We did leave early this morning but we could have left thirty minutes sooner. The ship's puppy failed to wake us, she was sound asleep. Probably because she walked at least a couple miles yesterday. We woke to the sound of the alarm on the phone.

Captain Ron got dressed, made his morning coffee and did his engine checks. Patti and the pup went for a walk and uncovered the flybridge. We were the second boat out of the marina.

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The Cape Charles Harbor has a pretty long dredged entrance channel from the south west. Because of the shallow water nearby, we had to travel south west for about twenty minutes, turn directly west and then turn north towards our destination of Onancock, VA. Forty five minutes after leaving, we were opposite Cape Charles and finally making progress northward.

The wind and waves weren't as bad as we expected them to be until about an hour out of Onancock. The ship's puppy decided that she had had enough and would rather be in the cabin below. Of course, with the boat rocking, that was not easy to accomplish, but we slowed down and Captain Ron got her down the ladder safely. (Kiki writes: *"I don't like it when the boat rocks. I like smooth sailing."*)

It was surprisingly lonely on the water today; we saw a couple ships in the distance, but no pleasure boats.

The Onancock Town Wharf (marina) is up a pretty, winding creek. Captain Ron grew up thinking of a "creek" as a stream that one could easily walk across, but this creek is several hundred feet wide in places.

As we approached the marina, Captain Ron tried several times to raise the dockmaster on the radio without success. Finally, he told Patti to rig the fenders and lines for a starboard side tie. The dockmaster came out of the office, pointed to a slip and grabbed our lines once we backed into it. He said he had been listening for us on the radio but didn't hear us. Who knows what went wrong? Boaters who came in after us said that they had heard us on the radio calling the marina.

Patti has a prescription that was about to run out and it must be filled at a CVS pharmacy. There is one about three miles from the marina and the

marina has a loaner car so we made arrangements for the prescription to be sent to this CVS and to borrow the loaner car.



HIGH COTTON docked at the Onancock Town Wharf

Patti took advantage of the free laundry here and washed and dried a load of clothes. Then we got the car and headed for the CVS. Since there is also a Walmart Super Center just down the highway from the CVS, we went there as well for groceries and an extra gallon of oil for the boat, "just in case".

One of the conditions for the loaner car is, it is free for two hours and ten dollars per hour after that. We were back well before the two hours were up, but the dockmaster had locked the office and gone home! We still have the keys. We could have gone out and hit every bar in town except that there's only one and it would be easier to just walk there.

We left the car parked next to the office and the K-9 to guard the boat and walked up the hill to the Irish Pub where Captain Ron ordered his usual shepherd's pie. Captain Ron will overlook the fact that shepherd's pie is supposed to be made with lamb, not beef. It was good anyway.

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Captain Ron's Shephard's Pie

We returned to the marina and took turns showering in the marina's showers. The showers here are better than what we have been experiencing lately. Not quite "five star", but modern, clean and well designed with privacy and a place to sit while getting dressed. Captain Ron went first, and then Patti next so she could put the rest of the clothes and the towels in the wash. Unfortunately, another boater was doing her laundry so ours will be finished later.

We have a relatively short trip tomorrow to Crisfield, MD (another state line will be crossed) so we will hang around long enough to give the car keys back to the dockmaster. And maybe even get breakfast somewhere.

Captain's Log, day nineteen (May 19, 2023)

Sometime during the night, the Birthday Bunny snuck into HIGH COTTON which was locked up tighter than a drum and left two birthday cards for Captain Ron. Captain Ron is now officially a "geezer" in anybody's book. Back when he was born, the Dead Sea was only sick!

We decided not to leave Onancock until 8:00 AM so we could return the keys to the loaner car. This gave us time to walk to the Corner Bakery for

donuts. We had to wait in a long line so we knew they would be good. We got a dozen, six each.

So, with a box of donuts on the flybridge, we pulled out of our slip at about 8:10 AM heading back to the Chesapeake Bay. This took almost an hour and was smooth sailing.

Unfortunately, once we exited the creek into the Bay, the winds were not blocked by the trees and the wind and waves picked up. It was an extremely uncomfortable additional two hours as we headed north to Crisfield, MD. It was too rough at this point to try to go down the ladder to the lower helm. It did calm down a bit as we turned east and entered the harbor in Crisfield. Captain Ron went below and found several things that had been on the counter were now on the floor. And the cooler full of drinks and ice had tipped over. Fortunately, it didn't open and spill everything out.

Once we got to the marina basin, we headed to the fuel dock. That's when we noticed that the gauge for the starboard tank was reading zero and the gauge for the port tank was reading half full. Sitting still or in flat seas, the engine draws fuel equally from both tanks, but because they are connected together and we ran with a list (leaning) to port all day because of the strong wind blowing on the beam, fuel had run from the starboard tank to the port tank. We put forty two gallons in a forty five gallon starboard tank! The port tank took twenty gallons.

The wind made it difficult to get off the fuel dock, but we got off between gusts and headed for our assigned slip. That's when we found out that the two young boys sent to assist us (summer help) had never helped tie up a boat before (OK, maybe a couple times). Captain Ron had to take charge and might have been seen as "abrupt" because things had to be done quickly and decisively. The lady who manages the marina came out and told

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them what to do once we got tied up sufficiently that Captain Ron could shut off the engine and rearrange the lines. This is a state run marina and each time we have been here the staff has been mostly teenagers.

We walked to the office and checked in. The puppy got petted and was given dog treats. We were given two slices of Smith Island cake, the Maryland state cake. Smith Island cake is unique as it is made up of many (ours had eight) very thin layers of cake with icing in-between the layers.



HIGH COTTON at Somers Cove Marina, Crisfield, MD

We walked back to HIGH COTTON and got the used motor oil and filters from our recent oil change and took them to the recycling station on site.

We rested from our journey, and ate some leftovers for lunch. We rested a bit more and then walked to town accompanied by the Sea Dog. There was a shop with an open door so the pooch just walked in and walked behind the counter to see if someone would pet her. The lady did, of course and she talked to us for several minutes.

We walked to the city commercial dock but there were no boats there so we walked to the ice cream shop and got ice cream for the crew. On the way back to HIGH COTTON, we stopped in the marina office where the ship's puppy got treats and full

attention from the entire staff. She did not want to leave.

Back at the boat, Captain Ron got his shower bag and headed for the bathhouse. The code did not unlock the lock. He walked to another bathhouse where he was able to take a long, hot shower.

Back on the boat we ate our cake. Actually, Patti did not care for it so Captain Ron had to eat her slice as well as his own. Captain Ron worked on our plans for the next couple of stops but has nothing firm yet. He decided to get some rest after a grueling day.

Captain's Log, day twenty (May 20, 2023)

A day in port! A day to sleep late! Captain Ron woke up about 8:30 AM and found Patti and the puppy asleep on the lounge. Apparently, they had gone for their morning walk, returned to the boat and gone back to sleep.

We still had several donuts left from our dozen so we tackled the remainder. They looked a bit more wrinkled for being a day old than the ones from chain stores but they still tasted good. Perhaps they have fewer preservatives.

Captain Ron walked up to the office to report his problems with the bathroom lock and code. The guys in the office looked bewildered but the girl said "Oh, that one is weird. If you put the code in, it locks you out. Just turn the knob without entering the code and you'll be fine."

Now it was Captain Ron who was bewildered, because the marina is handing out cards to boaters with lock codes on them, knowing that the codes don't work. The codes to the marina gates do work.

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Patti could not find the spray cleaner that Captain Ron had been using so we eventually decided to walk to the Dollar store and get some more. We stopped for ice cream on the way. Many of the small towns we visit on our cruises are doing pretty well with stores and restaurants. Unfortunately, Crisfield seems to be doing worse, not better. Many of the buildings we have passed by in the past two days are empty and others are businesses that are open just a few days per week. The Dollar store was doing well, though. We had to wait in line to check out.

We walked back with a couple bottles of cleaner, a pack of paper towels and a few food items. When Patti went to put the cleaner away, she found the one Captain Ron had been using so she refilled it with one of the new ones.

Captain Ron watched TV but fell asleep. Patti and the K-9 had gone for a walk but when they didn't come back, he walked to the office and found them there. The puppy was eating dog biscuits and getting petted.

We left the ship's puppy on the boat to catch up on her eating and napping and walked to the local seafood restaurant. Patti decided on ribs and Captain Ron thought the steamed oysters would hit the spot. The waitress came over and when Captain Ron asked for the steamed oysters, she told us that they were out of oysters. Oh well! He ordered crab cake "sliders" (miniature crab cake sandwiches) and a bowl of Maryland crab soup (essentially vegetable soup with crab meat in it).

Back at the boat, Captain Ron has been struggling with his navigation software. Supposedly, he can create routes in one program (Navionics) and then email them to himself and import them into another program (HomePort) that will allow him to check and modify the routes and load them on an SD card so they can be loaded into the chart

plotters. This has worked reliably in the past and worked once on our trip, but he was unable to get it to work yesterday and today. He may have to go back to manually plotting routes.

Patti took her shower and when she returned, Captain Ron went to take his. Knowing to just turn the knob without entering the code, he was able to use the main bathhouse. This was nicer than the one he used last night and since all the showers here are old enough to have not been built with flow restricting fixtures, he had plenty of hot water and plenty of pressure.

We will stay here at least one more day. We want to visit Cambridge, MD next but it's a long ride so we may take two days and anchor overnight. Also, we are trying to make sure we have a place to be over the Memorial Day weekend. This is the first day of boating for many people and the waterways and marinas can get crowded.

Captain's Log, day twenty one (May 21, 2023)

A day in port today. Kiki pulled her usual trick, up at the crack of dawn and wanting to go for a walk. In her defense, she can't just get up and use the toilet and go back to bed like the humans can. Captain Ron finished the wrinkled donuts after Patti turned her nose up at them. They still tasted OK.

We went to the office to pay for another day but they said we were paid up. We didn't argue the point. Patti bought Captain Ron an insulated coffee cup that says "Crabby until I get My Coffee". He has the same writing on his favorite mug at home. It came from a stop we made in Baltimore several years ago. The Sea Dog, of course, entertained the staff and got petted and fed dog treats. She really likes this place.

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We mentioned the other day that rough water had overturned the cooler in the cabin. Well, when this happens, water from the cooler leaks through the deck hatches and into the bilge. It doesn't really hurt anything, but we like to keep the bilge dry so if there is water in it, we know there is a problem that needs to be dealt with right away. One of the most important rules of boating is, the water belongs on the outside of the boat, not the inside.

Captain Ron got out the hand pump and bucket and pumped all he could out of the bilge and into the bucket. The pump doesn't get it all, there's a half inch or so left. It takes a shop vacuum to get it really dry.

Captain Ron tried again to export routes from Navionics to HomePort. He asked about this in a Facebook boating group, but got nothing really useful. He tried importing a route from the Internet and that worked fine but of course, it was a test and not the route he needed.

A little more research determined that Navionics was "upgraded" on May 17 and in hindsight, that's when the trouble started. Going to the Navionics support page, he found the suggestion that if one is having trouble exporting routes from Navionics into HomePort, they should upload the routes to a website that will modify them and then download the modified routes and import them.

So basically, they "broke" it with their upgrade but provided a convoluted "fix" that is very inconvenient for the user. Captain Ron is not a happy camper at this point.

We walked to the waterfront for dinner. On the way we stopped at the only shop that was open. We had a long chat with the lady who was working there. Patti did find something to buy so the lady's time was not wasted. Still, it's hard to imagine that these shops bring in enough money to pay the

people working there, much less make a profit. We saw very few people in town today.

After leaving the shop, we walked to the restaurant. This restaurant was more like a diner than a tourist restaurant and the food was mostly "home style". Patti had the steak and Captain Ron had pork chops with southern gravy. It was a good meal for both of us.

We walked back to the boat so Captain Ron could change into his walking shoes and then walked back to the Dollar Store for teabags for Patti. Captain Ron got a roll of paper shop towels for cleaning grease and oil.

Back at the boat, we got the pooch and headed out again, this time for ice cream.

After the ice cream excursion, Captain Ron got busy with the spray cleaner from yesterday and the shop towels from today and cleaned the bilge as much as possible.

We have marina reservations for the next few days, but not the Memorial Day weekend. Our marina of choice is booked full and the nearby marinas want over \$150 per night. We will make other plans.

Patti went for her shower while Captain Ron loaded the routes for the next two stops into the chart plotters. Then he took his long, hot shower.

Tomorrow will be a long day with an early start. The forecast is for decent boating conditions.

Captain's Log, day twenty two (May 22, 2023)

We were up at 5:30 AM. The humans got dressed, the Sea Dog went for a walk to do her "business", the power and lines were disconnected and we were underway just after 6:00 AM. One boat left

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before us, a sailboat. Two crab boats followed us out of the marina and at the end of the no-wake zone, they powered up and passed HIGH COTTON, one on each side. They were soon out of sight, but as the day went on, we saw many, many more crabbers setting and checking their traps.

Speaking of crab traps, we had to dodge a bunch of them today as well as fish traps.



Crabbers at work on the Chesapeake Bay

Today's voyage, from Crisfield to Oxford, ended up being over ten hours long. We had considered breaking it up into two days and anchoring for a night, but getting to and from a safe anchorage would have added three hours more so we decided to "tough it out". It would have been a shorter trip but the current was against us for most of the day.



A tug and barge of gravel on the Chesapeake Bay

Other than the length, today's voyage was pleasant with reasonable temperatures and wind and waves. There were just a few times when the waves were bothersome.

We mentioned the crab boats. We also saw a few pleasure craft, including one of the ones we followed in the Dismal Swamp. We saw a pod of dolphins jumping in the water, but not close enough for the ship's puppy to see. She did spend some time today looking for them and calling to them.



One of several fish traps we had to avoid on the Bay

Our marina for the next two days is a few stars short of five, but it's cheap and in a good location. Captain Ron turned the boat and backed into the slip while Patti slipped the bow lines over the pilings like we were seasoned pros. Not a sole was watching however!

The one restaurant that is open on Mondays didn't list anything exciting so we heated up our leftovers for dinner. There is a country deli down the street that sells sandwiches and some food items so we will probably get something from there tomorrow,

After dinner, we walked the pooch to the town park across the street. She spied the river access so down she ran, into the water. We met a local lady walking her dog so we talked with her while

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the dogs played. Actually, the other dog played, Kiki was too busy sniffing everything in sight.

On the way back to the marina, we met a family on bicycles. It turned out that they had just left their house so they went back and brought out three Yorkies. They all sniffed Kiki and then Kiki decided it was time to go.

Tomorrow will be a day in port but we will take the Sea Dog to the bigger beach for a while It's just a short walk up the street.

Captain's Log, day twenty three (May 23, 2023)

Captain Ron rolled out of the sack at 8:30 AM to find the female crew members sound asleep on the lounge. Apparently, they had gotten up earlier and taken their morning walk. It wasn't long before they woke and started moving around.

Patti prepared a "boat cooked" breakfast, corned beef hash with a poached egg on top for Captain Ron (one of his favorites) and scrambled eggs and bacon for the rest of the crew. Captain Ron worked on plans for the next few days.

As planned, we walked to the town beach. The "big beach", not the ten feet or so of sand at the edge of the town park. "Big" of course, is relative; this beach is not Ocean City, it's perhaps a couple hundred feet long and thirty feet wide, but it is an official town beach with a parking lot, restrooms and showers.

When we got there, the Sea Dog headed for the water. She ran in, swam a bit and ran out and started digging in the sand. She always digs in the sand but she never finds anything.

There were two ladies in beach chairs with a young child about a year and a half old. The child was fascinated with the puppy and petted her. Patti

gave him the leash and he pretended to walk her. Captain Ron threw some sticks in the water and the puppy swam out and got them. She brought them back and chewed on them. Once she got herself good and wet, she rolled over and wiggled on her back in the sand. This left us with a thoroughly dirty dog!



The crew goes to the beach

Patti searched for sea glass. She found some, but mostly shells and polished rocks.

We started our walk back to the boat but Kiki's leg "went out". This is something that has happened a few times recently and we have taken her to different vets with no diagnosis or cause and no cure other than pain killers. So now we had to carry a wet and dirty dog back to the boat. At least she is not a German Shepherd!

The dirty dog got her customary bath on the back of the boat and we all went inside to rest.

Later, the humans walked to the general store/deli for sandwiches. We brought them back to the boat.

Oxford, MD is a charming small town. There is the general store, a couple of restaurants, a few shops and a few marinas and boatyards. There is a really nice town park and of course, the town beach. Much of the town dates back to the 1700s and all

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the homes and yards along the main street are neat and maintained. People are friendly. There are also rabbits. Lots of rabbits in the yards and in the park. The Sea Dog thinks of rabbits as fun to chase, but she is not fast enough to catch any. And of course, she is on a leash.



One of the Oxford, MD rabbits

We mentioned yesterday that this marina is somewhat less than “five star”, but the showers are modern, tiled and have large diameter shower heads with good pressure and plenty of hot water. We took turns showering and then walked (mostly carried) the pup one more time.

Tomorrow’s journey is a short one so we won’t have to get up early.

Captain’s Log, day twenty four (May 24, 2023)

The ship’s puppy did not sleep well last night so that means Patti did not sleep well. Captain Ron, however, slept like a log. He did wake up at 7:30 AM, but decided to go back to sleep for a bit. It was less than a two hour ride to Cambridge and he didn’t want to get there too early. Also, the thermometer read 55 degrees outside and he thought it might be more comfortable once it warmed up a bit.

Eventually, everyone got up and got ready to leave. We pulled out of the marina at about 8:45 AM. Once we got out of Town Creek and onto the Tred Avon River, we saw crabbers. As we continued to the Choptank River, we saw many more crabbers. Maryland law prohibits setting crab traps in the tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay so these crabbers were running trot lines. Without going into great detail, a trot line is a long piece of rope, up to a quarter mile long, lying on the bottom of the river, with bait attached at regular intervals. The crabber hooks the line, runs it over a roller on the boat and drives the boat along the line. Crabs that come up with the bait are pulled off with a net and put in baskets for sorting and then for sale.

The trot lines often run across the navigation channel and since the crab boats are following the lines, recreational boats have to stay out of their way.

Even though we travelled a bit slower than usual, we found ourselves entering the Cambridge Yacht Basin in just under two hours. The dockmaster met us and directed us to our slip. He helped to tie us up and plugged in the shore power cord.



Bird perch #19 on the Choptank River

The Sea Dog was anxious to get to dry land and once we got her off the boat she got petted by the

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dockmaster. She still has a slight limp that seems to come and go.

We walked towards the bathhouse and stopped to talk with a couple on a boat from Georgia. They had their boat trailered from Georgia to Norfolk and have been cruising north from there. They said they had seen our boat somewhere, but none of us could figure out where. We had been at some of the same marinas but on different days.

The K-9 wanted to go in the bathhouse and there was no sign prohibiting dogs so we took her in. She sniffed around and lay down on the cool floor.

We walked back to HIGH COTTON, put things away and rested for a couple of hours. Then it was time to walk to town for a meal. The dockmaster had recommended an Italian restaurant so we went there. The food was very good.

Captain Ron is in need of a haircut. On the way to the restaurant, we passed a barber shop, "Bob's Barber Shop". The door was open and a gentleman was sitting in the barber chair. Captain Ron asked about a haircut. The gentleman said the shop was closed and "Bob" (the barber) had passed away. Captain Ron will have to find somewhere else to get his hair cut.

We returned to the boat after dinner and took the ship's puppy out. She just wanted to sit next to the picnic table and bark at other dogs as they walked by. That was OK with us.

This marina is in the town park so there are a lot of people around walking behind the boat. It's a nice park and the people are friendly. There is a sailing club and they have races every Wednesday evening so that crowd had a cookout after the race. We talked with some of the members and the pup got petted.

Tomorrow we will explore the town and try to get Captain Ron a haircut.

Captain's Log, day twenty five (May 25, 2023)

Captain Ron again slept like a log last night. Apparently the K-9 had to go out and pee at daybreak, but when Captain Ron finally decided to get up he found Patti and the pooch asleep in the cabin. Breakfast was bagged donuts and coffee (Dr Pepper for Patti, water for the pup).

Patti decided to strip the beds and wash the bedding and dirty clothes so she gathered up everything and took it to the bathhouse where there are laundry machines. When she came back she decided to vacuum the boat so Captain Ron got out of her way by walking around the marina and the lighthouse replica. When he returned, Patti asked him to go to the bathhouse and move the clothes from the washer to the drier. Captain Ron, multi-talented as he is, agreed and accomplished the task.



Forget Waldo, where is HIGH COTTON?

While he was at the bathhouse he talked to one of the dock hands and asked him if he had any suggestions on where he could get his hair cut. He recommended a place and gave Captain Ron the phone number.

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Captain Ron returned to the boat, called and made an appointment for 12:45 PM. Patti decided to get her nails done so she found a place on-line and called and made an appointment.

Captain Ron noticed yesterday that the air filter for the air conditioner had fallen out and needed to be replaced and he has been meaning to tighten the engine belts for several days so Patti and the pooch went for a walk while he accomplished these tasks. They brought the clean clothes back from the laundry machines. Then it was time for the humans to head their separate ways to get hair and nails taken care of.

Captain Ron hiked the mile or so to the hair salon. He got there in time to rest while another customer was being finished. He got his haircut, paid the lady and started the long walk back to the marina.



In case anyone forgets where they are

As he was walking, his phone rang and it was Patti. Her phone had sent her to a non-existent address and when she called the salon, she found that it was too far to walk anyway. She was on her way back to the marina.

Captain Ron came straight home, but Patti stopped in a few stores on the way. Once she got to the boat she had to make the beds and put the clean clothes away.

Captain Ron researched nearby restaurants and found one that had a Thursday special of a half-pound of steamed shrimp for \$6.00. That seemed like a really good deal so off we went. We had a salad and drinks as well (and a half-pound of shrimp for each of us) but it was a good meal at a great price. The shrimp were large and tasty.

We walked back (a little over one half mile) to HIGH COTTON and let the hound out for her evening walk. We took turns showering and are ready for bed.

Captain's Log, day twenty six (May 26, 2023)

Up at the crack of nine, Captain Ron made his coffee and polished off several of the donuts Patti had bought yesterday on her way home from not getting her nails done. The rest of the crew had already had their morning walk and breakfast.

Patti had talked to one of the marina employees yesterday about her difficulty getting to the nail salon. The employee said he would drive her there and pick her up when she was done so she made an appointment for today.

Captain Ron had replaced the air conditioner filter with a clean one and left the dirty one to be cleaned. He noticed it this morning so once Patti left for the nail salon, he and the K-9 walked to the bathhouse where there is a laundry sink for cleaning such things.

Once that was done, they came back to the boat where the filter was left out on the dock to dry.

There was a small farmers market in the town park next to the marina yesterday and Patti had brought back some peaches, tomatoes and cucumbers. It's doubtful that any of this came from local Eastern Shore farms, it's too early in the season, but it's the

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thought that counts. And we didn't have to find a way to a grocery store to get them; they were just several steps from the boat. Captain Ron ate a tomato. It was good.

The ship's puppy wanted to go for a walk so Captain Ron hooked up the leash and got her off the boat. She wanted to go back in the direction of the bathhouse. Captain Ron was sitting at the picnic table with the pooch when Patti returned with her freshly manicured nails. We all walked back to the boat.

Captain Ron picked up the dry filter, took it into the boat and lifted up the cushion so he could put it back in its place.

Apparently the air conditioner had been off when Captain Ron replaced the filter. This time it happened to be running and Captain Ron noticed a big rip in the flexible duct that runs from the air conditioner to the rest of the boat. Most of the cold air has been just blowing around under the seat.

Of course, it was now "tool time". Out came the tools. It turned out that both the outer and inner pieces of the duct were torn and there was not enough slack in the duct to cut off the torn section. So, after several tries, the decision was made to reconnect it, pull the wire reinforcing pieces together with a piece of paper clip and patch the hole with duct tape. Luckily, there was a new roll in the parts box that was still in the wrapper and not dried out.

There's no telling how long this hole has been there, but the AC seems to be blowing a lot better now than it has been lately. A proper repair will require a new piece of flexible duct about eight feet long. The trick will be getting it into place.

Captain Ron spent some time making reservations for the next few days and planning routes to get to

each place. Inflation seems to have hit around the Chesapeake as the marina rates have mostly been higher than we remember and higher than we are used to paying.

Patti heard about a good Mexican restaurant so that's where we went for dinner. After seeing it, Captain Ron recognized it from when we last visited Cambridge several years ago. The food was good and Captain Ron has leftovers again.

We have enjoyed Cambridge and the marina, but we have places to go and things to see. We will pull out tomorrow morning for a predicted five hour cruise to St. Michaels, MD. St. Michaels is one of Patti's favorite stops with a lot of shops and such. There are also a couple of ice cream shops. There is a playground with a sliding board that Kiki likes, but with her hurting leg, we will probably skip that this time.

We expect a lot of boat traffic, being the holiday weekend, but we will just deal with it.



Cambridge, MD getting ready for Memorial Day

Captain's Log, day twenty seven (May 27, 2023)

Dawn comes early this time of year, especially since we are a bit east of home. Captain Ron opened his eyes to find the Sea Dog watching him

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and wondering when he would get up. He did and we got all our walking and preparations done and pulled out of our slip at about 6:30 AM.

Once we got out of the marina basin and into the Choptank River, we saw crab boats. A dozen or so, tending their trot lines.

The first two hours were simply retracing our path from Oxford, MD. From that point, we headed towards Knapps Narrows and through the drawbridge which opened on our request. As we began to exit the narrows, we saw a crab boat approaching us, but on the wrong side of the channel markers. When we attempted to stay on the correct side of the markers, we realized that the crabber knew what he was doing, that the deep water had moved and the markers had not been moved to reflect this change. No problem, we just took the path the crab boat had taken to deeper water.



Waiting for the Knapps Narrows Drawbridge to open

At this point we still had about two and a half hours left before we got to St. Michaels. The temperature was in the low to mid-sixties and we were wearing hats, coats and gloves. High winds had been predicted but did not materialize.

We saw more crab boats and recreational boats began to appear. A boat much larger than HIGH COTTON and travelling at nearly four times the

speed of HIGH COTTON passed us and rearranged things on the dash and down below. Some people just don't realize (or don't care) how big a wake their boat makes at high speeds.

We got to the St. Michaels harbor and called the marina for docking instructions. We were told we would be in a covered slip. This would be a first for us. Captain Ron asked the girl on the radio what the clearance was under the roof. She said "I'm not sure, I think about thirty feet."

We got the lines ready and Captain Ron lined up the approach and backed into the slip. CRACK! Well it was no thirty feet, probably more like fifteen. The loud crack was the \$150 VHF radio antenna breaking off at the base. Then the bimini top got stuck under the roof of the slip. Captain Ron said some words of disgust that he probably shouldn't have said out loud. The girl said she didn't realize our boat was so tall. She did not apologize for giving inaccurate information. Of course, it's the Captain who is responsible for the boat so Captain Ron should have checked the clearance and put the antenna down.



HIGH COTTON in the covered slip

We got tied up and checked in, walked the ship's puppy and returned to the boat to put stuff away. Captain Ron rested for a bit. He thought about how to possibly repair the antenna. He taped over

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the splits to keep water out and then used hose clamps to refasten it to the base. We will have to have a few test conversations with other boaters to determine if it still works. If it does, replacement can wait until we get home. After a couple hours, the tide had gone down enough that we were able to free the bimini top from the slip covering. We may have to put it all the way down like we do for low bridges when we leave Tuesday morning.

After another hour or so, we took the Sea Dog to town for ice cream. There was a couple with a small child sitting on a bench, eating ice cream. When the girl saw Patti feeding the puppy ice cream, she wanted to do it as well so she did. Kiki knows how to work a crowd.



Kiki gets ice cream from her new friend

After the ice cream was gone, we walked to the town park. This is where the pup usually goes down the sliding board, but because of her leg problem we decided to not let her do that. It's not the slide; it's the jump at the bottom that worried us.

We walked back to the boat and ate leftover Italian food along with a can of green beans for dinner.

We walked the K-9 one more time and stopped to chat with some other boaters who were sitting around the fire pit. The marina is full and many of

these people came here for the weekend together from their home marinas.

Tomorrow, we will stroll through the town and check out the shops.

Captain's Log, day twenty eight (May 28, 2023)

Well, Captain Ron woke up with a toothache. Of course, it is Sunday and no dentists are available. Tomorrow is a holiday so he probably can't see one then either. Tuesday, we won't be near a dentist so it may be Wednesday before he can see one. He is not a happy camper.

Breakfast was scrambled eggs and bacon. Later, we walked to the general store in town. Patti got some country ham and Captain Ron got a container of frozen oyster stew. He didn't realize it at the time, but the oyster stew was fifteen dollars for the container. It was OK, but not worth fifteen dollars. Patti's country ham was good.

The town was crawling with people and they even had a police officer stopping traffic for pedestrians to cross the street.

Captain Ron went in one shop, found nothing of interest and returned to the boat with the food. Patti stayed to check out the other shops.

We are staying at the "low budget" marina here, the cheapest of three. Still, it's over one hundred dollars per night. Either of the others would have been over one hundred and fifty dollars per night. Marinas in this part of the Chesapeake Bay raise their rates on weekends and holidays, something that is uncommon in most of the places we have cruised.

Even with the premium rates, all the marinas are full. The one we are in even has some boats doubled up in the longer slips. We talked to a

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group who all came here in their boats from the same marina north of here on the Sassafra River.

Several boats are anchored outside of the harbor and the people come to town by dinghy. And of course, many people drive here and stay in bed and breakfast places or rental cabins. It's a tourist town.



Boats anchored off St Michaels Harbor

The Sea Dog got several walks today and made friends each time. She seems to be walking better.

We mentioned a few days ago about a marina being a few stars short of five, this place is the same. It's a boatyard with slips that they rent out. The showers are OK, nothing special, but they have hot water and decent pressure. We took turns showering and it's time for bed.

Captain's Log, day twenty nine (May 29, 2023)

The Internet here went down at about 8:00 PM last night so there's no telling when the Captain's Log will be posted. We could not connect to the marina's Wi-Fi so it was our T-Mobile hot spot that was connecting but not sending and receiving data.

Captain Ron found a T-Mobile number on his phone this morning (he could not search for one) and called for help. After several minutes being

addressed as "Mister Ronald" by a guy with a lovely, but hard to understand Indian accent, he was transferred to technical support where it was determined that we had used up our data allowance for the month. The guy was able to change our plan to double the data at supposedly the same price. Anyway, we are back on-line.

Nobody is answering at the dentist office; they are closed for the holiday. This means no help for the toothache until at least Wednesday when we will be in Chestertown, MD.

We walked the ship's puppy and of course, had to stop at the ice cream shop. After we finished, we walked a couple more blocks and started on a different way back to the marina. It began to rain. Not hard, but rain and we had not worn our raincoats. We got wet but not soaked.

After the rain stopped, Patti walked to the museum gift shop. Captain Ron and the Sea Dog stayed on the boat and watched TV. All of the other boats cleared out this morning. A couple others came in this afternoon.

We got an email from the marina we are staying at tomorrow and among other things, it stated that if we arrived before 1:00 PM we would be charged for an extra day. This is the first time we have encountered anything like this and Captain Ron thought it was a bit overly strict. It should only take us less than two hours to get from here to there.

This brought up another possibility though; the dentist office in St. Michaels opens at 8:00 AM so we will call and see if they can see Captain Ron in the morning. If not, we will still hang around here until 11:00 AM and then head slowly for Kent Narrows.

We walked to a waterfront restaurant at one of the other marinas. Captain Ron had soup, but still had

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trouble eating it. We were treated well and the food was good. It's a place we will return to on our next trip.

Back at the boat, the hound was ready for a walk so we took her back to one of the parks. She met a few dogs along the way.

So tomorrow, we get up before 8:00 AM and call the dentist. Their answer will determine our plans.

Captain's Log, day thirty, (May 30, 2023)

It rained last night but since we were in a covered slip, we missed out on the "free boat wash" the rain provides. Rain on the roof of the boat is relaxing.

The ship's puppy woke Patti up at daybreak and took her for a walk to the park. She apparently remembered the route. She chased a couple squirrels along the way. They came back and rested. Captain Ron got up and made his morning coffee and shaved. He was waiting for 8:00 AM to call the dentist when they called him at 7:45 AM. They asked about the problem and told us to come on in and they would fit Captain Ron in.

Of course, it was almost a one mile walk, especially considering that we walked right past it and another two tenths of a mile down the highway before figuring out our mistake. Phone directions are not always clear and reliable.

We filled out several pages of paperwork and then Captain Ron was called in to see the dentist. She poked and prodded and took X-rays. The diagnosis is that there is an infection and the best treatment was a week of anti-biotics. At least he wasn't referred to Dr. Yankem!

So, the dentist called a prescription into the little pharmacy in town that we had to walk past anyway

to get back to the boat. We stopped and got the prescription and Captain Ron took his first pill in front of the pharmacy.

It was now just a little past 11:00 AM, the checkout time for the marina. Most marinas aren't too fussy about this and the owner had said that we could stay late if necessary. This was also the time to leave because we couldn't check into our next marina until 1:00 PM.

Because it was near high tide and we were under the cover, we put the bimini top down into the "low bridge" position, unhooked the power and lines and headed back out into the Miles River. We called for a "radio check" and got an answer so apparently Captain Ron's repair was effective. He will make a more permanent repair when we get home.

We retraced our route for close to an hour and then headed for Kent Narrows. We could see the route 50 bridge in the distance.



Heading for Kent Narrows

We saw only a couple boats on the water today. No traffic to speak of, not even crabbers.

Kent Narrows is a narrow body of water between Kent Island and the Delmarva Peninsula. There are two bridges to go under, the old route 50 drawbridge that Captain Ron remembers from his

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childhood days and the newer high rise route 50 bridge that has been in place for many years. Maryland route 50 carries the traffic from Baltimore and Washington to Ocean City and the other Oceanside resort towns.

Safe Harbor Narrows Point Marina is a very large marina with a confusing layout. We had gotten our slip assignment by email and Captain Ron had looked at both the marina's website and Google Earth, but was still not sure where to go. He called and asked for instructions, but it was still unclear exactly where our slip was. The lady agreed to meet us at the dock so we could find our proper slip.

Docking wasn't as smooth as it often is because of tight quarters, current and wind, but we did get tied up with no insurance claims.



HIGH COTTON docked at Safe Harbor Narrows Point Marina

We have mentioned "stars" as far as marinas in the past few postings. Safe Harbor Narrows Point Marina is certainly a step up, close to five stars. The slips are fixed and a bit long in the tooth, but the marina is beautifully landscaped. There is a large pool (too cold to use right now), a gym and luxurious heads and showers in the main building. Unfortunately, the bath house near the boat that we will use is not so new or luxurious. It's fine though, maybe four stars. The Sea Dog got treats

in the office and got to run around without her leash. She entertained the staff playing with her dog biscuit and of course, she got petted by everyone who came in.



The ship's puppy finds some water to play in

After we got settled in, we took turns showering. Then we walked to the Harris Crab House, a fixture in this area for decades. We had steamed crabs and corn on the cob, a long time Maryland tradition and something we haven't had in a long time. That hit the spot!



Finally, our steamed crabs

We got back to HIGH COTTON's slip and there was a couple walking their new puppy. We got the hound off the boat and talked with the couple for a while. Their puppy wanted to play with Kiki, but she wasn't interested. They offered us the use of

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their car but we didn't really need anything so we thanked them but declined.

There is a little restaurant next to the crab house that serves mostly desserts, but also coffee, baked goods and breakfast sandwiches. We bought two pieces of cake and brought them back to the boat. One of their breakfast sandwiches is scrapple and egg so it looks like we will head over there in the morning before we leave this marina. It's only about a three hour cruise to Chestertown so there's no rush to leave in the morning.



Sunset over the Chesapeake Bay

Captain's Log, day thirty one, (May 31, 2023)

It was actually Captain Ron who woke up first today. Of course, his getting up woke the rest of the crew so everyone got up too early. We had used up all of our on-board potable water last night so Captain Ron got out the hose and refilled the tanks.

We mentioned that we wanted to get breakfast sandwiches at the little shop before we left and they didn't open until 8:00 AM. About 7:20 AM, we figured we would walk the puppy around a bit and then head for the shop. She made a beeline for the marina office which surprisingly, was open. There was a different lady from yesterday working

the desk and of course, the hound went straight behind the counter to the cabinet where the dog treats were kept. The lady gave her some treats and made a big fuss over her. She ate the small treats and played with the big one before finally eating it.

About this time, the lady from yesterday walked in so she fussed over the puppy and gave her more treats.

By this time it was past 8:00 AM so we thanked everybody for a lovely stay at the marina and walked to the sandwich shop. Captain Ron had big plans for his scrapple and egg sandwich, fried egg with the yolk broken, lightly toasted and buttered rye bread and a thin slice of white onion, but it turned out, the only option was to leave off the cheese. Who puts cheese on scrapple anyway? The sandwiches are all served on a biscuit.

Captain Ron mentioned that his wife would be in with her order but was outside with the dog. The girl said the dog was welcome so Captain Ron went to the door and invited them in. Patti placed her order and another worker offered Kiki a "pup cup". This was a small cup of whipped cream with two miniature dog biscuits. Kiki ate her pup cup there; we took the sandwiches back to the boat.

It was still pretty cold so we ate the sandwiches first and then got HIGH COTTON ready for the three hour voyage.

It was after 9:00 AM by the time we left the marina. We followed a sailboat and a small fishing boat through the winding channel leaving Kent Narrows. The fishing boat left the channel to stop and fish and the sailboat headed north, perhaps towards Rock Hall while we headed up the Chester River.

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OK Pawpaw, I am ready to go for a boat ride

An hour or so into our voyage, we spotted a large pod of dolphins just out of the channel. We veered over to let the ship's puppy have a look. She loves to watch the "big fishies" and she saw them right away. She watched and talked to them for several minutes. Eventually we continued on our way and they continued on theirs.

The Chester River is scenic and passes through wilderness, farmland and passes some beautiful homes.



A fairly nice mansion on the Chester River

Just before our arrival at the marina we passed a replica of an old sailing ship heading down river. We learned from the marina person that this ship does educational trips on the river.



A sailing ship leaving Chestertown, MD

Captain Ron easily backed HIGH COTTON into the assigned slip with the help of the dockmistress. This marina has wide fairways, long wide slips and new floating docks. It has been completely rebuilt from the dump it was when we last visited several years ago. This is a big improvement.



HIGH COTTON docked at the Chestertown Marina

We went to the office and checked in. Kiki got her expected dog treats and played with them before she ate them. She got to swim at the boat ramp on the way back to the boat and again at a small beach when we walked her an hour or so later after we got the boat settled.

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The pooch doesn't miss a chance to play in the water

Another boat came in and we talked to the boaters for a while. They boat around here and had suggestions on marinas and restaurants.

We walked to town and found a health food store where we found green beans for the hound and a soda and a couple bananas for ourselves. On the way back to the marina we stopped so Patti could shop at one of the few shops that were still open. We are pretty familiar with small town businesses closing at 5:00 PM, but most of these shops closed at 4:00 PM. We will go back tomorrow earlier.

The restaurant at the marina had a fire and closed a year or so ago and never reopened so we will walk back to town for a meal or two tomorrow. We ate leftovers today.

Captain's Log, day thirty two, (June 1, 2023)

Captain Ron had to get up at 5:00 AM to take his antibiotic. He went back to bed. He woke up about 7:00 to find that Patti and the pooch had already taken their morning walk and Patti had already put a load of clothes in the marina's washing machine. He decided to just go ahead and take a shower in the morning instead of his usual evening shower. Breakfast was English muffins and jam. Patti did another load of laundry.

We talked again with the two guys on one of the boats and the two women on the other that came in yesterday evening. They are all friends and were getting their folding bicycles ready to ride around town.

Jeanie Hutchinson, Patti's childhood friend who now lives on Kent Island, not far from here, came to visit. Jeanie was once married to one of Captain Ron's music playing friends and he knows her from those days so the "good old days" were discussed. She brought us a "care package" of fresh corn, strawberries and cinnamon rolls. We will eat good tomorrow!



Jeanie, Patti, Kiki and Captain Ron in Chestertown, MD

While we were checking in to the marina yesterday, Captain Ron noticed a "coffee table book" on the marina's coffee table. It was a thick, hard bound book full of photographs and descriptions of watermen of the Chesapeake Bay doing their various tasks. He went back to the boat and tried to find it on amazon.com, but it wasn't listed.

Today, Patti asked the dockmaster where he got it and he told her it was available at one of the local stores. It was apparently photographed and written by a local photographer.

After Jeanie left, we walked the K-9, left her to guard the boat and walked to town with the

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intention of buying the book and then walking to a BBQ restaurant that looked pretty good from their website.

We found the book and learned that the author had written a second book so we bought them both. They were not cheap, nor were they light.

We considered taking them back to the boat before going to the restaurant, but in the end we just took them with us. The restaurant was about two tenths of a mile from the store.

The restaurant turned out to be relatively inexpensive and very good. Patti had a beef brisket dinner and Captain Ron had a pit beef sandwich. Everything was delicious and the portions were huge. Service was efficient and friendly and the owner and chef came out and asked if we were enjoying the meal. We told him we were, of course. We have leftovers for tomorrow.

We trudged back to the boat carrying the heavy books and our food. Patti took the pooch for a walk while Captain Ron rested his weary feet. Patti took her shower. The heads and showers here are nice, clean and fairly new. The showers are spacious with benches for changing clothes.

This marina is fully booked for the weekend but we will be leaving in the morning for a marina in Rock Hall, MD. We haven't decided yet where we will go after that. We are thinking that we may not go as far north as Philadelphia as we had planned previously. It's not definite though, but we have to decide soon.

BTW: It has finally warmed up a bit. Captain Ron was able to wear shorts and a T-shirt. We were wearing coats, hats and gloves yesterday morning as we left Kent Narrows. Let's hope it stays warm.

Captain's Log, day thirty three, (June 2, 2023)

We were in no real hurry to get underway today, but with first light near 5:00 AM, we found ourselves up, dressed and walked by 7:00 AM so we said goodbye to one of the ladies on one of the other boats, got some recommendations from her on where to cruise, got the boat ready and headed out of the marina and back down the Chester River. We had the current with us so we didn't even rev the engine to our usual 2,000 RPM. We were still making good time.

We passed a group of six anchored boats that might have been part of the group that had the marina booked for the weekend. We were retracing our path almost back to Kent Narrows and then we turned off to the north.



A group of boats anchored on the Chester River

Once we were out of the river and onto the Chesapeake Bay itself, we saw lots of boats with people fishing. We could see the Rock Hall water tower in the distance but it was another hour before we pulled into the harbor.

We called the marina and two dockhands met us at our assigned slip and tied us up and connected the shorepower cord.

We saw the floats in the harbor and tents on the grounds and realized that we had somehow again

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arrived at Rock Hall for the triathlon event. This is a big deal where hundreds of people from all over the east coast come to swim, run and ride bicycles. We have been to this marina three times and every time has been the triathlon. They close the harbor for the swimming and no boats can enter or leave for about two hours.

The Sea Dog went straight to the office where she got treats and was petted. She played with the larger dog biscuits and threw them around the office. The office people were entertained.

We walked the pooch a bit and then went back to HIGH COTTON and got things put away. We had sliced tomatoes and cucumbers for lunch. Later, Captain Ron ate the strawberries Jeanie had brought us.

We checked out the pool. They have a nice pool here and it was pretty warm today, but the pool was still too cold for comfort. We passed and came back to the boat.

We talked for a while with some neighboring boaters. They live in Lancaster, PA but keep their boat on the upper Chesapeake Bay and have experience in these waters.

Captain Ron made plans for the next few days and made reservations at a couple of marinas.

Dinner, as planned, was leftovers from the BBQ restaurant in Chestertown along with the corn on the cob Jeanie brought us. It was sweet and delicious.

Captain Ron took a shower while Patti elected to wait until tomorrow. The showers here are really nice with individual rooms with a shower, toilet and sink. They are climate controlled, relatively new and clean and well maintained.

Tomorrow, we will be entertained by the athletes doing their thing. We will also take the granny cart to the grocery store in town to restock the boat.

Now, it's time for bed.

Captain's Log, day thirty four, (June 3, 2023)

Captain Ron slept through the time he was supposed to take his pill. He woke up about 6:30 AM and Patti (who was already up with the hound) reminded him. He took it and went back to sleep. We are far enough from the triathlon activities that they didn't wake us. We did go to the end of the dock and watch the swimmers swimming circles in the harbor. Later, we encountered them on their bicycle runs.



A couple hundred athletes swimming around the Harbor

Captain Ron made his morning coffee and finished up the cinnamon rolls. Kiki went to the office for treats and to entertain the staff.

We walked back to the boat and got the granny cart out from under the floor. We left the K-9 to guard the boat (we suspect she just sleeps) and hiked the six tenths of a mile to the store. Actually, we walked further than that; we walked past the store to West Marine where Captain Ron could have bought a new anchor roller but didn't know

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what size he needed. The existing one will work for a while longer (he hopes).

Next we stopped in the Dollar General for a few things. Eggs there are half the price of the grocery store.

Finally, we walked to the grocery store and Patti got most of what was on her list. They had only one bag of green beans (for the hound) and they were not great looking. They also had only one six pack of Dr Pepper.

From there, it was six tenths of a mile back to the boat pulling the granny cart and dodging the bicycle riders.

The K-9 met us at the door and assured us that the boat was fine. Patti took her for a walk while Captain Ron rested his weary feet. Later, he walked to the end of the dock and spent some time talking with some of the other boaters. This is a friendly marina. He also spent time uploading routes for the next few days to the chart plotter and fixing (hopefully) an issue with the laptop reading the nautical charts on the USB drive on the computer.



The Sea Dog takes Patti for a walk in Rock Hall, MD

Eventually, it was time for dinner. We had been warned that the restaurant next to the marina had changed hands and that the prices had gone up

and the food quality had gone down. We had looked at the menu yesterday and nothing caught our eye. There is another restaurant at the other end of the harbor so we walked the half mile to it. We got sandwiches and they were good.

Patti suggested going for ice cream so we did. That was across the street from the grocery store and a half mile away. After we ate our ice cream we went over to the grocery store and got a fresh bag of green beans (they had received a delivery since we were there this morning) and more Dr Peppers. Then we walked back to the boat. We got our steps in today!

Captain Ron took his shower and then Patti took hers. The ship's puppy didn't need one.

Tomorrow we have to leave before the swimmers start or wait until they are finished. The harbor is closed while they swim and no boats can go in or out.

Captain's Log, day thirty five, (June 4, 2023)

That was a short summer! It was in the mid-fifties when we woke up this morning. Back to long pants and sweatshirts, knit caps and gloves!

We decided to get out of the harbor before the triathlon swimming started so we got dressed, got the boat ready, walked the dog and pulled out just before 7:00 AM. No other boats were in sight. We had to head due west for a half hour or so before turning north to clear some shallow water.

The first couple hours were smooth sailing but then it got really rough for about a half an hour. The waves were two feet high or more. Then the seas calmed down. We encountered three tugs pushing barges coming from the C&D canal. They

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were in the shipping channel and we were outside the channel but still in deep water.



A tug and barge heading south on the Chesapeake Bay



A bird perch on the Chesapeake Bay

We turned east into the Sassafras River. It's a beautiful, scenic river. By this time, we began to see recreational boats. Some were big, some were small. Some were going fast and some were anchored in the many beautiful coves and creeks off the river.

After about an hour and a half, the Skipjack Cove Marina came into view. We hailed them on the radio several times with no response. Just as Captain Ron was reaching for the phone, they answered and told us what slip to go to. They said they would meet us there, but we were already in the slip and half tied up by the time they got there.



This boat cruising is tiring work

We had already paid on-line but we needed the codes for the Wi-Fi, etc. It turned out there is no code needed for the restrooms. There is a beautiful pool with a code for the gate, but it was too cold for the pool. Kiki was disappointed that the office had no dog treats, but she did get petted.

This is a very large marina and there are a few other marinas just up the river from this one. Many of the boats here are owned by people who live in Pennsylvania, New Jersey or Delaware and they drive here for the weekend to use their boats. It's a great boating area.



Skipjack Cove Marina

There is no town or city near this marina and only one restaurant, the one in the marina. There is

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also virtually no T-Mobile cell service. The marina's Wi-Fi is pretty flakey as well.

Eventually, it was time for dinner so we fed the pooch, locked her in the boat and walked to the restaurant. We won't go into the details, but the food was fine, the prices were reasonable, but the service was awful. We spent more time waiting for our food and waiting for the check afterwards than we spent eating.

After dinner, we took turns showering. The showers are a long walk from the slip and pretty dated, but they were clean and hot with plenty of pressure.

Tomorrow we will either anchor in one of the coves or take advantage of the free dock near the beach in Betterton near the mouth of the river.

Captain's Log, day thirty six, (June 5, 2023)

With a short ride today, we were in no rush to get underway. Patti and the pup got up early as usual, Captain Ron rolled out of the sack about 8:00 AM. Captain Ron got out the hose and filled the fresh water tanks while Patti cooked breakfast for the crew.



Patti shares her breakfast with the K-9

After breakfast, we got the boat ready, did the engine checks and headed out of the slip. The fairway at this dock is relatively small and we had to pull out and back up to make the turn without hitting other boats.

Our plan was to fill up on diesel fuel as the price here was reasonable. We tried calling the marina on the radio with no success. We pulled up to the fuel dock and tied ourselves up before realizing that this was the gasoline area, the diesel was another hundred yards further. We untied, moved to the diesel section and tied ourselves up again.

We called the marina on the phone and the lady said she would call the fuel attendant.

Once he arrived, we found out that we were at the high speed pump and since we need the slow speed pump, we had to move again. This time we just grabbed the lines and dragged the boat to the proper pump.

We took on sixty two and a half gallons of diesel, paid the man and were on our way.

Since we had plenty of time and were sightseeing, we continued up the river past several other marinas to the drawbridge and turned around. There are more marinas and more boats in this area than one might expect. Some are pretty large and expensive boats.

We continued down the Sassafras River towards Betterton and the free dock next to the beach. Again, it's a beautiful river with lots of scenic coves and side creeks.

A motor yacht came up behind us, passed us and then made a big circle and headed back up the river. We passed several cruising sized sailboats and a powerboat heading up the river as well.

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We found the free dock and got ourselves docked. The dock and slip was a little tighter than we might have liked with a rock jetty across from the slips, but we got HIGH COTTON backed in and tied up.

The ship's puppy was anxious to get to the beach of course so we put her on the dock and off we went. We passed a spot where there had been a small fire on the dock that hadn't been repaired.

There is a "pond" of sorts on the beach but out of the surf. She walked through that and then went to the edge of the river. She is not fond of waves so she ran back up the sand each time a wave came in. She dug a few small holes in the sand.



The ship's puppy checks out the beach

This beach is part of a county park and there are restrooms and showers but they were locked. We walked back to the boat where the K-9 got a shower in the cockpit. We put things away and rested a bit. Internet access here is spotty at best. We are beginning to suspect that our switch from Verizon to T-Mobile may not have been a good idea.

After a couple hours, the Sea Dog wanted to go for a walk again. She really wanted to go back to the beach but her mawmaw wouldn't let her. She still managed to get wet and sandy so after her walk, she got another shower, this time with shampoo.



Captain Ron checks out the water in Betterton, MD

About the time we started heating our leftovers, the seas kicked up and we were rocking in our slip. We couldn't get the weather forecast because we had no Internet so we couldn't tell if the wind would die down tonight or not. One thought was to leave the dock and go back up the river a half mile or so to a protected cove, but we were afraid we couldn't get out of the slip without risking hitting the rock jetties considering the wind and waves. We already had our fender boards out but we added extra lines and fenders in the hopes of avoiding any damage or anything coming loose. At least the wind is blowing us away from the dock and not into it. Hopefully, the wind and waves will lessen once the sun goes down.

Tomorrow's run to Havre de Grace is under two hours so we won't have to leave early, but we need to get out of this slip before the wind and waves pick up. We will just go slowly if necessary.

Captain's Log, day thirty seven, (June 6, 2023)

It was not a good night last night. The wind and waves kept up and the boat was rocking until somewhere between 3:00 AM and 4:00 AM. Only the puppy slept. We woke up about 5:30 AM and decided to get out of there before the wind started

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back up. Most likely, we won't go back to that dock in the future.

So, with about two hours of sleep, we walked the dog, untied six docklines (a couple got chafed and are no good any more), removed the fender boards (one got cracked from the pounding against the dock) and maneuvered between the dock and the rock jetty to the river. The sun was low in the sky and with the haze, it was hard to tell it from the moon.



The hazy sun on the Chesapeake Bay



A bald eagle sitting on a buoy, waiting for a fish

We had less than a two hour voyage from Betterton to Havre de Grace and that would put us at the marina before 8:00 AM so we slowed down a bit. Patti called the dockmaster and explained our situation and he said it was OK to come in anyway (he is also the owner). He met us at the

slip and caught our lines (he had to drive from his other marina) and Captain Ron backed the boat into the slip like he knew what he was doing (Captain Ron says it's mostly luck). This marina was built as part of a condo development but was sold to another marina a few years ago. There is no actual staff at this location unless you call somebody. It's actually very nice with modern, clean showers and heads and laundry. The docks have been replaced since we were here several years ago and they are nice as well. They are floating docks which makes it much easier to tie up and much easier to get on and off the boat as the docks rise and fall with the tide.



HIGH COTTON docked at Log Pond Marina

We thought we would take naps, but the journey and docking had us wide awake. After a couple hours of resting, we took the ship's puppy for a walk to the town park at the southern end of the town. She found a small beach and went for a swim. Then she rolled in the sand (her usual routine). Of course, she got a bath in the cockpit when we got back to the boat before she was allowed inside. (Kiki writes: *"Yes, I like to swim in the water and roll in the sand. It feels soo good! And I don't mind when Mawmaw gives me a bath."*)

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The pooch goes for a swim in the park



Rolling in the sand feels so good when you are soaking wet

Patti called Captain Ron's dentist at home to get a prescription for more anti-biotics for his tooth. He says it is much better, but not 100 percent.

The dentist called the prescription in to a pharmacy in town so we had to walk a half mile or so to pick it up. Then we walked another half mile to the center of town and had lunch at a small café. Many of the restaurants in Havre de Grace are closed on Tuesdays.

After lunch, we walked around the business district and checked out a couple of the stores. The comic book store that we remembered from our last visit was closed as well. The note on the door said something about the owner having knee surgery. We stopped at the ice cream store on the way back

to the boat. (Kiki writes: "I knew it, I could smell ice cream on their breath! That's not fair!")

Captain Ron walked directly from the ice cream store to the boat while Patti stopped at the candy store on the way. It started to sprinkle. Captain Ron got to the boat, put the ship's puppy in the V berth, got in himself and fell asleep. Patti made it to the boat just before the rain came. It was heavy rain, but just for a few minutes.



The lighthouse in the town park



A bald eagle on the jetty outside the Log Pond marina

We mentioned the marina; we are actually out of the Chesapeake Bay and in the Susquehanna River at the very top of the Bay. Like a couple other marinas we have stayed at lately, many of the boats here are owned by people who live in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

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Patti took her shower and came back and took the hound for a walk. They went to the park where the puppy got petted and fussed over. Captain Ron took his shower, forgot his glasses and had to go back for them.

Tomorrow we start heading back south. It should take about four hours to get to our destination. Hopefully, we will get a good night's rest tonight and make up for lost sleep.

Captain's Log, day thirty eight, (June 7, 2023)

Today was supposed to be a "sleep in" day. It wasn't. With sunrise at about 5:45 AM, the puppy was up and ready to go. The humans resisted as long as they could, but she was ready for her morning walk. This was actually a pretty nice marina, especially with the new docks and we met some nice people here. Of course, we pretty much exhausted the sightseeing and shopping opportunities yesterday with the exception of the comic book store which wouldn't open until the weekend.

We got out of the marina at about 7:40 AM, covering the last half mile or so of the Susquehanna River and entering the Chesapeake Bay again. A couple hours into our voyage we came across a large pod of dolphins. A very large pod, perhaps forty or fifty dolphins heading in the same general direction we were.

Captain Ron stopped the boat for a few minutes so the Sea Dog could watch them and talk to them. (Kiki writes: "*There were a whole bunch of big fishies everywhere. I like to watch them and talk to them.*") Eventually, they moved on and we continued towards our destination, Bowley's Marina on Middle River, north of Baltimore.

It has been hazy the last two days, making it difficult to see the shore. It turns out that this is because of smoke from wildfires in Canada. It's hard to believe that smoke could travel that far, but apparently all of Maryland is under an air quality alert because of it.



Crabbers hard at work on the Chesapeake Bay

We got to the marina and called them on the radio several times with no response. We called them on the phone and got an answer. We were directed to a slip with a floating dock, but were told that it would be a starboard tie up. As we approached it, we realized that it was actually a port tie so Patti had to quickly rearrange the fenders and lines. There was a strong wind pushing us away from the dock, but we got in and tied up safely. The electric outlet for our slip did not work so we had to get out the long cord and connect to the outlet at an adjacent slip.

The ship's puppy was ready for solid ground so we hopped off the boat and walked to shore and the office. This is a very big marina and a very long walk to shore. She made it though, did her "business" and found the boat ramp. She ran down the ramp and into the water for a swim. After she swam back and forth for a few minutes, we headed for the office where she got several dog treats. Then we walked around the grounds. It's a

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pretty nice marina with landscaping and a pool.



Bowley's Marina is a large marina north of Baltimore, MD

The pool is not open during the week, only on weekends until the local public schools let out for summer vacation. That seemed a bit strange to us, but it's probably too cold to use anyway.

We took the long walk back to the boat. In one of the slips we spotted another Camano Troll just like HIGH COTTON. Nobody was on it though and there was a sign indicating that it was for sale. There was no price listed.

We got things put away on the boat and rested a bit. The marina's Internet is a bit slow, but useable and the TV works with a pause every now and then.

There is a transient sailboat next to us from Texas. They are headed for Maine. The lady was stripping the finish off the teak trim in preparation for refinishing it. We thought that was pretty ambitious. We hardly even wash HIGH COTTON on our cruises. Maybe once or twice.

The Sea Dog wanted to go for another walk (and another swim) so off we went. She swam and then we walked around the grounds again and sat in one of the gazebos.

Back on HIGH COTTON, Patti cooked a boat meal (there are no restaurants nearby and we had eaten

all of our leftovers). We ate the canned ham we had purchased a few days ago. It was not as good as we had expected (it was awful). The sweet potatoes and stewed tomatoes were pretty good.

Captain Ron walked the distance to the showers. They are a little old but very nice and clean. Once he got back, Patti set out to take her shower. A few minutes after she left, the Sea Dog decided that she wanted to take another walk so Captain Ron hooked her up and they walked to shore. Patti came out of the shower so the whole crew walked the marina grounds again and then back to the boat. We got our steps in today.

Our slip is near the end of the dock and it's a high traffic area so there's a bit more rocking that we would like. It should calm down tonight though. We hope.

Captain's Log, day thirty nine, (June 8, 2023)

It did calm down last night and we got a good night's sleep. The ship's puppy had Patti up early and they went for a walk. Captain Ron finally rolled out of the sack somewhere around 7:30 AM. He made his coffee and did his engine checks while Patti uncovered everything on the flybridge.

We helped our slip neighbors get their sailboat off the dock and then we pulled out into the smoke filled river. Captain Ron is thinking about suing Canada for letting their smoke interfere with our trip!

Luckily, we have a GPS with our course marked on it because it was very difficult to see the channel markers and make out the islands from the water in the distance.

We passed Hart Miller Island, a Maryland State Park only accessible by water. There were nine

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boats anchored off the beach. This is a place we had hoped to visit but it's still too cold for the beach. It was hard to make out the beach and the watch tower with the smoke in the air.

About the time we turned into the Patapsco River towards Baltimore, the boat traffic picked up. Three or four pleasure boats were ahead of us and a couple of tug boats passed us going the other direction. One was going more than nine knots and gave us a pretty good wake.



A tug passes us at high speed



The Francis Scott Key Bridge on the way to Baltimore, MD

We neared the Anchorage Marina and called them on the radio. The dock hand directed us to our slip and was there to meet us and grab our lines. These are single slips with a finger pier on each side so they are pretty easy to back into. Captain Ron had considered going bow in so he could

replace the broken anchor roller but he checked last night and according to their website, the local West Marine didn't have the part in stock. The broken one should still work. We will go to West Marine and replace the two dock lines that were damaged at Betterton.



HIGH COTTON at the Anchorage Marina, Baltimore, MD

Speaking of the Anchorage Marina, looking at the weather for early next week, it doesn't look good so we are planning on staying here longer. We booked our slip for three days, but it turns out they have a good weekly rate and it will only cost us about \$50 more to stay for seven days (four more). There is a Safeway grocery store, a hardware store, a West Marina and a couple dozen restaurants nearby. Also a Target with a CVS where we can get our prescriptions refilled.

Kiki went to the office and got petted, but they have no treats in the office. There is a gumball machine with dog treats outside, in front of the office. Treats are free.

Patti had a desire for Chinese food so we looked online for a Chinese restaurant. It was midafternoon so we were hoping for a place with lunch specials. We found one that was supposed to be six tenths of a mile away but our phones took us a couple blocks in the wrong direction so it was a longer walk.

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We got our food and it was pretty good, but much more than we could eat so now we have leftovers. We got to view part of “Upper Fells Point” walking there and back. We stopped in a fishing tackle store on the way back and got a tour of the store and a history lesson. The lady at the counter suggested good places to eat and gave Patti a better bag for our Chinese food.



If the sign fits

With all the walking we have been doing, Captain Ron is considering padded insoles for his shoes. We will probably walk to Target and CVS tomorrow and stop at West Marine and Safeway on the way back.

The marina here has no Internet on the docks, but the hot spot gets a strong signal and the TV gets all the Baltimore stations plus the Internet stations.



Anchorage Marina's solution to dog treats

Captain's Log, day forty, (June 9, 2023)

Bad news this morning. We were waiting for breakfast this morning in a restaurant when we learned that our good friend and Captain Ron's long time band leader Allen Brown had passed away. He had not been in the greatest health lately but this was still a shock to us. Hopefully, we can stay here and attend the services.

Backtracking for a moment, Patti and the pup were up early this morning and went for a long, slow walk. The hound stopped and sniffed everything in sight. Patti did not. Captain Ron dragged himself out of the sack at about 7:30 AM.

Since we had planned to go to a nearby restaurant for breakfast, Captain Ron didn't make coffee. Patti fed the pooch and off we went. Sitting at the table, Captain Ron turned on his phone and learned of Allen's passing. Captain Ron played music with Allen for about twelve years in the 1970s and 1980s, often two or three nights per week. After that group quit playing together on a regular basis, there were often "reunions". This is truly the end of an era. Allen will be missed.

At the restaurant, we each got the "senior pancakes" breakfast. Sadly, the waitress took our order without asking for proof of age.

This restaurant automatically adds an eighteen percent "gratuity" to every check. Captain Ron thinks calling this a "gratuity" is dishonest. It is really a "surcharge".

After our breakfast, we walked to the nearby West Marine to replace two docklines that were damaged by our stay a couple of nights ago in Betterton. They were chaffed about halfway through.

We got a good deal on the docklines because they only had one of the length we wanted. They

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offered us the same price on longer lines. The lines were on sale as well and Captain Ron had \$20 in “rewards”, cutting the price even further.

After West Marine, we walked back towards the marina and stopped at the Safeway grocery store. You know you are in the big city when the grocery store has a uniformed guard at the door!

Our reason for stopping was to get fresh green beans for the ship’s puppy, but we ended up with the beans, insoles for Captain Ron’s shoes and four six packs of Dr Pepper. We should have taken the granny cart.

We stopped in the marina office and changed our stay to the weekly rate. We will be here through Wednesday night.

We walked back to HIGH COTTON and Patti put stuff away. Then she gathered up the dirty clothes and headed for the laundry room. Later, Captain Ron got out the water hose and some chemicals and tried to clean the cockpit. Somehow, there are traces of what appears to be packing tape stuck to the deck. He got the dirt off and a few dock marks on the starboard hull, but the tape remains. We will stop in the hardware store tomorrow for more appropriate chemicals.

We found out that Allen’s visitation will be next Tuesday and the funeral will be Wednesday so as of now, our plan is to rent a car on Tuesday, drive to Patti’s sister’s house, leave the K-9 and go to the visitation. We will spend the night at the house, attend the funeral, stop back by the house for the Sea Dog and drive back to the marina. Fortunately, Mt. Airy is only about an hour’s drive from the marina and Patti’s sister’s house is only a few miles out of the way.

Dinner was the leftover Chinese food. Chinese food (most of it) reheats pretty well.

We each took showers and Patti walked the puppy and now it’s time for bed.

Captain’s Log, day forty one, (June 10, 2023)

We are in port until next Thursday so there’s not a lot of cruising stuff to report. The marina puts on a continental breakfast every Saturday morning. We forgot about this, but when we walked by with the Sea Dog we noticed people eating so we got an outdoor table and got some coffee, juice, donuts and fruit. Kiki got some cream cheese.

We walked the mile or so to the CVS to pick up our prescriptions. This CVS isn’t a standalone store; it is inside the Target department store. Patti picked up a few more things that we needed and several T shirts that we probably didn’t need, but that were on sale. We also went to the Harris Teeter grocery store next door for beans for the puppy. We wandered through a couple other stores in the shopping center but didn’t find anything we needed.

Our route back took us through a waterfront park where they were having some sort of kayak event with dozens of people launching kayaks and paddling to the Inner Harbor and back. There was an ice cream truck there so on our way back, we stopped for ice cream.

Baltimore has constructed a “promenade” all along the shore line around the Inner Harbor and extending out past our marina to this park. We walked along this promenade back to the boat instead of walking along the busy street. It was a bit longer of a walk, though. We stopped to rest a few times.

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Patti and Captain Ron stop for a rest along the waterfront

We searched the Internet for a restaurant for dinner, but in the end, we walked across the street to the Outback Steak House. Maybe we will get more ambitious tomorrow.

The puppy took several walks and each time, she made new friends. One girl got down on the dock and played with her for several minutes.



Wherever she goes, the Sea Dog makes friends

We made arrangements for a rental car to get us to Mt. Airy for Allen Brown's services. Maryland has an eleven percent tax on car rentals. They also force grocery stores to charge for bags. Captain Ron is glad we left Maryland when we did.

We remembered that the marina has a live band every Saturday night at the end of "C" pier near where the swimming pool used to be (it was a

floating pool, floating in the river and it apparently sank so there's no pool right now).

We walked (with the Sea Dog) over and listened to the band for three or four songs. It was not the sort of music we enjoy so we walked back to the boat and went to bed. Captain Ron was too tired to write.

Captain's Log, day forty two, (June 11, 2023)

Patti and the puppy woke up early and went for a walk. Then they went for another walk. They were gone when Captain Ron got up.

We had a large donut and half of a large bagel left from yesterday's continental breakfast so that was our breakfast this morning. We added cream cheese to the bagel.

We walked to Safeway for more food and supplies. It's not often that we find ourselves this close to a grocery store. This time we brought our own bags so we wouldn't have to buy bags.

We returned to the boat and put everything away. After that, we did pretty much nothing other than walk the Sea Dog and talk to other boaters.

We decided to save our leftovers for Tuesday night when we would be at Patti's sister's house (she is away) and we picked out a nearby restaurant that looked good. The website said it would be open until 7:00 PM, but when we got there about 4:00 PM, it was closed and dark. So much for that!

Walking back towards the marina, we came upon a Jamaican restaurant that Captain Ron had seen on the Internet. They were out of Captain Ron's first two choices and his choice of beverage, but we eventually settled on our order. The food was actually excellent and we told them so. As usual though, we have leftovers for another day. At our

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ages, we can't wolf down those huge portions like we used to.

We walked back to the boat and took the K-9 for another walk. There was a family with several small children hanging around behind their boat while the father and oldest son were washing it. Kiki walked over to them and they petted her and made a big fuss over her. She loves that.



Kiki makes more friends

After a rather long walk (we should have gotten ice cream but we hadn't brought any money) we walked back down the dock towards HIGH COTTON and the pup got petted again. After that, we took turns going to the showers.

Tomorrow we have to call our insurance company for proof of insurance and call the rental car company and see if they will bring the car to us on Tuesday. Otherwise, it's a bit over a mile away, another long walk.

Captain's Log, day forty three, (June 12, 2023)

Captain Ron woke up to donuts this morning! Patti walked the ship's puppy, brought her back to the boat and then walked to Safeway for donuts, all before Captain Ron rolled out of the sack. That's a great first mate!

We called the car rental place and they will bring the car to us so we don't have to walk there. We called our insurance company and they sent proof of insurance to Captain Ron's phone.

We did mostly nothing all day, just several dog walks. About 1:00 PM we walked back to the diner that had been closed yesterday (after calling and confirming their hours) and had our main meal. Patti had a chef's salad and Captain Ron had the "world famous" crab cakes. He actually had the appetizer, five mini crab cakes. In total, they were probably bigger than a single regular crab cake. He ate four and brought one back for later. They were very good.

It rained on and off for most of the afternoon. Once it stopped, we asked the pooch if she would like to go for ice cream. She said "yes", of course.

There is an ice cream shop fairly close to the marina, but one of the dockhands had recommended a different ice cream shop about a half a mile away. We (all of us) walked the half a mile, stood in line to order and ordered, only to be informed that they do not accept cash as payment, only credit cards. Patti had not brought her purse, only a \$20 bill and Captain Ron didn't bring his wallet. We got no ice cream there.

So, we walked the half mile back to the other ice cream shop and got ice cream. Patti shared hers with the puppy.

Back at the boat, Captain Ron got online and wrote a scathing review of the ice cream place for not accepting cash (he gets that way sometimes in his old age).

We are packed and ready for our road trip tomorrow. The car rental place is picking us up at 9:00 AM.

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Captain's Log, day forty four, (June 13, 2023)

We don't want to bore anyone with details; it was a non-boating day, so here it is:

We met the Car rental guy at 9:00 AM in front of the marina. He drove us to the office where we did some paperwork and switched cars. Driving a strange car through downtown Baltimore traffic was an exciting experience, but without incident. Once we reached Interstate 70, it was routine, as was the short trip south on MD Rt 97 to "the farm" (Patti's family place where her sister still lives).

We showered and went to the funeral home for the afternoon visitation. The Sea Dog stayed at the farm.

Then it was back to the farm for dinner and visiting, then bed. A non-rocking bed for the first time in six weeks.

Captain's Log, day forty five, (June 14, 2023)

Last night we slept in a dark room with no rocking. The ship's puppy did not see the sunrise so she slept in.

We got up, ate donuts for breakfast, showered and went to the funeral home for the service. Again, the puppy stayed at the farm.

The rest of the surviving members of the band, Bill and Buddy were there and we had a nice chat. Some of the other musicians from that era were there and we talked with them as well. Unfortunately, we learned that another good friend and musician is in a nursing home after having a stroke.

The service was nice with Allen's CDs playing in the background up until the time of the preaching.

After the service, we reminisced with our friends again for a few minutes, then it was time to get the car back to Baltimore.

We stopped back at the farm to pick up the ship's puppy who was ready to "go for a ride in the car". We stopped for gas and then headed back east on Interstate 70 to the Baltimore beltway and then Interstate 95 into downtown. Again, the downtown traffic was challenging, but the phone's directions took us right to the door of the rental place. We made it in plenty of time.

After some more paperwork (actually, it's all done on a tablet these days), a guy drove us back to the marina.

We rested a bit, then got out the granny cart and walked to Safeway for more supplies. After we returned, Captain Ron topped off the potable water tanks and put the water hose away.

Dinner was leftover steak and potatoes along with a side of creamed spinach.

Another puppy walk and it will be time for bed. We are set to head out tomorrow and anchor off Dobbins Island in the Magothy River between Baltimore and Annapolis.

Captain's Log, day forty six, (June 15, 2023)

Finally, a chance to get away from the crowds, the 24/7 sounds of train horns, helicopters and police sirens! Well, not exactly. Looking at the weather forecast this morning, today was forecast to be a great day for boating and anchoring, but tomorrow was predicted to have a good chance of thunderstorms most of the day. We decided that travelling and docking in thunderstorms would be less than fun so we changed our plans, skipped Dobbins Island and went straight to Annapolis

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where we got a slip at the famous “Ego Alley”. Ego Alley is not the official name, but it is called that because lots of people drive their expensive boats to the end of it, turn around and drive back out. It’s a place to be seen. There are lots of people but so far, no trains, helicopters or police sirens.

But we have gotten ahead of ourselves. Patti and the puppy were up at 6:00 AM for their morning walk. Once they returned, Captain Ron got up, got dressed and made his coffee. Patti fixed some of the bagels we bought at Safeway yesterday. This is when we discussed the weather forecast and changed our plans.

Captain Ron set out for the marina building to dump a bag of trash, use the head and buy a bag of ice. He walked the whole distance and realized that he had forgotten his key card and couldn’t get in the head or the lounge where the ice was. He walked back to the dock and realized that without the key card, he couldn’t get on the dock and back to the boat. Fortunately, he had his phone so he called Patti to bring him the card.

We decided to cruise to the actual Inner Harbor just to see it once again. It was too early in the morning for a lot of people to be out and for the stores and restaurants to be open.



The iconic Domino Sugar sign in Baltimore

Heading down the Patapsco River, we came to the Francis Scott Key Bridge that spans the river. We saw something strange, a helicopter hovering above the high voltage power cables that parallel the bridge with something hanging down from it.

Once we got closer, with the help of our binoculars, we were able to determine that it was lowering two men in a basket of sorts to do something to the wires. Then it rose up, flew to shore with the men swinging in the basket and returned to a different portion of the cable. Now that would be an interesting job!



Workers suspended from a helicopter, working on the lines

Eventually, we got to where the Patapsco River joins the Chesapeake Bay and turned to the south. We could see the Chesapeake Bay Bridge in the distance but it took about an hour and a half to actually get to it.

Before we got to the bridge we passed seven or eight sailboats heading north. We think they were participating in some sort of event from what we heard on the radio. A couple of large, fast yachts passed us heading south.

Once we passed under the bridge, we turned to the southwest towards Annapolis. To port, there were five large ships anchored, waiting to go to ports in Baltimore. In front of us were fourteen sailboats (yes, we counted them) heading out of

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Annapolis and of course, since they were sailing, it was our duty to stay clear of them.



The Chesapeake Bay Bridge

We called the City Dock and got our slip assignment. We backed into the slip and got tied up with a little help from a young dockhand with more enthusiasm than experience. Captain Ron readjusted the lines after he left.

The ship's puppy was ready to explore our new temporary home, so we got her leashed up and followed her to the waterfront. She did her business and then turned her attention to a guy skateboarding back and forth on the paved waterfront. The Sea Dog is not fond of anything with wheels (except for the car or a golf cart if she is riding in it). She barked every time the guy came near.

The guy came over, got off the skateboard and petted her. He showed her the skateboard and told her it was harmless. She still barked at it.

Back at the boat, the K-9 was assigned guard duties and the humans went for a late lunch. Captain Ron had a hankering for oysters and one restaurant advertises one dollar oysters so he ordered six and a bowl of Maryland crab soup (essentially vegetable soup with crab meat). Patti ordered nachos.



Captain Ron's plate of oysters

After our meal we stopped in a couple of shops and then headed back to the boat. The hound wanted to go for another walk so we walked back to the waterfront where she got petted and had her picture taken. Then we headed for the ice cream shop. The hound loves her ice cream.



The HIGH COTTON crew in Annapolis, MD

Back at the boat, the humans took turns going to the showers. This place is a bit strange, it's not really a "marina" as such, there are slips along Ego Alley and moorings in the creeks that the dockmaster manages. The building with the office and the showers is across the public walkway and parking lot from the slips so we have to walk through the traffic with our shower bags and up a flight of stairs to take a shower. The facilities are a bit "long in the tooth", but there is plenty of hot water.

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We are here for three days and haven't made plans for after that yet. The weather is not looking promising early next week.



The sun sets over the Maryland State Capitol Building

Captain's Log, day forty seven, (June 16, 2023)

We had a good night's sleep last night once the restaurant on the other side of Ego Alley closed. It was dark and there was almost no rocking. Captain Ron woke up at 7:00 AM and saw Patti and the puppy in bed beside him. He thought they had slept through the night, but actually they had gotten up at daybreak, gone for a walk and then gotten back in bed.

Patti had planned to do a load of laundry, but instead, we walked up the street to the deli for breakfast.

We stopped in a few shops on the way back to HIGH COTTON, but most weren't open yet. We walked past a nail salon so Patti went in and got an appointment for later in the morning.

Patti left for her nail appointment and Captain Ron worked on our plans once we leave Annapolis. After a while, the K-9 scratched on the door, indicating that she wanted to go for a walk.

Captain Ron leashed her up, lifted her off the boat onto the dock and they set off on their walk. The Sea Dog walked with a purpose to the end of Ego Alley, around the end and back up the other side as far as possible. She walked through several puddles and chased the ducks off the dock and into the water. Then she walked back past the boat and to the waterfront. Eventually, Captain Ron coaxed her back to the boat.

Once Patti returned with her nails freshly done, the K-9 stayed on the boat while the humans walked and shopped until no store had not been visited. A couple T shirts and some souvenirs were purchased. As usual, the town was richer for our visit.

Patti's nephew and his two children came from their home in Glen Burnie to visit. We visited for a while on HIGH COTTON and then walked for ice cream. There was a guy at the end of Ego Alley juggling and doing magic tricks so we walked over and watched for a while. Then they had to go.



The HIGH COTTON crew along with Brock, Aubree and Ethan

We put the ship's puppy back on the boat and walked back to the same deli where we had breakfast for matzo ball soup. They had a combination of soup and salad so we ordered that (for each of us), not realizing how big the portion of soup was. The matzo ball was the size of a

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softball! We brought the salads and some of the soup back to the boat for tomorrow.



Annapolis, MD looking towards the harbor

While in town, we noticed that there is going to be a parade tomorrow starting from the parking lot behind our boat and extending up the main street. Some research determined that this will be a “Juneteenth” parade. We will have a front row seat whether we want one or not. We just hope it doesn’t start too early.

Captain’s Log, day forty eight, (June 17, 2023)

We were afraid the parade preparations would wake us this morning. The signs in the parking lot said no parking from 3:00 AM until 12:00 PM. As it turned out, the parade didn’t actually start until noon. Nothing happened at 3:00 AM.

About 7:00 AM, we woke and saw tow trucks hauling away the half dozen or so cars that had been left in the parking lot. Apparently the owners didn’t read the signs last night or were too drunk to drive home from the bars.

We followed the hound to the waterfront and sat on one of the benches watching the boats come and go. Then we went back and watched the groups gathering for the parade. There were some

floats, a Corvette car club, a motorcycle club, a fitness club, a couple of dancing clubs and an all drum “band”. No bands other than the drum band. Eventually, at about noon, the parade marshals got them started and everyone fell in line. We were watching from our flybridge so we had a front row seat.



The parade starts behind HIGH COTTON

We had our salads from last night and since we hadn’t put the dressing on them yet, they were fine. Very good, in fact.

We walked the puppy and then decided to visit the nearby Naval Academy. Fortunately, Captain Ron took his wallet and Patti took her purse, because it was like going to the airport, showing photo IDs and emptying pockets into trays to be scanned.

Once we were allowed in, we discovered that the museum with all the exhibits was in another building. We followed the signs and eventually found it. It was a half mile walk.

We walked around and looked at some of the exhibits, but it was way too much to take in for the short time we were there and Captain Ron’s feet were hurting him. After a half hour or so we walked the additional half mile back to the boat.

Captain Ron took off his shoes, lay down on the bed, turned on the TV and fell asleep.

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There is a restaurant in town that specializes in lobster rolls and Captain Ron had the choice of oysters or a lobster roll (at two different restaurants). He chose the lobster roll. Patti had two hot dogs (she doesn't care for lobster).



Captain Ron's lobster roll

Once we returned from the restaurant, we all went to the flybridge to watch the boats coming and going on Ego Alley. Boats would come in travel to the end, turn around and go back out again. Two boats pulled into the slip next to HIGH COTTON but the harbormaster chased them away. It is supposed to be reserved but nobody is in it yet.



The action on Ego Alley

Kiki was more interested in the people and dogs walking on the dock behind us. She alerted us to every dog and every skateboard that went by.

We took turns showering and now we are ready for bed. People are still walking on the dock behind us and boats are still coming and going in front of us. Music is playing somewhere. Tomorrow, we really will anchor. That's unless something changes, of course.



HIGH COTTON in her slip at Ego Alley, Annapolis, MD

Captain's Log, day forty nine, (June 18, 2023)

We didn't know it, but there was a car show today. Cars began arriving at 7:00 AM. Loud cars! Lying in bed, Captain Ron thought he was hearing boats leaving, but it was the cars. And a few motorcycles. Anyway, that was our wakeup call this morning.

Captain Ron got out the dedicated potable water hose and topped off the water tanks. He unplugged the shore power cord and put it away. He also unhooked the fender board and put it away. Fixed docks are always more difficult than floating docks that rise and fall with the water level.

Captain Ron and the Sea Dog climbed the ladder to the flybridge while Patti undid the five dock lines holding us in our slip. Since the tour boats had been blowing their horns every time they left their slips for the past three days, Captain Ron decided

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that he might as well do the same so he blew HIGH COTTON's dual trumpet air horn. Everyone near the docks knew that somebody was leaving their slip.

Today's voyage was to be less than two hours so we didn't even get up to full speed. We saw a few sailboats and a couple power boats. Most crabbers in Maryland don't work on Sundays, they go to church.

We passed about a half dozen large ships anchored and waiting for their slips in Baltimore. We also heard one that was underway on the radio.



Ships anchored and waiting their turn in Baltimore



The Thomas Point Lighthouse south of Annapolis, MD

Captain Ron accidentally carried his phone up to the flybridge this morning and it was a good thing he did. He got a phone call from his daughter,

Robyn, wishing him a happy father's day. His son Andrew sent him a text.

We passed Camp Wabanna where Captain Ron and his brothers went to summer camp when they were teenagers. Of course, back then, he never dreamed that he would be cruising past it in his own boat sixty eight years later.

We left the Chesapeake Bay and entered the Rhode River. We skirted High Island (which has now sunk and is just a shoal) and headed for the back side of Flat Island (which is still above water by a few feet).

We anchored HIGH COTTON and Captain Ron uncovered Q-Tip (our dinghy) on the bow and began re-inflating it with the electric pump. The Sea Dog saw this and began barking and jumping around. She loves her dinghy rides.

We got the dinghy in the water and around to the swim platform and loaded up. We were trying to decide who would get in first when the Sea Dog jumped in. That settled that.

We went to the beach on the island. The Sea Dog was the first one out of the dinghy and swam back and forth just off the beach. Then she went to shore and began digging in the sand.

There were two families (with boats) already on the beach and they thought this was hilarious. One of the young kids was digging a hole in the sand with a plastic shovel and Kiki walked over, jumped into his hole and started digging also.

The puppy continued swimming and digging. The humans waded a bit but didn't swim. Eventually, of course, it was time to head back to the mother ship. The puppy doesn't know when to stop and in the past she has overdone it and gotten sick from playing on the beach. She got a thorough bath before being allowed back inside HIGH COTTON.

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More and more boats came as the day wore on. At one time Captain Ron counted thirty boats anchored near Flat Island. This island is probably no more than a couple hundred feet long and half as wide. The actual beach is much smaller, but the surrounding water is shallow with a comfortable sandy bottom.



The crowd arrives at Flat Island

We ate lunch and rested. Later, Captain Ron took Q-Tip for a spin around the island and the crowd.



HIGH COTTON anchored off Flat Island, Rhode River, MD

We had leftovers for dinner. Then we unloaded the dinghy and put everything away. The dinghy is tied behind the boat so we can have the hatch open for ventilation. We will get it back on the bow before we head out tomorrow.

Captain Ron has been generally happy with his upgraded TV and Fire Stick, but all of a sudden, he can't get anything on youtube or HomeStream (our TV provider at home). Youtube works on the computer but not the Fire Stick. So far, the Internet has not been much of a help.

All the boats near us and the island left before dark, but there are about a half dozen anchored within sight. It's time for us to hit the sack.

Captain's Log, day fifty, (June 19, 2023)

Captain Ron is frustrated with technology even though that is what he did for a living!

We are at Shipwright Harbor Marina in Deale, MD. Captain Ron signed on to their WiFi on the TV and both youtube and Homestream worked! He signed back on to his hot spot and they didn't work. He rebooted his hot spot and now they both work. How would a hotspot transmit some data and not other data? How would it know? And how would it transmit it to the computer and not the TV set? Anyway, he knows now what to do if this happens again.

Back to the beginning, we had a great night's sleep last night. It was quiet, cool and dark with no rocking or water noise. All the boats near the island left but about a dozen boats spent the night anchored in various parts of the river, not near us. A few of them left before we did.

We were not in any rush to leave our quiet anchorage; we had the breakfast of champions (half a bagel each), checked the engine, pulled up the anchor and motored back the way we came in. There was a lot of mud on the chain and anchor so we dropped it back in the water a few times to try to wash it off. We have an anchor washdown system, but the hoses keep failing and Captain Ron

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has pretty much given up on it. It is rare that we see this much mud when we pull up the anchor.

As we left the Rhode River and entered the Chesapeake Bay, some sort of fog or haze set in. We could barely make out the shore or any boats in the distance. We had a route to follow on the chart plotter though so all we had to do was watch out for markers, other boats and crab pot markers. We did see lots of those. We also saw a few "rays". Not "stingrays", probably "cownose rays". Cownose rays are fairly common in the Chesapeake Bay. As we got within a mile or two of the marina the fog cleared and we saw a lot of boats heading out towards the Bay.

As we neared the marina, we called on the radio for docking instructions. We got them but misunderstood and went past the marina. We called again and were told to turn around. We found our spot on a T head and the dockmaster caught our lines and welcomed us.

The Sea Dog was anxious to get off the boat and explore so Captain Ron got his wallet and we all walked to the office. It's a long walk.

We paid and got our welcome package. Kiki got treats. There is normally a cat in the office but he was nowhere in sight. The cat's name is "Bob". We did see him later though. The rules here call for dogs to be on a leash at all times. Apparently, cats can roam freely though.

On the way back to the boat we stopped to talk to some other boaters. The puppy spotted a fairly large turtle and wanted to chase it. It wouldn't run though, it just went inside its shell. Later we saw it jump off the dock and into the water.

Captain Ron got the TV up and running with the results mentioned above.

There is a nice swimming pool here and since it was pretty warm and the fog had cleared, we decided to check it out. We put on our swimsuits and walked to the pool. Unfortunately, it was a bit cold and we only got in up to our waists. Well, Patti got entirely wet, but neither of us swam. We got out and sunbathed for a while and then went back to the boat.



Patti checks out the pool at Shipwright Harbor Marina

We walked to the closest restaurant and found that tonight was "Mexican night". Since we will be here for at least two days, we decided to have Mexican food tonight and choose from the regular menu tomorrow. The food was good.

Back at the boat, we realized that while our spot on the T head made it easy to dock the boat and easy to get on and off, it may be too exposed for the weather we are expecting for the next couple of days. We had to put out both fender boards and another dock line because of the rocking and the wind hasn't really picked up yet. We will ask tomorrow if they have an inside slip we can have.

For now, the winds have died down somewhat and the office is closed any way. We took our showers (they are nice and modern) and will soon hit the sack.

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Captain's Log, day fifty one, (June 20, 2023)

We rocked and rolled for most of the night last night. Not as much as we did at Betterton a couple weeks ago, but it was uncomfortable. By morning the wind had shifted and it was blowing us away from the dock so we weren't hitting it. Still, we are looking at several days of strong winds and or thunderstorms so we went to the office and asked if we could move to a more protected inside slip.

We were given an inside slip so we unhooked everything, left the T head and motored around to the new slip. The slip is longer than the ideal for our boat, but with our new 35' docklines, we were able to make it work.

The winds picked up as we were backing into the slip and we had to abort the docking and go back out for a second try. With the help of a dockhand and the owner of the adjacent sailboat, we were able to get safely in the slip and tied up. We should be in good shape here even in high winds.

We had planned on walking to the other restaurant for breakfast, but by the time we got moved and settled in it was too late.

Patti decided to wash a load of clothes and clean the boat. Captain Ron had noticed a lot of grime on the return air grate for the air conditioner when repairing it yesterday so he got the spray cleaner and paper towels and took care of that. Then he got out of the way while Patti cleaned. He repaired one end of one of the shorepower cords that had begun to deteriorate.

Once the boat was clean and everything put away, we walked to the office and made arrangements to stay here until the weather was better for boating. They have a policy where if you pay for five days you get two free and that may be what we will do. The weather looks pretty nasty for the rest of the week.

We decided to go to the "other" restaurant for dinner. It's a longer walk, but on their website, they advertised chicken pot pie as the special for Tuesday. Captain Ron had his heart set on a chicken pot pie.

We walked to the restaurant, sat down and when the waiter came over, Captain Ron said "I'll have the chicken pot pie." The waiter looked at him with a puzzled look and said "I'll have to check and see if we have any." Captain Ron said "Isn't that the Tuesday special? The waiter said "No, that was the winter menu."

Anyway, Captain Ron didn't get his chicken pot pie. He had fish and chips instead. Patti had country fried steak.

We walked back to the boat (about a half a mile) and took the ship's puppy to the outdoor showers for a much needed shower with her special doggie shampoo.



Kiki gets a much needed shower

After returning from the hound's shower, Captain Ron set off to take his (in the indoor shower). When he returned, Patti went to take her shower and then put the towels and the remaining dirty clothes in the laundry.

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Captain's Log, day fifty two, (June 21, 2023)

So today is supposed to be the first day of summer! Well, it rained most of the day with the temperature in the mid-sixties. The heat is on.

As might be expected, we stayed aboard HIGH COTTON except for dog walks. There were several of those of course and each time, the Sea Dog got dried off when she returned to the boat. The humans have raincoats; the K-9 has none.

We spent some time trying to plan our stop after we leave here. We are still using weather predictions and hoping that they are at least close. We have reservations for two of the next three stops, but are waiting on confirmation of the third. Captain Ron is not fond of on-line reservations because you make a "request" and then have to wait an unspecified time to find out if your request was accepted or denied.

As we mentioned, we only left the boat for dog walks. Dinner was leftover Mexican food from two nights ago. The weather forecast is calling for rain and mid-sixties again tomorrow.

Captain's Log, day fifty three, (June 22, 2023)

Today's weather was a repeat of yesterday. The hound was up at 6:00 AM, wanting to go for a walk so Patti got up and took her. Captain Ron guarded the bed. Eventually, he got up and got dressed. Patti wanted to go out for breakfast so we left the K-9 to guard the boat and set out for the "Happy Harbor Restaurant", the same place we had dinner last night.

We stopped and talked to one of the employees of the marina and he told us about another restaurant "just a couple blocks further away". Apparently "blocks" around here measure two

tenths of a mile each because we walked four tenths of a mile past the Happy Harbor. Altogether it was nearly a mile to the restaurant.

Anyhow, it was a nice place and the food was decent. Patti got a scrambled egg to go for the ship's puppy.

On the way back to the marina we stopped in the hardware store. We didn't need anything, but Captain Ron likes to browse hardware stores almost as much as he likes to browse marine stores.

We didn't find anything to buy but we ended up talking to one of the employees who was raised and spent most of his life in Bethesda, MD, one town over from Captain Ron's hometown of Silver Spring, MD. They spent some time talking about the good old days.

Once we got back to the boat, we fed the hound her scrambled egg (part of it) and then took her for a walk. The temperature was in the mid-sixties and there was a light drizzle for most of the day so pretty much all we did was walk the puppy every couple of hours. Captain Ron tried again to make a reservation at the Rod and Reel Marina in Chesapeake Beach. He may just have to call them on the phone.



A slip neighbor working on his sailboat

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Captain Ron has been wanting to replace our two inflatable PFDs (life jackets), but with ones with a Type III Coast Guard approval, not Type V which requires that they be worn to count as the required number of life jackets.

He got an email that West Marine was having a sale and it turned out that the PFDs that he needed were on sale so we went back to the nearby West Marine and bought two. Then we went to the nearby restaurant for dinner. Our plan was to have leftovers for tomorrow night because thunderstorms are in the forecast.



Captain Ron unloads excess funds at West Marine

After dinner, it was back to the boat, walk the Sea Dog and take showers. Now it's time for bed.

Captain's Log, day fifty four, (June 23, 2023)

Patti and the puppy went for their 6:00 AM walk, then came back and crawled back into bed and went back to sleep. Captain Ron actually got up before them this morning.

It rained on and off for most of the day so when it was not raining, we walked the puppy. When it rained, we stayed on the boat reading or watching TV. Captain Ron armed the life jackets (they inflate

with a CO2 cartridge) but one doesn't seem right so he may have to take it back tomorrow.

Captain Ron had not gotten a confirmation back from his reservation request so he finally called them on the phone. It turns out they had sent the confirmation about two minutes before Captain Ron called. Anyway, we are set for the next week.

He spent some time planning our stops after that. We have a seven hour journey between two marinas and we are looking for a way to break that up with a stop in between.

We talked to some of the other boaters at a table near the pool. It was "free beer" night but with the weather there weren't many people around.

Another dog walk and it's time for bed. Hopefully, tomorrow will be more exciting.

Captain's Log, day fifty five, (June 24, 2023)

As usual, Patti and the pup went for an early morning walk. They came back and went back to sleep in the saloon. Captain Ron came to life about 8:00 AM.

We decided to go back to the restaurant (the one furthest away, almost a mile) for breakfast so we fed the K-9 and left her to guard the boat. There are no sidewalks around here except on the bridge so we walked against the flow of traffic and hoped that drivers would move over for us. Most did.

We both had creamed chipped beef on biscuits (AKA "SOS") and grits. We couldn't finish it all so we brought the rest back for breakfast tomorrow.

We walked back to the marina and rested a bit. Then we walked over to West Marine where the teenaged employee told us the PFD was just fine. Captain Ron should have known better. The best

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employees work during the week, the weekend employees tend to know less.

The weather today went from warm sunshine to dark clouds and sprinkles and back several times. We would go out when it was sunny and come back to the boat for the rain. Kids were swimming in the pool but the lifeguard made them get out when there was thunder. We never saw lightening though.

Most of the boats in this marina are in annual or seasonal slips and are owned by people who live within an hour or two drive from here. Many spend the weekends on their boats (much like we do at home) and the parking lot is much more crowded than it was earlier in the week.

On one of our excursions we were talking to some boaters who were grilling way too much food on the marina's grills. They offered us hamburgers and pork chops so that was our dinner tonight, not our leftovers. The ship's puppy got some hamburger as well. It was hot out but we heard thunder so we took the pooch back to the boat and returned to talk with them some more.

Eventually, we came back to HIGH COTTON and took turns going back to the bathhouse for showers. If we forgot to mention it, the heads and showers here are very nice. The pool is nice also, but a bit too cold for us right now.

It's off to bed for now. We have one more day and night here and then we continue south.

Captain's Log, day fifty six, (June 25, 2023)

"On the Boat Again, I just can't wait to get on the Boat Again" (with apologies to Willie Nelson).

Technically, we have been on the boat all this time, but after a week, we will actually start the engine

and move, even if only a few miles from here. We are anxious to move on, even though this is a lovely marina.

Summer returned today and it was warm and sunny all day but the pool was still too cold for the "seniors". Children were playing in it and a few adults were in, but not the crew of HIGH COTTON. It's a beautiful pool though.

We had leftovers for breakfast. Creamed chipped beef and grits, plus a freshly fried egg for Captain Ron. We spent much of the day outside, walking the Sea Dog and talking to other boaters. The pooch made friends and got petted. The humans made friends but did not get petted. Being a nice weekend day, there were a lot of boat owners around today. Many took their boats out of course; others just hung around the pool or worked on their boats.

We have plans (and reservations) through next Sunday. Captain Ron spent time trying to figure out where we should go after that. He has also been trying to find a groomer for the ship's puppy without results. It seems the groomers we have contacted (and tried to contact) have no use for an extra hundred dollars. At this rate, we will be coming home with a very shaggy dog!

Our ride tomorrow is only a bit more than an hour long so we will stay here for much of the morning. We don't want to show up at the next marina at 9:00 AM when their official check-in time is 3:00 PM. Noon to 1:00 PM will probably be OK. We took our showers and are ready for bed.

Captain's Log, day fifty seven (June 26, 2023)

We were in no rush to get up this morning, but we forgot to tell the hound. So, at 6:00 AM, she was up and ready for her walk. Patti got up and walked

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her, then they both came back to the boat and rested until Captain Ron rolled out of bed.

We have been trying to arrange for a haircut for the ship's puppy and have called or emailed a dozen or more mobile groomers. Some had messages on their answering machines saying that they weren't taking new clients and some didn't bother to call us back. This morning, Patti called one in Chesapeake Beach (our destination for today) and she said she could meet us at the marina at noon.

Our email from the marina had specified a check in time of 3:00 PM which is pretty strange for a marina. Patti called on the phone and they told us to come as early as we liked.

With our plans coming together, Patti went to the ice machine and got two bags of ice while Captain Ron filled the nearly empty potable water tanks.

We unhooked the power cord and lines and left our home for the past week at about 10:15 AM. With such a short trip, we didn't go at our normal cruising speed and we had the current against us so it was almost two hours by the time we were actually in our slip at the Rod 'N' Reel Marina in Chesapeake Beach, MD. We saw a few boats along the way, mostly sailboats or fishing boats.

Now, the fun part. As we approached the marina, we called on the radio several times without a response. We finally went below and got a phone and called them. The person who answered seemed a bit confused and asked if we had a slip for the night. We told him we did even though we had mentioned that we had a reservation and were asking for docking instructions. He gave no instructions but said he would be out to assist us.

Not seeing anybody, we pulled in behind the breakwater where we had been docked a few years ago. A guy finally showed up, but gave no

indication of where we were to go. Finally we heard him say something on the order of "Take your pick." By this time, the wind and current had us drifting too close to the pilings so we had to make a circle and head back towards a T head.

He asked for the bow line and pulled the boat to the dock which pushed the stern out too far for Patti to toss him a line (Captain Ron should have taken charge here but he didn't). He knows better but doesn't like to boss people around, even when he needs to.

So the Dockhand tossed the line back onto the bow and told us to go out, turn to port and go to the other part of the marina alongside the buildings. We did and he directed us to a slip where we got tied up. It's actually a much better slip, protected from the wind and waves.

Captain Ron got off the boat to connect the shore power. The boat next to us was using one of the outlets on the power pole for our slip because the boat next to it was using both outlets on their power pole. The second outlet was missing the circuit breaker. The dockhand thought it would work anyway, but Captain Ron knew better. In the end, he had to use two shorepower cables end to end to connect HIGH COTTON to a working power receptacle.

We took the Sea Dog for her customary first walk around a new marina. We couldn't find the office so we had to ask somebody. While we were walking, the groomer called to say she was on her way so we walked to where she said she would park, found her van and handed the hound over to her.

We walked to the office and told the dockhand and his co-worker that we had only been able to book and pay for one night online but were planning on staying for two nights. They were unable to figure

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out how we could do that. We asked about the key cards for the showers and the dockhand said the hotel would take care of that. He walked us over to the hotel desk and they said that the marina would be the one to take care of that. The dockhand said he would call his boss and get back with us.

We got the flybridge covered and things put away. The groomer called and said she was done so Patti walked back to her van and retrieved the lighter, cleaner ship's puppy. The dockhand came to the boat and said we should go to the hotel to pay for the next night and get our key cards so off we went.



Doesn't my new haircut look good?

The lady at the hotel desk said no, that was wrong, but she agreed to call the marina manager (who was off today) and straighten things out. She eventually came back out, made us two key cards and gave us the marina manager's phone numbers to arrange payment. Things seem a bit disorganized here.

Leaving the K-9 to guard the boat, we got out the granny cart and walked to the nearby grocery store where we stocked up on Dr Peppers, vegetables for the hound and food for the humans. They had fried chicken and side dishes so we bought what

would be our main meal for the day. The granny cart is very handy for grocery runs.

Captain Ron pulled the cart back to the boat while Patti made a side trip into the CVS for a soda and "cash back". No ATMs for us, we just shop where we can get cash back on our credit card. There's no fee or interest.



Captain Ron with the full grocery cart



The HIGH COTTON crew in Chesapeake Beach, MD

Once Patti returned and put everything away, we ate our grocery store chicken. The K-9 got fresh green beans, carrots and Brussel sprouts. She really wanted chicken though.

We walked the puppy again, this time we walked around the entire complex including the waterfront where our slip would have been. The water is really shallow and some of the slips were

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mud, not water. There is sand, but not really a beach. It's part of the restaurant and bar. There's a stage for bands on the weekends.

We decided to go together to take our showers (together to and from the boat, the actual showers are separate of course). We didn't have to use our key cards, leaving us wondering what they are for. There is a pool but the sign on the door said it was closed.

Back at the boat, the humans are freshly washed and so is the hound. We will lay our heads down in the same bed, but in a different town.

Captain's Log, day fifty eight (June 27, 2023)

Well Q-Tip (our dinghy) took its last gasp today. Captain Ron noticed that one side had lost a lot of air (it's been on the bow of the boat so it's visible every time you look out the front). He untied one side and set it up on its side so the inflation valves were accessible and got out the electric pump and began re-inflating it. As it got near the recommended pressure, there was a loud "pop" and it collapsed with about a six inch blowout on one of the seams. Having spent \$500 to have it reglued before our trip, that would make our single beach trip a \$500 trip to the beach and back. At least it didn't pop while we were riding in it.

Captain Ron was strongly tempted to just heave the whole thing overboard right then and there, but better judgement prevailed and he deflated the other side and floor and rolled it up. He got out the storage bag and tried to bag it but the bag was dry rotted and ripped. No more rides to the beach for the Sea Dog this trip.

Back to the beginning:

Patti and the puppy got up early for their morning walk and got back in bed when they returned. They were still sleeping when Captain Ron got up.

There is supposed to be a continental breakfast in the hotel, but apparently it's been reduced to just coffee and hot water (tea). Captain Ron got two cups and walked back to the boat.

We decided to walk over to McDonalds for breakfast so Captain Ron ended up with another cup of coffee. After breakfast, we walked to the grocery store for more sodas and junk food.

We came back and put the food away. After that was the incident with the dinghy.

We took the ship's puppy for a walk and she found a nice cool spot in the sand under a boardwalk and dug a pretty deep hole. She loves to dig. She walked to the dock and spied the mud and water just a couple feet lower than the dock. She considered jumping down but Patti wouldn't let her. We wouldn't have had a way to get her back up easily.

Back at the boat, we ate some sliced tomatoes, sliced cucumber and balsamic dressing for lunch. Later, we took the pup on a long walk under the bridge spanning the creek and to the rest of the marina where the smaller boats are kept.

We remembered that the railroad museum was open from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM so we walked over to it and learned about the railroad that used to bring people from Washington, DC to the amusement park in Chesapeake Beach starting in the 1890s up through 1935. The railroad and amusement park are gone now, replaced by a large hotel and casino. And the small marina where we are staying. Chesapeake Beach was one of Captain Ron's "hangouts" when he was a teenager. He played music there and in the nearby North Beach, MD. Everything has changed since then.

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We realized that the marina sells diesel fuel at a reasonable price and that we could fuel HIGH COTTON right in the slip without moving so that's what we did even though we could travel a few more days on the fuel we had already. We took on about thirty gallons.

We walked to the closest restaurant for dinner. It's in the casino. While waiting for our food, Captain Ron noticed an e-mail from our insurance agent saying that our auto insurance was due today. The only way to pay it today was with a credit card by phone and that turned out to be a very difficult and frustrating process. One of the hardest parts of taking these cruises is being away from home and not getting mail and bills.

Tomorrow, we have a little over a two hour cruise to a place we have never been before. We shall see.

Captain's Log, day fifty nine (June 28, 2023)

As usual, Patti and the pooch went for a walk at 6:00 AM and then came back and got back in bed. Captain Ron woke up at 7:30 AM and the rest of the crew soon followed. Captain Ron walked to the hotel for a cup of coffee. Patti readied the flybridge while Captain Ron did his engine checks and unplugged the shore power cord. Barges and tugs have been working in the channel into the marina and in front of our slip and they were there when we were ready to leave so we had to avoid them on the way back out into the Bay.

The Chesapeake Bay is quite shallow near the shore in this area so we had to head due east for about a mile before it was deep enough to head south towards Flag Harbor. It was pretty hazy on the Bay today so we didn't get a good view of things on shore. We could see Breezy Point Beach, a place we occasionally went to when we lived in

Takoma Park, MD about forty years ago. We also passed Scientist Cliffs where Captain Ron's family would vacation in the 1950s. It was basically a straight shot from where we turned south near Chesapeake Beach to the entrance to Flag Harbor Marina.



Cliffs on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay

As we approached the marina, we called them on the radio several times, but got no answer. Then we called them on the phone and got an answering machine! Now at this point, we are in the entrance channel wondering where our slip is and have not been able to contact a marina employee. We saw some people on their boats and asked them, but they knew nothing.

The phone rang and it was the marina. Just in time, we got directions to our slip. It turned out to be easy to get into and we had help tying up.

The ship's puppy was anxious to get off the boat and explore and Jamison, the boat yard dog was waiting to greet her. He seemed happy to have a four legged visitor.

Coming down the fairway, we passed two Camano Trolls, sister ships to HIGH COTTON. With only about two hundred and sixty five of these boats made, it's a bit rare to see one, much less two. The marina owner said there was another but it was away today.

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Jamison, the boat yard dog and Kiki the ship's puppy meet

The Sea Dog walked around the marina familiarizing herself with all the new smells. The humans followed obediently behind. After the exploration, we returned to the boat where the humans had sliced tomatoes and cucumbers for lunch. The pooch had dog food.

With lunch out of the way, we decided to walk to the beach. The beach was one of our reasons for stopping at this little known marina. The marina is on a canal at right angles to the shore of the Bay. There is a beach on each side of the canal. A guy we met while walking the pooch suggested the south beach for hunting sharks teeth.

We set out to walk to the south beach, but the path ended. We walked to a road but it ended as well. We met a guy walking his dog and he gave us directions to the beach but the route was a pretty long walk. He suggested that we go to the north beach instead so we turned around and walked to the marina entrance and the beach.

Once the pooch spied the water, she ran to it and out a few feet. She went in and out several times and then decided to walk along the edge of the water. As usual, the humans followed.

There were a few families on the beach and Kiki decided to walk over to one of them and make

friends. She helped the children dig holes in the sand and got petted by everyone.



As usual, the Sea Dog is a hit with the women



The Sea Dog gets up close and personal

We could see the Cove Point LNG terminal in the distance and it appeared a LNG vessel was at the dock loading. As we mentioned, it was hazy so it was difficult to make out any details. We have seen these vessels in the past and they are unique.

Eventually, we walked back to HIGH COTTON. The pup had to have a bath and the humans had to wash the sand off their feet and leave their shoes outside.

We were resting (Captain Ron was napping) when we heard a knock on the window. It was the owner of one of the other Camanos. We invited him onboard and had a nice talk about our boats

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and the places we have been. We exchanged boat cards.

After our visitor left, Patti heated up our leftovers from the past couple of days and we had dinner. Then there was another dog walk where Captain Ron picked up a shorepower cord that had been left for the trash. He can replace the ends if necessary. These cords are quite expensive if purchased new. There was a lifeguard at the pool, but nobody swimming. We asked him if the water was warm and he said it wasn't. We will find out for ourselves tomorrow.

Patti went to take her shower followed by Captain Ron. This marina is in a rural area off the Bay and we expect peace, quiet and darkness tonight.



Our slip at Flag Harbor Marina in southern Maryland

Captain's Log, day sixty (June 29, 2023)

We got our quiet night's sleep last night. There was no rocking and no noise, but there are lights in the marina so it wasn't totally dark. We have to anchor for that.

We didn't do much of anything today. Perhaps we were worn out from yesterday. We got up, of course and walked the hound. Patti fixed a homemade (boatmade) breakfast of corned beef

hash with a poached egg for Captain Ron and scrambled eggs and sausage for the rest of the crew. One of the burners on the stove won't always remain lit so after the stove cooled off, Captain Ron attempted to troubleshoot it. It turns out that the flame is not always continuous around the burner so it sometimes does not heat the thermocouple and the gas shuts off. Captain Ron is not sure at this point how to fix this.

We walked the Sea Dog and met a lady and dog that live in the community adjacent to the marina. The dogs sniffed each other and the humans talked.



Kiki makes a K-9 friend

Captain Ron noticed that ever since the accident with the VHF antenna, it can be raised so it is pointing a few degrees forward or a few degrees to the rear, but not straight up. Either the mounting bracket got bent or it got jarred loose from the side of the flybridge. Since there was no easy and obvious fix for this and the antenna still works, he decided to leave it alone for now.

Patti had been talking to the owner of the boat yard and he mentioned that they had a used boat stuff store so Captain Ron walked over and checked it out. He didn't find anything we needed though and came back empty handed.

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We had another lunch of sliced tomatoes and cucumbers. Then, it was time to walk the pup again. We went by the pool but decided it was still too cool to enjoy so we came back to the boat and took naps.

Patti lifted the seat to get out food for dinner and decided to reorganize everything so dinner was delayed. Captain Ron had chicken and dumplings with corn on the side. Patti had soup and corn. The ship's puppy licked the bowls.

Then, it was one short dog walk and our showers. We pull out of here tomorrow for a two hour cruise to Solomons Island and another marina we have never been to before.



A marina resident



Another marina resident

Captain's Log, day sixty one (June 30, 2023)

The ship's puppy was up bright and early this morning at 5:30 AM. Patti took her for a walk and then they both got back in bed. Patti and Captain Ron have the option of using the head on the boat, the puppy does not. We rolled out of bed at about 8:00 AM.

We forgot to mention that it has been very hazy the past few days. Apparently, the wildfires in Canada are still burning and the smoke is showing up in Maryland. It's not as bad as it was a few weeks ago when we were in Baltimore, but it is hurting our photos.

We returned the bathroom key (an actual key) to the marina owner and chatted with him for several minutes. Then we unhooked ourselves and motored out of the marina and into the Chesapeake Bay.

As we did when leaving Chesapeake Beach, we had to go a considerable distance from shore before the water was deep enough to turn south toward Solomons Island.

We passed the Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant and then the Cove Point LNG terminal, staying out of the security zones each time. The ship we saw a couple days ago was gone.



The Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant

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The Cove Point LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) Terminal

The water got a bit choppy as we neared the Patuxent River, but it calmed down once we made the turn into the mouth of the river. We saw the Cove Point Lighthouse, one ship, several sailboats, a few crabbers and a few power boats. We saw two bald eagles sitting on some sort of floating marker but with the haze, we couldn't get a good photo of them. An extremely loud jet airplane flew directly over us from the nearby naval air base.



The Cove Point Lighthouse

We had been warned that the marina would not answer a radio call so we called them on the phone for docking instructions. The dockmaster met us at our slip and caught our lines. He complimented Captain Ron on his skill at backing into a slip. (Patti writes: *"Yea, I think Captain Ron is getting a little*

big headed from these compliments, but he did do a good job.")

The Sea Dog wanted to check out the area so we followed her around the grounds. There is the marina, a hotel and a restaurant. She wanted to go in the restaurant but we hadn't brought money so we had to just keep walking around. We'll probably eat there sometime.

We had been warned that the heads here were in bad shape, but when we saw them, they weren't bad. We have seen worse. Far worse.



HIGH COTTON at Beacon Marina, Solomons, MD

Back at the boat, we ate the last of our tomatoes and cucumbers for lunch. There's a grocery store about a mile from here so we can replenish our food supply if necessary.

Captain Ron was napping and Patti was playing games on her phone when both of our phones rang at once. Patti's friend Kim had gone to our house to check on things and the alarm keypad wouldn't let her disarm the system. Patti's phone had Kim calling to say she couldn't disarm the system and Captain Ron's phone had the alarm company wanting to know if they should call the police.

After much confusion and a few more calls and passwords, it was determined that the batteries in the keypad were dead. Luckily, we had extra

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batteries in the kitchen drawer and Kim was able to replace them and put the system back in operation. Thanks Kim.

It started sprinkling and the K-9 got nervous and wanted to go for a walk. We put on our raincoats and walked. The rain stopped and we found ourselves at West Marine (go figure!). We went inside and the ship's puppy got dog treats. Captain Ron tried as hard as he could but found nothing he needed.

We left West Marine and looked over and saw a Roy Rogers restaurant. For those not familiar with these restaurants, they are fast food restaurants featuring roast beef sandwiches, similar to Arby's, but serving "real", not chopped and pressed roast beef. As you might guess, there is a western theme. They used to be quite common in our part of Maryland when we lived there but the majority of them closed many years ago.

We walked over, got an outside table because the pup was with us and ordered our dinner. It was as good as we remembered. Captain Ron even had some leftovers. (Kiki writes: *"I like when Mawmaw and Pawpaw take me to dinner at restaurants. I get fed people food and I get to sniff around to see what other people had to eat."*)

After our dinner, we walked back to the boat. Patti took her shower followed by Captain Ron. Now it's time for bed.

Captain's Log, day sixty two (July 1, 2023)

Well, the Birthday Bunny somehow snuck into a locked HIGH COTTON and left birthday cards for Patti! She is now officially still thirty nine years old.

We got up and decided to walk back to Roy Rogers for breakfast. It was creamed chipped beef for

Captain Ron and pancakes and bacon for Patti. Not bad, but not as good as their roast beef sandwiches.

Captain Ron had gotten an email from West Marine advertising thirty percent off on all shoes and since he will need a new pair of boat shoes soon, we stopped in on the way back from Roy Rogers. Well, it turns out the sale was for one day only and that day was yesterday so he didn't buy new shoes. We had been in the store yesterday but didn't see any sign advertising the sale. Captain Ron had even looked at the shoes yesterday but there was no sale sign in the shoe department. This West Marine doesn't seem to be as well organized as some we have been in.

We stopped at the liquor store and bought two bags of ice. Beacon marina doesn't sell ice. We stopped in the hotel and asked if boaters could eat the free breakfast. The girl didn't know but contacted her boss. We cannot. Patti asked her if there were laundry facilities at the hotel. She said there were not but the restaurant next door had a washer and dryer. Later, we asked the restaurant and they said they did not have laundry facilities but the hotel did. This will require further investigation.

We decided to visit the Calvert Marine Museum. It was very interesting and we saw examples of old boats and motors, ancient marine life, watermen, and stories of humans in the area from the beginning of history. We also saw live otters and rays. There are many different varieties of rays, but the ones we see most often in the Chesapeake Bay are called "Cownose Rays". They often swim near the surface with the tips of their wings piercing the surface.

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The lighthouse at the Solomons Maritime Museum



An original "One Armed Bandit (slot machine)

We came back to the boat and considered going to the pool, but the wind had picked up so we decided to nap instead.

After our naps, we walked to the restaurant and had dinner, then walked back and got the Sea Dog off the boat for her walk. She found two older guys sitting on the dock crabbing so she stopped and got petted. We could see that neither of them knew much about crabbing so we tried to give them some advice, but they didn't really have the equipment they needed.

It began to rain so we returned to the boat. It has been dry. Maryland needs the rain and HIGH COTTON needs a free boat wash.

Captain's Log, day sixty three (July 2, 2023)

It rained last night, but not long enough or hard enough to give HIGH COTTON the bath it needs. There's a possibility of course that the crew will get out the bucket and brush and give it a proper wash before we get home, but the chances are slim.

Captain Ron was up and down last night with heartburn, probably related to the fact that he had fried oysters and fried onion rings for dinner last night. He is going to have to start watching what he eats, especially for dinner. He was up with the rest of the crew and joined them for their morning walk.

Coming back from our walk we talked to a professional clammer at the head of our dock who was working on his boat. He was complaining that he had gone to West Marine for some small nuts for his shifter and the lady had given him the wrong size. He was in a rush to get going and West Marine wouldn't be open for a few more hours. Captain Ron got one of the screws from him and was able to find the four nuts he needed from the stash on HIGH COTTON.

The K-9 had some sneezing spells last night and one this morning. There is an "emergency veterinarian" within walking distance of the marina so Patti called them. They said they were fully booked and couldn't see her until next Sunday (a week from today). We have to question their understanding of the word "emergency".

Anyway, the pup hasn't sneezed since this morning so we figure either something was in her nose and she sneezed it out or it was some sort of allergy.

We have decided to stay here in Solomons Island through the fourth of July, partly because we can probably find another vet if we have to and partly just because this is a decent (and relatively cheap) place to be. There will be fireworks Tuesday night.

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We noticed a nail salon in the shopping center just past West Marine and Roy Rogers so we made appointments to get our nails done. Captain Ron and Patti got pedicures and then went to lunch at the sub shop next door. After lunch, Captain Ron walked back to the boat while Patti returned to the nail salon for a manicure.

We haven't been in the pool yet, but Captain Ron stuck his feet in and thinks it's warm enough for a swim. We might try it tomorrow.

Just about every time we take the Sea Dog for a walk, she heads for the restaurant so we decided to take her with us this evening. We had to eat outside of course, but it was fine and she enjoyed having dinner with her Mawmaw and Pawpaw.

We took turns going for showers and now it's time for bed.

Captain's Log, day sixty four (July 3, 2023)

Patti and the puppy went for their early morning walk this morning. Captain Ron found them sleeping in the saloon when he rolled out of bed.

The marina's restaurant isn't open during the week for breakfast so our choices were to have English muffins on the boat, walk to 7-11 for donuts or return to Roy Rogers. Roy Rogers it was, so we walked the pooch again and then walked to Roy Rogers for sausage gravy over biscuits.

Back at the boat, we worked on plans for after we leave here on Wednesday. We decided to skip Smith Island, partly because the marina doesn't have electric power at the docks yet and partly because we don't want to be so isolated, just in case Kiki does have a medical issue. That makes our next stop Kilmarnock, VA, about a seven hour cruise for HIGH COTTON. The marina there is

supposed to be very nice and they have a courtesy car so we can drive into town for groceries and supplies.

We finally made it to the swimming pool. It's not large, but it's decent and it wasn't too cold. The air temperature was in the nineties so we stayed in the water for a while and talked with some of the hotel guests.



Captain Ron takes a dip in the pool



Patti's turn in the pool

There is a seafood store near the other stores so rather than eat at a restaurant or cook on the boat, we walked to it and bought a dozen steamed blue crabs. Walking back to the boat with our crabs, we stopped at the liquor store for two six packs of beer. We didn't need twelve bottles of beer of course, but Captain Ron and Patti each prefer different brands of beer.

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For those who don't know this, Captain Ron and Patti both were born and raised in Maryland and lived in Maryland until they retired and moved to Charleston, SC in 2005. Also, for those who don't know this, a long time Maryland tradition (at least in the part of Maryland surrounding the Chesapeake Bay) is sitting around a table piled high with steamed blue crabs, picking and eating them and drinking beer.

So, we had our crab feast and the crabs were big, heavy and full of meat. We didn't have the traditional brown paper to put on the table so we used a spare bath towel. We have four crabs left to pick and eat tomorrow.



A crab feast on HIGH COTTON

Once we finished eating and cleaning up the mess, we took the ship's puppy for her evening walk. She walked to the restaurant which was nearly deserted. She found no food, but there was a man and woman sitting at a table near the restaurant so she went over to them and made friends. The lady got down on the ground with her and petted her while everybody talked. They wanted to know about our boat and our cruising.

Eventually, it started to get dark so we walked back to the boat to get ready for bed. Tomorrow will be our last day in Maryland. Virginia is next.

Captain's Log, day sixty five (July 4, 2023)

Captain Ron woke this morning to find the crew asleep in the saloon. Apparently, they went for a walk at 5:30 AM, came back and went back to sleep.

We ran out of potable water last night so we had bottled water to wash our hands and brush our teeth until Captain Ron got out the hose and refilled the tanks. There is a gauge, but it's not very accurate. That's not a good excuse; Captain Ron should have done that yesterday. It's no big deal though.

Captain Ron made his morning coffee and then we walked to the 7-11 for donuts for today and tomorrow. We stopped at the liquor store for ice for the cooler and walked back to HIGH COTTON. Patti drained the cooler, rearranged it and added the ice. Then we ate our donuts.

Some of the locals showed up and began decorating their boats. It turns out there was an Independence Day boat parade on the creek today. We sat on the fly bridge and had a riverside seat. There were a lot of boats, big and small, power and sail and decorated and not. It was a pretty impressive boat parade.



Part of the Independence Day boat parade

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We took the Sea Dog for a walk and she led us around the corner to the “back side” of the marina where a bunch of locals were hanging out and grilling food. She begged and got a piece of hot dog. The folks here are nice and unpretentious. They said this marina was the “Budweiser marina”, while the one next to it (Spring Cove Marina) was the “white wine marina”. All we know is that the other one charges about double the rate of this one.

Being Independence Day, our dinner tonight was hot dogs and baked beans. Just before dinner, the Internet (Captain Ron’s hot spot) stopped working again. This marina is supposed to have Internet but it doesn’t seem to work.

Patti and the pup went for a walk and Captain Ron went for a shower. He finished his shower and the rest of the crew was still walking. We started back towards the boat and met a couple who had driven to town to watch the fireworks show. We talked a bit and the ship’s puppy got petted.

Back aboard HIGH COTTON, Captain Ron called T-Mobile to see about getting his Internet access restored. He got put on hold for about fifteen minutes and finally hung up. The recording suggested using the T-Mobile “app” so he installed that on his phone but couldn’t get anything on it that would help. Patti went to take her shower while Captain Ron tried a different T-Mobile phone number. He ended up with a guy who was very hard to understand and was apparently not that good at listening because he kept trying to sell Captain Ron some sort of home Internet service.

After being put on hold several times and being asked to restart the hot-spot, the guy said it was fixed. It was not. Captain Ron will call again tomorrow in the hopes of getting somebody else. The marina we will be at tomorrow is supposed to

have Internet. This one was supposed to have it but it doesn’t work.

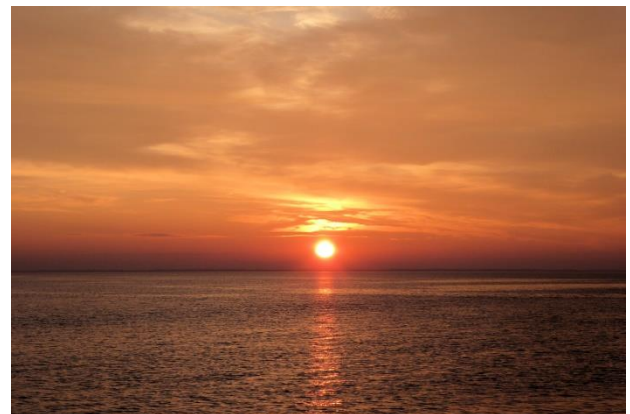
Once it got dark, we went up on the flybridge to watch the fireworks. They were nice. Not what one might find in the big city, but nice. After the fireworks show, we went to bed.



The Independence Day fireworks at Solomons, MD

Captain’s Log, day sixty six (July 5, 2023)

The plan for today was to get up early to make the seven hour cruise to Kilmarnock, VA. The alarm was set for 5:00 AM, but the ship’s puppy had the urge to go at 4:30 so she and Patti were already up and the puppy walk was already completed. 5:30 AM saw us pulling out of our slip and watching the sun rise.



Sunrise on the Patuxent River

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The entire creek leading from the Patuxent River to the marina has a marked (on floating buoys) speed limit of "6". Nowhere is it specified if this is six knots or six miles per hour (six knots equals about 6.9 miles per hour). Captain Ron thought about contacting the Maryland DNR and clarifying this, but since we are leaving Maryland today, it doesn't really matter. We did cross the line into Virginia about four hours into our voyage. Also, Captain Ron had to take a thirty minute "power nap" to ease a kink in his back early into the voyage.

The river and the Bay were smooth today. Not "smooth as glass", but close to it. The junction of the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay can often be quite rough because of opposing currents and we have experienced this in the past, but today we were lucky and had a smooth seven hour ride.

As we passed the mouth of the Great Wicomico River which leads to Reedville, we passed several large fishing vessels fishing for menhaden, a fish that is then taken to a processing plant in Reedville and ground up to produce fish oil, animal feed and fertilizer. This is a large scale operation indeed. We also saw three large ships heading north in the shipping channel.



The ship's puppy watching for the navigation buoys

An hour or so later, we turned west into Indian Creek and headed for the Chesapeake Boat Basin near Kilmarnock, VA. The marina provides a courtesy vehicle for transients to visit the town. There are restaurants, shops and grocery stores. Even a Walmart!

We called the marina on the radio, got our slip assignment and got tied up and hooked up with the help of a staff member. We walked to the office for our check in and welcome package (we had already paid through Dockwa, a marina reservation service). The hound got a dog treat and played with it, much to the amusement of the office staff.



HIGH COTTON at Chesapeake Boat Basin, Kilmarnock, VA

On the way back to the boat, the Sea Dog spied a boat ramp so she ran down and went for a swim. She retrieved a stick that Captain Ron threw in for her. Back at the boat, she got rinsed off before being let inside.

Patti gathered up a load of dirty clothes and took them to the laundry area. The laundry and several of the heads are less than a year old and very nice. The docks and the rest of the marina are nearly new and nice as well. Of course, this marina charges a bit more than some of the others we have stayed at. You get what you pay for.

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We got ourselves settled in and rested a bit. We then changed into our swimsuits and headed for the pool. It is not large, but it's a very nice salt water pool and the water was warm. We swam and talked to another boat owner for a while.



Patti and Captain Ron test the pool

Eventually, we realized that it was getting late so we walked back to the boat and had dinner. Captain Ron ate the four leftover crabs while Patti had leftover hot dogs, her choice.

Patti decided to do another load of laundry so she carried the dirty towels to the laundry facility. Captain Ron is ready for bed, but the towels won't be finished for a few more minutes.

Captain's Log, day sixty seven (July 6, 2023)

Captain Ron woke up this morning and found the rest of the crew in bed with him. Little did he know that they had gone for an early morning walk, returned and gotten back in bed.

We had leftover sticky buns so that is what we had for breakfast. There were more walks and the K-9 found the boat ramp and went for another swim. We talked with the marina owner and told him how much we enjoyed his marina.

We had reserved the courtesy vehicle for this evening at 5:00 PM so we could drive into town for dinner and then to Walmart to restock the boat. We realized that we wouldn't be able to explore the town or visit the shops because they would be closed so we went to the office and asked if we could have it this afternoon as well. They told us that nobody else had asked for it so we could have it.

As we were leaving our boat to head for the courtesy car, we talked to the crew from another boat and found out that they had planned on using the courtesy vehicle to go to an appointment at a resort but hadn't asked in advance for the van. They suggested that we go together so that's what we did. We all piled into the van and with Captain Ron at the wheel, we headed for town.

Their appointment was for 1:00 PM and we dropped them off. Actually, the one lady was getting a ninety minute massage and the others were going to wait in the bar. We drove back to downtown Kilmarnock, parked the van and walked around. The town was bustling with people in the two to three block downtown area. Patti did manage to boost the local economy, buying a couple of items. Captain Ron found nothing that interested him.



Patti enriching the local economy

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We drove back to the resort and picked up the other people and returned to the marina where we dropped the van off. Another couple wanted to use it so they had it until 5:00 when we set out for town again.

Captain Ron had picked out a Thai restaurant and we had to wait until 5:39 PM for it to reopen. The food was good and the prices were reasonable.

Once we finished with dinner (Captain Ron had leftovers, Patti did not), we got back into the van and set out for the Walmart on the outskirts of town. Sam Walton would have been very disappointed. The produce was in sad shape and many of the shelves were empty. Captain Ron was looking for bagels and all they had were “jalapeno cheddar” flavored bagels. He didn’t buy any. There is a loaner vehicle at the next marina and a grocery store in that town. We will make another grocery run tomorrow there.

We returned to the boat, put stuff away and took our showers. The showers here are brand new and very nice, but they forgot to install hooks for towels and clothing and there is no place to sit to dress except on the toilet.

Tomorrow’s trip is only a couple of hours so there will be no crack of dawn departure.

Captain’s Log, day sixty eight (July 7, 2023)

We had a leisurely start to our day today. No rush to get out on the water as our trip was just about two hours to the next marina.

We got the boat ready and walked to the office to turn in the key cards and say goodbye. We pulled out of the marina at about 9:00 AM and headed back down the creek to the Chesapeake Bay. Our destination for today, Deltaville, VA was only about

eight miles away as the crow flies, but fourteen miles away by water. We took it easy, travelling a bit slower than usual and saw dozens of boats, mostly people out for a day of fishing.



Heading from Kilmarnock, VA back to the Chesapeake Bay

We saw some dolphins and stopped to watch them. The ship’s puppy got to see them too. (Kiki writes: *“I love to watch the big fishies playing in the water.”*)

We got to Deltaville, called the Dozier’s Regatta Point Yachting Center on the radio and got our slip assignment. Actually we were put on the face dock, not in a slip, which made docking as easy as it can possibly be.



HIGH COTTON at Dozier’s Regatta Point Yachting Center

This is a beautiful marina with sturdy floating docks, nice, clean heads and showers, a small

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swimming pool and a courtesy vehicle. We have been here before and always make it a point to stop here when passing through the area.

We asked about the courtesy car but someone was using it and someone else was getting it after them so we straightened up the boat and had a lunch of sliced tomatoes.

Once the car was available we took it and stopped at West Marine (bought nothing), the farmers market where we bought more tomatoes, a melon and fresh corn on the cob. Then we went to the grocery store where we bought a pound of shrimp and several other items. Next door was the Dollar General so Patti got some Dr Peppers and eggs.

Back at the boat, we put things away and rested a bit. Then we headed to the pool for a dip. The pool is small, but nice and it was reasonably warm. We swam a bit, relaxed and talked with one of the other boaters for a while.

After the pool, we returned to the boat and Patti cooked the shrimp and corn. It was a good meal.

This marina has a nice wide porch equipped with rocking chairs and facing the setting sun. We went to the porch and sat, talking to some of the other boaters. Kiki met one of their dogs and they sniffed each other.

We eventually realized that it was past our bedtime so we excused ourselves, returned to the boat and went to bed.

Captain's Log, day sixty nine (July 8, 2023)

There was no reason to get up early this morning so we didn't. Well, actually the hound had Patti up at the break of dawn for a walk, but they came back and went back to sleep.

We did manage to find "plain" bagels at the store yesterday so we had bagels for breakfast. Captain Ron found out that the marina makes coffee in the captain's lounge so he got himself a cup and brought it back to the boat.

After breakfast, Patti stripped the bed, took the bedding to the laundry and vacuumed the boat. We took the K-9 for a walk and she wanted to go to the office for dog treats so that's where we went. We talked to the guy on duty for a while and made arrangements to stay an additional day.

When Patti unplugged the toaster this morning she noticed that the electrical outlet was loose. Captain Ron put on his electrician's hat and repaired it.

Lunch was more sliced tomatoes.

After lunch, the skies darkened and we could hear thunder in the distance. It sprinkled for a few minutes but there was no significant rain. The puppy was not happy with the thunder and wanted to get off the boat so we walked her.

Captain Ron has been doing a lot of research on replacing Q-Tip (the dinghy) which blew up a few days ago. He finally decided on a particular brand and model so he went on the dealer's website and ordered it. A few minutes later he got a phone call from the dealer saying that this particular brand of dinghy couldn't be registered in the USA because it had a European manufacturer's number.

Well, if it can't be registered, it wouldn't be much use so Captain Ron cancelled the order. He got on the manufacture's website (in England although the dinghy is actually made in China) and asked them for clarification. He is waiting for more information.

There is a pizza restaurant that delivers to the marina, so instead of cooking, we called and had

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spaghetti dinners delivered. Then it was time for showers. These are some of the nicest heads and showers we have experienced in our travels. Nice, clean heads and showers make for a good marina experience.

Some reading and TV watching and then it's off to bed.

Captain's Log, day seventy (July 9, 2023)

This morning was the usual; the puppy got Patti up and they went for a walk, then they returned and went back to bed. Captain Ron got up about 8:30 AM, got dressed and walked to the captain's lounge for coffee but they hadn't made any yet. He came back to the boat and made his own. Patti cooked breakfast for the crew.

After breakfast, Patti went to the office to see about getting the courtesy car again to get more supplies from the grocery store. She noticed that there was coffee in the captain's lounge so she came back to the boat and told Captain Ron.

Leaving the K-9 to guard the boat, the humans headed for the office for the car keys and another cup of coffee for Captain Ron.

Being Sunday, most of the town was closed (except for the churches), but the Dollar General and the grocery store were open. West Marine was open as well but we managed to drive past without stopping again. We got what we needed and returned to the boat.

Once everything was put in its proper place and the dock cart returned, we had another lunch of sliced tomatoes. Captain Ron topped his with a scoop of cottage cheese while Patti topped hers with sliced cucumbers.

One reason we decided to stay in Deltaville another day was, storms were forecast for today. By 2:00 PM, it hadn't stormed and the sun was shining. We decided to take advantage of the pool so we changed into our swimwear and walked to the pool. We had a refreshing hour or so in the pool floating around and talking to the other boaters. One of them looked at her phone and told us that the storm would arrive in another hour.

We heard thunder in the distance and decided that we might as well get out of the pool and return to the boat to keep the ship's puppy company. At about 5:00 PM, it finally started to rain and rained pretty heavily for a few minutes. Then it was over.

Dinner was leftovers, Pad Thai for Captain Ron and spaghetti for Patti, both as good as they were on day one, thanks to the microwave oven.

The ship's puppy went for a walk after dinner and walked through every puddle she could find. She also met another puppy and they sniffed and followed each other around for a few minutes. Patti talked to the boaters.

Patti went for her shower. A few minutes after she returned, a sailboat came to the dock in front of HIGH COTTON. Since the marina was closed we went out to help them dock. After that, Captain Ron went for his shower. As we mentioned before, the showers here are really nice.

We heard from two or three different boats that came in today that the Chesapeake Bay had been a little rough today so it was probably a good idea that we decided to stay even though it was calm here except for the several minutes of rain late in the day.

Tomorrow we have a six hour cruise south to Hampton VA, pretty much at the end of the

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Chesapeake Bay. Hopefully, the weather will be calm.

Captain's Log, day seventy one (July 10, 2023)

So after careful analysis of the weather forecasts, our plan was to get up at 5:00 AM and be underway by 5:30 AM. Well, about 2:00 AM we were awakened by the boat rocking and hitting the dock (the fenders were in place so there was no damage), the wind howling and the water hitting the hull of the boat. This kept up until the alarm went off at 5:00 AM.

We decided to wait a bit and see if anything changed and compare today's forecast to tomorrow's. A consideration was that we had already reserved and paid for a slip for tonight and tomorrow in Hampton, VA and we wouldn't be able to call and ask if we could move our stay back by a day until they opened at 8:00 AM.

After going outside to check on the actual conditions and checking tomorrow's forecast, we decided to go ahead with our plans to head for Hampton today.

We left the marina a little after 7:00 AM. The water was a bit rough for a while, but certainly nothing we couldn't handle and not nearly the worst we have ever experienced. The Bay actually seemed to calm down as we went farther south.

We saw just a few boats for the first few hours, but as we got to within several miles of Norfolk, we saw an area where cargo ships anchor while waiting their turn at the terminals in Baltimore. There were about a dozen ships, apparently tankers at anchor and one container ship making its way north. Kiki also saw some big fishies but they were too busy to swim along with us like they sometimes do down south.

As we got closer to Norfolk we saw a large military ship heading out to sea but we were far enough from it that we didn't have to take any special precautions.



Sailing classes in Hampton Roads

We turned to starboard into the Hampton Roads Inlet and then into the Hampton River. We called the marina and were met at our slip by a lady dockhand. We got tied up and plugged in and took the K-9 for her exploratory walk.

We walked to the office to check in but we were already checked in on-line. We got the restroom and Wi-Fi codes and the Sea Dog got some treats. (Kiki writes: *"All marinas should give out free dog treats. It should be a law!"*) We sat in the office for a few minutes while the boat cooled off and then walked back to the boat to get it straightened out and put things away. We had lunch; sliced tomatoes and cottage cheese for Captain Ron and ham and cheese rollups and macaroni salad for Patti. The puppy had dog food.

We rested a bit and then decided to take the pooch for a walk. There is a paved walkway along the river bank so that's the route we took. Kiki met some people and got petted.

It started to sprinkle so we turned around and headed back to the boat. It stopped sprinkling before we got there. We met a man from

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Frederick, MD (near where we lived for more than twenty years before retiring to South Carolina) and talked with him for a while.

There is a T-Mobile store just a few blocks from the marina so we decided to go there and see if they could straighten out the hot spot data issue.

According to the guy in the store, the data slow down should have ended today because the bill was paid and the next billing cycle has begun. He gave us a number to call if there are still problems.

Next we went to a "deli-pub" for a light supper. The food was OK, but the place was noisy and loud.

Back at the boat, it was time to walk the ship's puppy again. We walked the other direction, towards a park. We took her in the fenced dog park and turned her loose but she just sniffed.

It's time to rest up now so we can shop and sight see tomorrow.

Captain's Log, day seventy two (July 11, 2023)

Captain Ron was snug in his bed with visions of sugar plums dancing in his head when he was rudely awakened by the sound of the anchor windlass running on the deck over the V berth. It didn't take him long to figure out that this was not supposed to be happening and to hop out of bed, take the two steps to the saloon and shut off the circuit breaker. He got dressed, made his coffee and went to the bow where he quickly determined that the other windlass foot switch had failed, this one failing in the "on" mode. The good news is, this happened when he was on the boat and able to take quick action. If we had been away from the boat, the windlass could have run until it burned itself up, a one thousand dollar issue. He cut the wire to the switch so he could turn the breaker

back on and use the other switch for "down" and the rocker switch at the helm for "up".

With the morning's excitement out of the way, Patti fixed bagels for breakfast. The K-9 was ready for her second walk of the morning. She decided to walk towards town to the park near the Air and Space museum. She went in the dog park and got unleashed, but just walked around and sniffed. There were no other dogs in the park.

We returned to the boat, fed the hound and left her to guard the boat while we went to check out the shops. Patti found a couple things she liked in an antique store. We walked by the Hampton History Museum and decided to go in and check it out. Then we remembered that another store we wanted to visit closed at 1:00 PM so we asked the museum staff if we could go and come back in a few minutes. They said that would be fine.

We walked out the door, down the street, made a left turn, walked a block, made another left turn and walked to the shop. We looked and realized that we were looking at the back door to the museum!

We went into the British grocery store. Captain Ron looked at the steak and kidney pies and pasties, but since they would have to be refrigerated, he just bought some spice mixes for shepherd's pie. Then we took the short way back to the museum.

Once we finished at the museum, we stopped in a restaurant for lunch and then one more shop where Patti again found a couple things she couldn't do without. They had country ham for sale at \$16.00 per pound but we would have had to buy a whole ham and they were about three pounds each. And they would also have to be refrigerated. We didn't buy one. We returned to the boat and again, walked the hound.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Our T-Mobile hot spot was still not working (well it works but a glacial speed) so Captain Ron got on the phone to T-Mobile again (the first guy on the phone the other day said he fixed it and the guy in the T-Mobile store said it would be fixed automatically today (it wasn't).

After talking to a machine, he was transferred to a guy who asked a lot of questions and then transferred him to a woman who asked the same questions again. The end result was that even though the bill has been paid, the billing cycle doesn't end for another week and the hot spot will be useless until then. We already have the highest hot spot data allowance available through T-Mobile so it cannot be upgraded and there is no way to purchase additional data. This may result in some late Captain's Logs for the next few days.

Captain Ron walked to the marina building and took a shower. Once he returned, Patti went for hers. Then it was time to walk the hound again. Between walking the dog and walking to shops and restaurants, we get our exercise in when boating.

Tomorrow we have a short trip from Hampton to Norfolk. Then we will be back on the Intracoastal Waterway, headed for home.

Captain's Log, day seventy three (July 12, 2023)

We were in no rush to get underway today for our two hour cruise. Patti and the pup got up as usual and walked. Then Patti walked to the donut shop to get donuts for the crew's breakfast. Captain Ron was awake and dressed by the time she returned with the donuts.

We each ate one and then took the ship's puppy to the marina office for treats and to say goodbye to the dockhand.

We forgot to mention that the marina has planted a vegetable garden for boaters to help themselves to. There are bell and hot peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, eggplant and different herbs. We got some yesterday and a couple more today before we left.



The boaters garden at The Docks at Downtown Hampton

Leaving the slip was simple and it was about 9:00 AM when we unhooked the power, untied the lines and headed out.

We were doing fine until the depth sounder beeped signaling shallow water. Apparently, Captain Ron missed a shoal while planning the route yesterday so we had to backtrack a bit and go a different way. No big deal and no grounding.

The ship's puppy got to see big fishies twice and remained on the lookout for more until we reached the marina.

There was considerable boat traffic, from small recreational boats to larger recreational boats, tugs, cargo ships and military ships. We managed to avoid them all by staying on our side of the channel.

We called Waterside Marina on the radio and they welcomed us back. The dockhand was very professional and had us in our slip and tied up in no time.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



We try to stay out of the way of these guys



Another one to stay away from

The puppy was ready to get off the boat and explore so Patti took her to the nearby park while Captain Ron hooked up the shore power and adjusted the lines. Then he joined the rest of the crew in the park where they had found someone to talk to (Patti) and someone to pet them (Kiki).

We waited a bit for the boat to start cooling down and then returned for a lunch of tomatoes and other vegetables.

The temperature outside was in the nineties so we mostly stayed aboard HIGH COTTON with a few dog walks in the park. There is a fountain in the park for people to play in and there were many children playing in it. There are also homeless people in the park but they were mostly sleeping.

Eventually, we walked up to the pizza restaurant we usually visit in Norfolk and had a pizza. We had leftovers so we will have pizza tomorrow night.

Patti took the long walk to the showers, followed by Captain Ron.

We are on the ICW now, headed south.

Captain's Log, day seventy four (July 13, 2023)

Our plan for today was to make the 8:30 AM locking at the Deep Creek Lock on the Dismal Swamp Canal. There are three railroad lift bridges in Norfolk that are known to cause problems for boaters, often staying closed to marine traffic for an hour or more for no apparent reason.

Because of this, we decided to allow extra time so we left our slip at 6:40 AM for the slightly more than one hour trip to the lock. We kept the radio on channel 13, the bridge and lock channel for Virginia.

The first bridge was open but with a maintenance truck on the track. As soon as we passed through, we heard the announcement on the radio that it was being closed for maintenance. About a half hour later, we heard the announcement that it was back in service and open again. The second bridge was open and we passed through without incident.

As we approached the third bridge, the one that held us up for the better part of an hour on our trip north, we heard an announcement on the radio stating that it was closing.

Captain Ron immediately called the bridge operator and told him that we were headed south, about five minutes away and asked if we could go through before the bridge closed (unlike most bridges, for these three, there is no bridge operator on site, the bridges are opened and

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

closed from a remote location). Surprisingly, he agreed to stop the closing of the bridge until we were able to pass through.

Captain Ron shifted HIGH COTTON into overdrive (figuratively speaking) and raced towards the bridge. Of course, he had to slow to “no wake” speed to actually pass through the bridge (that’s the rule).



One of three lift bridges we had to deal with this morning

Once we got through the last bridge, we proceeded at a leisurely pace to the Deep Creek Lock. We got there early and found a pontoon boat waiting to lock through. We called the lockmaster and made arrangements to lock through when the lock opened.



Time to make a choice

As the lock doors opened, the pontoon boat turned around and headed away from the lock. We wondered what was going on until the captain yelled out that it was his first time in a lock and he wanted to follow us so he could watch us and see how it was done.

We entered the lock and got tied up. The pontoon boat followed us in and got tied up also. Then we were raised about eight feet to the level of the Dismal Swamp.



Entering the Deep Creek Lock

After exiting the lock, we went a quarter of a mile or so and waited for the lockmaster to come and open the drawbridge. The same person operates both the lock and the bridge, driving between them.

Since we were planning on stopping for the night at the welcome center, we proceeded at a leisurely pace, but eventually lost sight of the pontoon boat.

We always look for wildlife along this route. We usually see turtles but didn’t see any today. We did see something swimming across the canal in front of the boat so we stopped and watched it. We believe it was a beaver. The ship’s puppy saw it too. We also passed from Virginia into North Carolina.

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Seen crossing the Dismal Swamp Canal



HIGH COTTON at the Dismal Swamp Welcome Center Dock



We are headed south

We kept the radio on, but didn't hear any other boats entering the locks at either end. HIGH COTTON and the pontoon boat were the only boats on the Dismal Swamp Canal today.

We got to the welcome center dock and tied ourselves up. A few minutes later, the pontoon boat showed up and we helped them to tie up.

This North Carolina welcome center is between US highway 17 and the ICW and serves motorists and boaters. We went to the office and checked in. It's free but they keep a record of the boats that stop at the welcome center. Kiki got treats, got petted and entertained the ladies.

We went back to the boat and ate leftover pizza for lunch.

After lunch, we walked across the bridge to the State Park. On the way there, the pup found a boat ramp so she went in the water for a dip.

We walked through the woods on the boardwalk and then back across the bridge. Kiki went for another swim. (Kiki writes: *"I like to swim and play in the water whenever I get the chance. It's fun and it keeps me cool."*).

There is supposed to be Internet here but it apparently doesn't reach the boat dock. Today's log may or may not get posted today.

We had a light supper of sliced tomatoes and cottage cheese for Captain Ron and assorted vegetables and dip for Patti.

There is an electrical outlet on one of the light poles and Captain Ron was tempted to use an adapter to connect HIGH COTTON so we could have air conditioning tonight, but he figured the air conditioner would probably overload the circuit and trip the breaker.

We will take showers on HIGH COTTON tonight just to cool off. We plan on leaving early tomorrow to make the 8:30 locking at the South Mills Lock.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain's Log, day seventy five (July 14, 2023)

It was hot last night and there was little breeze. Fortunately, the fan in the V-berth kept us relatively cool and comfortable. We were sound asleep until the K-9 alerted us to people walking on the dock at about 11:00 PM. As we mentioned before, the welcome center is used by motorists and boaters so apparently someone stopped and needed to stretch their legs and found the dock.

They meant no harm and we went back to sleep. We cast off from the dock at about 7:00 AM for the five mile voyage to the South Mills Lock. The first locking of the day is at 8:30 AM and north bound boats lock through first. We called the lockmaster on the radio and she said that if there were no northbound boats, she would fill the lock chamber and come open the bridge so we could get to the lock (the same person works the bridge and the lock).



The ship's puppy says goodbye to the Welcome Center

The water in the canal is normally still and we had tied HIGH COTTON to a dolphin (in this case, a "dolphin" is several pilings tied together, not a marine mammal) near the bridge while we waited for the bridge opening. What we didn't anticipate was, when the lock tender let water from the canal into the lock, it produced a small current and turned HIGH COTTON around, facing north.

Captain Ron had to make a U turn in the canal to head south again.



Looking back on the Dismal Swamp Canal

We entered the lock and were dropped back down about eight feet to the level of Turner's Cut and the Pasquotank River and continued south.

The weather forecast for today called for the possibility of rain, thunderstorms and temperatures in the nineties so instead of going all the way to Elizabeth City, we called Lamb's Marina in Camden, NC and reserved a slip. It's not fancy, but it is protected and has power to run our air conditioner. And at a flat rate of thirty five dollars per night, it is a welcome change from the hundred dollars or more per night that we paid at some of the Chesapeake Bay marinas.

We had light rain for part of our trip this morning, enough to get prepared to go below, but not enough to actually force us to go below.

We got tied up and plugged in at the marina and headed for the office to check in and pay. Kiki was disappointed that they had no doggie treats. (Kiki writes: "I thought there was a law that marinas had to have doggie treats. I may write my congressdog!")

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

We went back to the boat and got things covered up and put away in case the rains came. They didn't.



HIGH COTTON safely docked at Lamb's Marina

There is a very small boat ramp between our dock and the office. More of a kayak launch than a boat ramp, but for the ship's puppy, it was an invitation to go swimming. Every time we walked her past it, she ran in for a swim. And every time she came back to the boat she got a rinsing.

We had lunch on the boat, rested, and then we walked to the nearby dollar store for ice and a few supplies. We walked the puppy and met several of the resident boaters.

The restaurant where we ate when we stayed here a few years ago has closed, but the restaurant at the marina that was closed the last time has reopened as a different restaurant. We looked at the menu on-line and had an idea of what we wanted, but when we actually went there, the menu was quite different. This seems to be happening to us quite often. Anyhow, we got sandwiches and the food was pretty good. By the time we finished eating the place was nearly full.

We walked back to the boat and took turns going to the marina's shower building. It was not fancy, but the showers were clean, with plenty of hot water.

When we got here, the dockmaster put us pretty close to another boat "in case we get more boats in". Well, they did get four sailboats in after us so the dock is pretty crowded. We should be able to get out using our bow thruster to make a ninety degree turn away from the dock. The other boats are planning to leave early, possibly earlier than us so if they do, we can pull HIGH COTTON back to make our exit a little easier.

Our plan is to leave as early as possible to try to beat any winds and rough water on the Albemarle Sound.

Captain's Log, day seventy six (July 15, 2023)

The other boats did manage to leave before we did. They were trying to go north and get to the Dismal Swamp Lock to make the 8:30 AM locking. We weren't far behind them though, getting unhooked and untied by 5:40 AM.

We had our running lights on as required, but we had no trouble seeing by that time in the morning. We saw no other boats until we reached Elizabeth City and found a guy standing in his small boat just off the channel by the bridge, fishing.

Captain Ron called the bridge tender a couple of times before he answered. He claimed he was hearing a lot of static and asked if we wanted to go through the bridge. Our speculation is that we woke him up as it was a little after 6:00 AM.

He opened the bridge for us and we went on through. We cruised in front of Elizabeth City at no-wake speed. There were no boats at the Elizabeth City free docks.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



The Elizabeth City Bascule Bridge opens for HIGH COTTON.

Once we were past the Elizabeth City waterfront, we increased our speed to our customary 2,000 RPM (seven knots) and headed towards Albemarle Sound. We passed the Coast Guard station and the blimp hanger. We saw no blimps today.

It took over two hours to exit the Pasquotank River and another two hours to cross Albemarle Sound. We saw a boat in the distance and thought it was coming our way but when we finally got close, we realized that it was a crabber setting crab pots. And yes, he was setting them directly in our path. We spent the next two hours dodging crab pots.



The ship's puppy on high alert for crab pot floats

The water on the Sound was pretty rough for the first hour or more of our crossing. Rough enough to keep us on the flybridge without attempting to go down the ladder. Eventually the water calmed

down enough that we could take the ship's puppy down to the cockpit to "do her business".

We called the Alligator River Marina to get our docking assignment and to fill up on diesel fuel. In the past, we have always had help, but today the lady on the phone told us where the diesel pump was (we already knew that) and that we should "lift the handle" and she would turn the pump on.

So, we docked HIGH COTTON in front of the diesel pump, Captain Ron lifted the handle and dragged the hose to the boat and pumped sixty two gallons of diesel into the boat. He walked to the office (this marina doubles as a roadside gas station, convenience store and restaurant) and saw a sign stating "Card reader down, cash only". Now this was going to be a problem because we don't normally have close to three hundred dollars in cash on the boat. When he explained this to the lady, she said we could come back later to pay. She also said we could just move our boat down the dock away from the fuel pump for the night and not have to move it to a slip.

This was the day for Captain Ron to change the oil and filters so he got to work. It was over ninety degrees outside and not much less inside because the air conditioner had not yet cooled the boat down.

The good news was, Captain Ron accomplished all his tasks without any major spills and without dropping anything important into the bilge. The bad news was, Captain Ron felt like he was about to pass out and had to get a wet towel and take a break before he finished. Eventually, he did finish and put everything away. This oil change will last until we get home and then some.

Patti took the credit card back to the office and they figured out a way to pay from their other location. That left just the dockage to be paid.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

The hound got to go swimming at the boat ramp. She always swims here and remembers where the boat ramp is. Captain Ron went to take a shower and change out of his sweaty clothes. Patti and the pooch went with him, but sat in the Captain's lounge watching TV.

We walked back to the boat and Captain Ron took a nap while Patti surfed the net on her phone. It started to rain, big time. A full fledged storm with thunder and lightning. Kiki was not happy.

Once the rain stopped, Patti realized that we had forgotten to cover the helm on the flybridge and put things away. The seat covers were soaked, the binoculars were soaked and the camera was soaked. The seat covers can be dried, the binoculars are waterproof, but the camera no longer works. We have a spare camera so Captain Ron dug it out and put the battery in the charger.

This same camera got soaked a few years ago and wouldn't work for several days, but finally recovered. We will have to see what happens this time. It's about due for replacement as is the laptop computer.

The marina doubles as a restaurant as we mentioned and serves just about anything as long as it can be fried. Patti had fried chicken and Captain Ron had a fried fish sandwich. We shared the fried okra.

We paid cash for the meal and the night's dockage. Then we walked back to the boat and Patti gathered the wet towels and seat covers and took them to the laundry room and put them in the dryer. She came back to the boat and took the ship's puppy for a walk. Then she went for her shower and to retrieve the towels and seat covers from the dryer.

We have reservations for another marina fifty miles closer to home for tomorrow, but the

weather forecast is "iffy" at best so we may have to cancel and stay here another day. This marina is fine for a stopover, but not so great for longer than that. There is nothing within walking distance and nothing to do except watch TV, take showers and eat fried food in the restaurant.



The HIGH COTTON crew at the Alligator River Marina

Captain's Log, day seventy seven (July 16, 2023)

We looked at the weather forecast last night and again early this morning and decided that sixteen miles per hour winds on an open river would not be comfortable or enjoyable so we cancelled our plans and went back to sleep. We called our next marina once they opened and moved our reservation back a day. Some marinas won't do this, but Dowry Creek Marina is family owned and low key enough to be flexible with boaters. We did have a strong storm last night with thunder and lightning and heavy rain, but only for a short time.

We could have eaten breakfast at the marina, but chose to eat what was on the boat.

We mentioned that there is nothing to do at this marina so that is pretty much what we did, nothing. There was another brief storm this morning.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

We walked to the end of the dock near the river and could see whitecaps on the river. It would not have been a fun trip.

An older couple on a sailboat came in late yesterday and decided to leave this morning about mid-morning despite the weather. They had a cat on their boat and walked her on a leash. We helped them untie their boat when they left.

Later a couple with a Yorkie came in to the marina for fuel. We took Kiki out but the man said their dog was not friendly so we talked to him while his wife walked their dog.

We went back to the marina grill for more fried food for dinner and again had to pay cash for our meal and dockage because their credit card reader was still not working. We'll have to replenish our cash soon.

Tomorrow's weather looks really nice so we are anticipating a nice ride although it will take about seven hours. There's a nice pool at the next marina so hopefully we can get in some pool time. Also, they have a loaner vehicle so we can get to the grocery store.

Captain's Log, day seventy eight (July 17, 2023)

Up bright and early at oh dark thirty, the dog was walked, the trash dumped, the power disconnected, the lines untied and we were off on another day of adventure. A couple of the crabbers beat us to it and left before we did.

First, we had to get the Alligator River Swing Bridge opened so we could pass through. It took several tries on the radio and we even resorted to the handheld VHF just in case the installed radio wasn't working. Perhaps the bridge tender was busy. Perhaps he was napping.

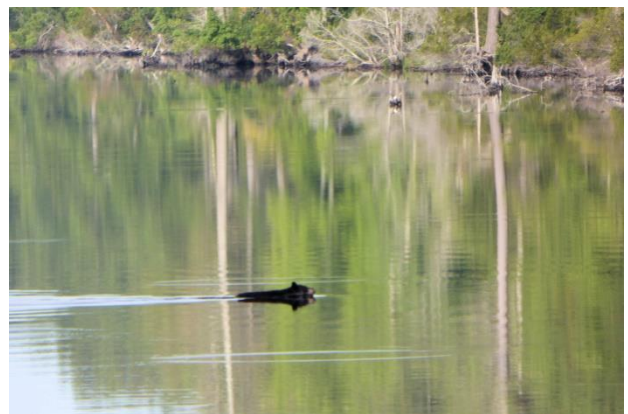
He wasn't very quick opening the bridge either and there were very few vehicles on the bridge.

Once we got through the bridge, we continued south on the Alligator River (up river) for about two and a half hours. We saw several crabbers working the Alligator River. One cruising boat passed us heading north.

We turned into the Alligator River-Pungo River Canal and saw a bald eagle sitting high in a tree. Next, we saw what we have been looking for in our previous nine transits of this canal, a bear swimming across the river! A black bear! We watched him (or her) swim in front of us and then climb out onto the bank. Unfortunately, the ship's puppy missed seeing this in all the commotion.



A bald Eagle on the Alligator River-Pungo River Canal



A black bear swimming across the Canal

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

We passed three or four boats heading north and a boat that had been at the Alligator River Marina with us last night caught up with us and passed us. Their destination for tonight was supposed to be Myrtle Beach. At two hundred and sixty miles or so from where they passed us, we have our doubts.

We exited the canal and continued south on the Pungo River until the Dowry Creek Marina came into view. Our total time was about six hours, about an hour less than we had estimated.

We called on the radio (and confirmed that it was working fine) and were given our slip assignment. Two dockhands met us at our slip (one seemed to be training the other) and got us tied up. Patti and the pup took off while Captain Ron adjusted the lines and hooked up the power. We all converged at the office where we checked in, paid and arranged for the loaner car at 3:00 PM. We decided to stay here an extra day to enjoy the pool and do some (free) laundry.

Back at the boat, we straightened up, covered the flybridge and rested a bit. Then it was time to get the loaner car and head for the grocery store. The new office girl had unknowingly given the car to someone else without checking so we had to wait about fifteen minutes for it.

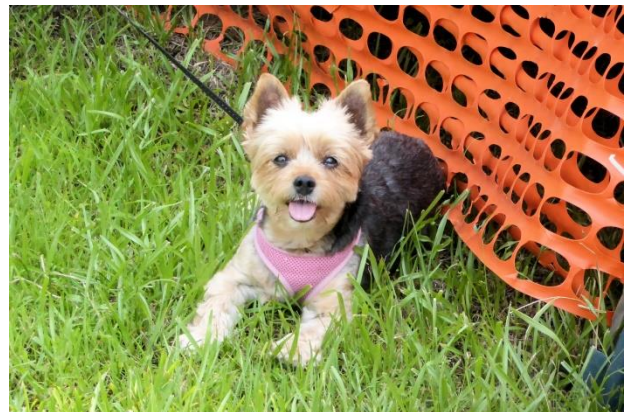
We started our drive to the grocery store and saw our second bear of the day. Unfortunately, this one had been hit by a vehicle and had gone to bear heaven where picnic baskets and honey trees abound.

Since the loaner car is only available for an hour at a time, it's not really possible to eat at any of the restaurants in town except for carryout so we decided to get something at the store that we could easily fix on the boat.

Captain Ron discovered pre-seasoned and pre-cooked fajita beef, so coupled with a bell pepper, an onion, a pack of tortillas and a can of seasoned black beans, we had our first meal. The meal for tomorrow will be pre-cooked beef tips with gravy, prepared mashed potatoes and a can of vegetables from the boat pantry. Problem solved. Lots of cruisers claim to cook on their boats, but in the summer time, cooking really heats up the boat.

We got some cash back at the grocery store to replace what we had to use at the previous marina, then headed back to the marina, turned in the keys and put stuff away.

The ship's puppy wanted to go for a walk and chase lizards so that was next. Then we returned to the boat where Patti whipped up our Mexican feast. It was actually pretty good.



I am cute and I know it!

Patti gathered up a load of laundry and took it to the laundry room. There will be more tomorrow.

Captain Ron donned his swimwear and spent some time in the pool before going directly to the shower. Patti waited for the wash cycle to finish, put the clothes in the dryer and took her shower.

Tomorrow will be a day of cleaning the boat, finishing the laundry and relaxing.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain's Log, day seventy nine (July 18, 2023)

Up at the crack of nine, Captain Ron found the rest of the crew sleeping in the saloon. They had gone for a walk earlier and returned to go back to sleep.

Patti fixed breakfast for everyone. Then she stripped the bed and took the bedding to the laundry. She got out the vacuum and vacuumed the boat. Captain Ron did his best to stay out of her way.

Captain Ron's hot spot is working again, now that the next billing cycle has started, but for some reason, for the last few days, we have been able to use the phone as a hot spot for high speed data and even television. Apparently, the hot spot has a separate data limit from the phones.

Lunch was sliced tomatoes and cottage cheese (again) for Captain Ron and kale salad for Patti. At least we are eating some healthy meals.

Patti retrieved the bedding and made up the beds. Captain Ron took a nap.

Once most of the children left the pool, we changed into our swimwear and spent some time in the pool. For some reason, it is very smoggy here, much as it was a few weeks ago from the Canadian wildfires. We have no idea why and when we asked the marina workers, they had no idea either.

After our time in the pool we had dinner. The microwavable beef tips with gravy and the mashed potatoes were surprisingly good. We had a can of green beans along with them and they were as expected, canned green beans. We had chocolate pie for dessert.

Tomorrow, we will get up early to try to beat the forecast winds on the way to Oriental, NC.

Captain's Log, day eighty (July 19, 2023)

Another oh dark thirty wakeup call! Walk the Sea Dog in the dark with a flashlight and the same for stowing the fender boards and power cable (actually, Captain Ron wore his "headlight").

We slipped away from the marina at 5:40 AM with our running lights on, following the breadcrumbs on the chart plotter. It was light enough by then to see the channel markers leading from the marina, but the breadcrumbs helped as well. Captain Ron saw a couple dolphins, but the ship's puppy missed them. We couldn't stop in the narrow channel without risking drifting out of it or hitting one of the poles that mark the channel.

The seas were up a bit on the Pungo River so we had a little over two hours of moderate rocking. We crossed the Pamlico River and entered Goose Creek where the water was flat. In Goose Creek we saw several small boats apparently dragging nets for shrimp. Each one had a flock of birds following it, waiting for anything they tossed back into the water.

Goose Creek led us past the Coast Guard station and the RE Mayo shrimp dock where the big ocean going shrimp boats dock.



Shrimp boats at the RE Mayo shrimp dock

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Eventually we found ourselves in the Bay River, heading towards the Neuse River. The winds picked up and so did the seas. It was moderately uncomfortable for the next two and a half hours until we reached Oriental, NC. We saw a few more boats on the Bay River and the Neuse River.



Are we there yet?

As we entered the channel to Oriental, we called the marina on the radio. We were met at our slip by an experienced dockhand who grabbed our lines as Captain Ron backed HIGH COTTON into the slip.

The K-9 was ready for a walk so Captain Ron grabbed his wallet and we went to the office to check in and pay. This marina is old fashioned in that they do everything in person and over the phone, not on the Internet. You call them on the phone, you walk into the office and you hand them money or a credit card.

After finishing at the office, the puppy got walked some more and then we returned to the boat to put things away and rest from our six hour plus trip.

There is a marine store near the marina and they are a dealer for a particular brand of dinghy that Captain Ron is considering so we all walked over and talked to the owner. He said he would email Captain Ron with prices once he determined the

shipping cost to our home (they don't stock this model). Patti found some items that she needed and had to walk back to the boat for her purse. Kiki got some dog treats and got petted.

We stopped at the little café for ice cream. For some reason, dogs are allowed inside so we sat inside and ate our ice cream. The entire crew.

We had run low on water yesterday and the water at Dowry Creek Marina smelled of Sulphur so we didn't fill our tanks and couldn't wash our dishes last night. Captain Ron got out the dedicated water hose and filled HIGH COTTON's tanks so the dishes could be washed and we were back to normal as far as water was concerned.

This marina has a nice pool, but even though it was hot, it was cloudy and we had run out of time so we didn't use the pool. We went to the restaurant at the marina for dinner.

Back at the boat, Patti walked to the showers, followed by Captain Ron. Hopefully, tomorrow will be a more reasonable wake up time.



HIGH COTTON docked at the Oriental Marina and Inn

Captain's Log, day eighty one (July 20, 2023)

We had a short ride today and didn't have to get up early but nobody told the Sea Dog. So, we were

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up bright and early, but not at an unreasonable hour. There is a small coffee shop across the street from the marina and it opens at 7:00 AM but they don't have donuts so we decided not to wait for it to open. We left the slip at about 6:45 AM and headed out of Oriental into the Neuse River.

To get back on the ICW, we had to cross the Neuse River diagonally. This took us about forty five minutes and it was rough going.

The ICW exits the Neuse River into Adams Creek which is fairly narrow and protected. As we entered Adams Creek, we encountered three good sized shrimp boats dragging nets for shrimp. The COLREGs (rules of the road on the water) give priority to vessels engaged in fishing, but the problem was, these boats were in the ICW channel and with their outriggers out, they took up much of the channel.

The first one we encountered was going in our direction and on the very edge of the channel so it was not an issue. The second one was coming toward us and for some reason decided to cut across the channel directly in front of HIGH COTTON. We had to turn to port and actually leave the channel to avoid hitting the boat or getting tangled in the nets. Fortunately, the water was deep enough that we didn't hit the bottom. Captain Ron was not sure if the captain was just not paying attention to where he was going or if he was intentionally being a jerk.

The third boat was not a problem and we passed a fourth shrimp boat several minutes later but it was out of the channel.

Further up Adams Creek, there are interesting multicolored houses along one side. New ones are being built on the other side now.

We got to the Morehead City Yacht Basin and called them on the radio. We were put on the fuel

dock (but not near a fuel pump). This was an easy spot for docking and close to the office and showers.

We went to the office and checked in and paid. There were no dog biscuits in the office, but there is a jar of them in the building with the heads and showers so we went there and the ship's puppy got her treat.

We started talking to the couple on the boat behind us and they mentioned that they were getting the courtesy van to go to the grocery store and invited us to go along. Captain Ron wanted to get a spare impeller for his oil changing pump and remembered buying one at a marine store near the marina so Patti went to the grocery store with the couple and they dropped Captain Ron off at the marine store. Unfortunately, the store did not have the part in stock so Captain Ron walked back to the boat and took the K-9 for a walk. Patti returned with the groceries and put things away.

We walked to a restaurant for a light supper and then walked back to the boat. Patti took the puppy for a stroll and Captain Ron walked to the showers. He was taking his shower when he heard barking in the building. He recognized the voice. It was the ship's puppy in the building, playing with another dog biscuit. Patti was there also, but not barking.



If it moves I'm going to get it!

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Once Captain Ron finished, we all walked to the end of the dock and talked to some other boaters from Florida. They had come here to fish in what looked to be an extremely expensive brand new fishing boat. Kiki got petted and didn't want to leave.

Once we returned to the boat, Patti went for her shower.

Tomorrow, we plan on heading to Swansboro, NC. It's about a three hour cruise, but the weather is calling for strong winds. We may have to change our plans.

Captain's Log, day eighty two (July 21, 2023)

We woke up this morning to fairly calm winds so we continued with our plans to head to Swansboro, NC. Captain Ron topped off the potable water tanks while Patti uncovered the flybridge. We left the dock at about 7:00 AM.

The dockhand had warned us about possible strong currents at the end of the dock leading to the channel, but it was a non-issue.

We rejoined the ICW and headed south past the North Carolina Port Authority Dock. Then it was through the Atlantic Beach Bridge and on to Bogue Sound. It was a pretty straight shot all the way to Swansboro, just a matter of staying in the marked channel. Much of this sound is just a foot or two deep except in the channel. There was some wind and some chop but the wind kept us cool and the chop was not objectionable. There were just a few boats around when we left at 7:00 AM, but by 9:00 AM, we were being passed by many boats and some Jet Skis. The Sea Dog warns us of approaching Jet Skis.

We had a reservation at the Swansboro town dock and of course, there is no docking help unless other boaters happen to be there. There were none.

Captain Ron's plan was to back into the slip as we usually do, but because of the current and the short distance between our slip and other docks, he changed his plan after the first attempt. These slips are long enough for us to dock bow in and still get on and off the boat easily so we just docked bow in.

Patti walked the puppy while Captain Ron adjusted the lines and got the power hooked up.



HIGH COTTON at the Swansboro, NC town docks

Swansboro has lots of ducks that hang around near the waterfront. We were walking the hound when we were surrounded by thirty or so ducks. She went from ignoring them to trying to chase them.

We checked out a couple of the shops near the waterfront and then went back to the boat to cover things up and rest. Later, we walked to the main street and checked out the shops. Kiki got treats and got petted, but we didn't find anything we needed. One shop had a dress Patti liked but not in her size.

We stopped in the ice cream shop and got ice cream for the crew and were again surrounded by

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ducks. (Kiki writes: "Yes, I like my ice cream. I also like to chase ducks.").



Kiki meets the ducks in Swansboro, NC



Not everyone has a "big boat"

We returned to HIGH COTTON, got out the granny cart and headed to the Piggly Wiggly grocery store about a mile away. We stopped in the Dairy Queen for a burger and fries and a cup of ice cream.

Once we got back to the boat, Captain Ron had to lie down and rest. He fell asleep. Patti put the groceries away.

There is a live band playing outdoors at the restaurant at the foot of the dock, but they are not at all loud and actually pretty good. We can't hear them from inside the boat so they won't be a problem when we try to sleep.

We contacted a few small marinas along the way for a slip for tomorrow night, but could not get one so we'll most likely anchor for the night.

Captain's Log, day eighty three (July 22, 2023)

The four legged alarm clock woke us at about 6:00 AM so we decided to get up and get ready to go. There is a well-known restaurant about two blocks from the docks that opens at 7:00 AM so we decided to get breakfast there before we left. Patti thought it was OK but Captain Ron was not impressed. We brought some scrambled eggs back to the boat for the pup and she gobbled them down. She gave the restaurant a high rating.

It was time to go and we unplugged the power cord, untied the lines and began backing out of our slip. About this time a guy on a pedal kayak decided to cross behind HIGH COTTON. Fortunately, there was enough room and he didn't get hit.

We rejoined the ICW and headed south. The skies were cloudy and it began to sprinkle lightly but we continued to drive from the flybridge.



Entering the Camp Lejeune Marine Base

We used the Navionics app on the tablet to calculate our time of arrival at the Onslow Beach

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Swing Bridge which opens only on the hour and half hour. We were travelling with the current part of the way and against the current part of the way so the app showed us different arrival times depending on our speed at the time. We arrived about ten minutes early and that was fine. Better than arriving ten minutes late and having to circle around for twenty minutes.

As we passed through the bridge, some guys in a small boat coming the other way warned us about the rain and sure enough, a mile or two further south, it started raining and we had to retreat to the lower helm, out of the rain. It was then that we noticed that the windshield wipers weren't clearing the glass very well. Captain Ron will have to check on this.

We saw very few boats early in the morning, but as the day wore on, boat traffic increased. By the time we got to Surfside Beach, boats were passing us left and right. We couldn't help noticing the one yellow "go fast" boat with the name HIGH COTTON. The guy gave us a thumbs up as he passed us by. He came back the other way a couple hours later.



Another unique boat on the ICW

We didn't count the number of boats that passed us, but it had to have been a hundred or more. We did count the number of boats that called us on the

radio to arrange a "slow pass". That number was "one". We don't expect the small runabouts and center console boats to call for a slow pass, but several larger boats that should have called didn't. It was like boating in a washing machine.

We had a couple of anchorages in mind for the night. The one just after Surf City was a bit too far north, considering that it was a nice travel day so we passed it by. The second was a place we have anchored before, about a half hour before Wrightsville Beach, but when we turned in, we realized that there was a lot of boat traffic coming and going. We must have anchored there on a weekday the last time.

We explored another potential anchorage and found the same problem so we decided to continue on to Wrightsville Beach. We called a couple of marinas, but as we expected, they had no vacant slips.



Weekend boat traffic in Wrightsville Beach, NC

There is an anchorage that Captain Ron had heard good things about to the east of Wrightsville Beach next to the barrier island so we headed for it. We found several boats already anchored there but plenty of room so we proceeded to drop the hook.

The anchor didn't seem to catch at first, but eventually it did with enough force to pull the line

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off the gypsy and bend a piece of the windlass.
Something else for Captain Ron to fix!

We anchored near a large catamaran sail boat with a dozen or more young women on board. Patti speculated that it was a bachelorette party. The women were dancing, laughing and having a great time. We suspected alcohol was involved.

There were about six other boats anchored in our end of the anchorage and several more towards the other end. A few minutes after we got settled in, a guy came flying through the anchorage weaving between the boats and towing two kids on a tube. They fell off and he didn't seem to notice for a while. As he finally came back to pick them up, Captain Ron suggested to him that he do his high speed towing somewhere other than around the anchored boats. He did leave, but he made a big wake doing so. It seems that some people lose all sense of courtesy the minute they get behind the wheel of a boat.

A half hour or so after getting settled in, it started to rain. It rained hard for an hour or so and then cleared up. A guy on the sailboat took several of the women to shore in the dinghy. Later he took the others to shore.

The hot spot has very weak Internet here and the cell phone is no better. It's a bit surprising that T-Mobile has such weak service in a resort city and the Wilmington, NC area. The Captain's Log may not make it out tonight.

Dinner tonight was leftovers from the restaurant in Morehead City. Ribs for Patti and linguini and clam sauce for Captain Ron.

Tomorrow, we head out and down the Cape Fear River to Southport, NC. We should be home Thursday or Friday.



Anchored for the night in Wrightsville Beach, NC

Captain's Log, day eighty four (July 23, 2023)

We had a great night's sleep last night, the rain cooled the air and once it stopped, we were able to open the windows and hatch for a cooling breeze.

We got dressed, got the boat ready, pulled the anchor up and were on our way. It was about a ten minute ride back to the ICW and we turned south.

Even though it was early in the morning, the boat traffic had already started. There are sand dunes on the east side of the ICW here and people were beaching their boats or anchoring just off shore and setting up chairs and tents on the beach.



People setting up to party on the island

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As we approached Carolina Beach, the ICW veers to the west and passes through a cut in the land known as "Snows Cut". There are small cliffs on each side and a bridge carrying traffic over the cut. People climb down the cliffs and fish in the cut. There were lots of them when we passed by.

A fairly large motor yacht passed us going the other way, throwing a large wake. There was no way to avoid it so we held on to the puppy and braced ourselves. Later in the day we heard somebody on the radio complaining about the same boat and its wake.

Snows Cut led us to the Cape Fear River. The Cape Fear River is a big river and cargo ships use it to get to Wilmington, NC. We heard one on the radio announcing its departure from Wilmington, headed to sea. Later in the day, we saw it as it passed the marina.

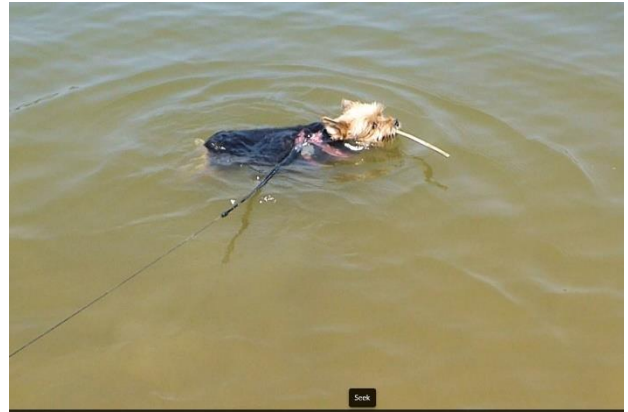
There are two car ferries that cross the Cape Fear River just upstream from the marina we were headed for. We saw them both, but unlike a couple years ago, we were not close enough to them for any concern. There is also a passenger ferry that takes people from a terminal next to the marina to Bald Head Island where they rent vacation homes by the week. It uses the same channel as the marina. It left a few minutes before we arrived.

We were assigned a space on a T head which made docking a matter of simply pulling up to the dock and stopping.

Once we got ourselves plugged in so the air conditioner could start cooling the boat, we gathered up the Sea Dog and headed for the office to check in and pay. This marina is "old school", you call a person on the phone for a reservation and you hand him a credit card when you get there for payment. We like that.

We stayed in the office as long as we could, waiting for the boat to cool down (we had a hot ride today). Then we walked over to the small restaurant at the ferry terminal for lunch to go. That is when we saw the cargo ship as it passed by.

There is a small beach on the Cape Fear River that is accessible from the marina and the ship's puppy loves it so after lunch, we hooked her up and walked to the beach. She swam in the river and dug in the sand. The battery in Captain Ron's camera was discharged so he got just a few pictures.



The Sea Dog fetches a stick in the river

Laundry is free at this marina so once we got back from the beach, we changed into our swimwear, gathered up our dirty clothes and headed for the pool area. Patti put the clothes in the washing machine and then we took a dip in the pool.

After the pool, we returned to HIGH COTTON where Captain Ron did what he could to improve the performance of the windshield wipers since the forecast is for rain tomorrow. It appears they will need more extensive work once we get home.

We called and made reservations for tomorrow and the next night in North Myrtle Beach and Georgetown.

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As usual, we took turns showering. There is only one shower for men and one for women here, but they are very nice and very clean.

Time for bed now, we have a six hour trip tomorrow.

Captain's Log, day eighty five (July 24, 2023)

Up early this morning, everyone dressed, coffee made and the dog walked, we pulled out of the marina a little before 6:30 AM. As we turned south onto the Cape Fear River, we had the ebb current running with us. We reached a speed of a little over ten knots for a few minutes. Unfortunately, this didn't last long. As we turned off the river on the ICW at Southport, we found ourselves going against the current and our speed dropped to about six knots. Being a Monday, there was very little boat traffic.



HIGH COTTON at high speed on the Cape Fear River

We mentioned Captain Ron working on the windshield wipers yesterday and his work must have paid off because even though the forecast was for rain most of the day today, we didn't have a drop. In fact, it was sunny for most of the day. It did rain last night though while we were sleeping.

We encountered a small boat moving slowly coming toward us on our side of the channel. Captain Ron held a steady course and the boat crossed to "his" side of the channel. As it passed us, we realized that it was towing what apparently was a net for catching shrimp. Following a little way behind this boat was an even smaller boat, also towing a net.

We passed nice waterfront homes, smaller waterfront homes and a campground full of permanent trailers. We also passed two ocean inlets where we could see breakers on the ocean.



Our view this morning

We came up on a boat going slowly on our side of the channel. Suddenly we heard a voice on the radio calling the "small trawler". It turned out that this was another boat towing a net to catch shrimp. He asked us to pass him on the port side of the channel. According to the rules, boats "engaged in fishing" have priority over recreational boats, but it's hard to tell if they don't identify themselves.

Eventually, we could see the tall condos of North Myrtle Beach in the distance. That meant we were nearing our marina for the night, the Myrtle Beach Yacht Club, which is actually in Little River, north of North Myrtle Beach. And entering our home state.

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We had decided that this was a good place to top off our fuel tanks so we pulled up to the fuel dock and took on sixty nine gallons of diesel fuel. Once fueled up, we moved to our slip. This time, our slip is close to the office and the pool. On the down side, this slip has a tight fairway with little maneuvering room. Captain Ron did manage to back the boat in with no insurance claims.

Once we got tied up and the power connected, we walked to the office to check in and pay. Kiki got a dog treat and played with it before eating it.

Back on the boat, we rested (Captain Ron fell asleep watching TV). Then we changed into our swimwear and walked to the pool. It's a nice pool and there were floats so we floated around and talked with some of the other boaters.



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

Once we tired of floating in the pool, we returned to HIGH COTTON, got dressed, walked the hound and then walked to the nearby restaurant.

This is somewhat of an upscale restaurant so we each had prime rib for dinner, the sixteen ounce cut. We have plenty left over for another night.

Back at the boat, we took the pooch for another walk. It's now bedtime and we have a bit longer run tomorrow than we had planned on so we will be up early again.



The HIGH COTTON crew in Myrtle Beach, SC

Captain's Log, day eighty six (July 25, 2023)

The alarm was set for 5:30 AM this morning. Patti got up to use the bathroom while Captain Ron and the ship's puppy stayed in bed. A few minutes later, they got up and started getting ready for the day.

It was a little after 6:00 AM when we unplugged the boat, untied the lines and headed out of the marina and onto the ICW.

One of the first things we had to do was get through the Little River Swing Bridge. This was one of two swing bridges that we had to have opened for us today.

Shortly after passing through the swing bridge, we spied an alligator swimming across the ICW. This seemed a bit strange because this is a heavily populated area with homes or marinas along every foot of shoreline.

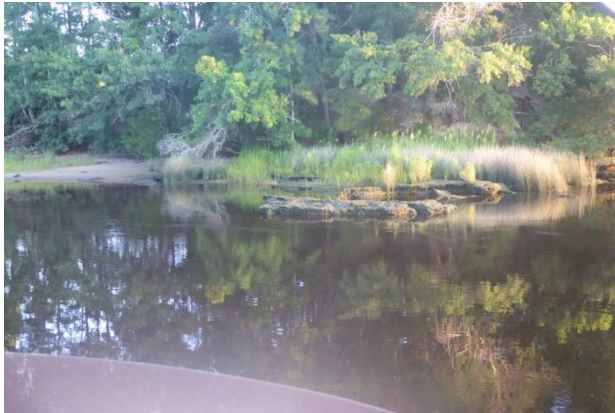
Once we cleared all the no-wake zones, we ramped it up to our usual cruising speed of two thousand RPM. Usually, that would be a speed of seven knots, but the current was against us this morning and we were doing less than six knots.

With calm sea conditions in what amounts to a canal, the galley wench decided to go below and

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whip up some breakfast sandwiches consisting of rolls, scrambled eggs, cheese and bacon. Yum!!

The tide was going out and when we reached the infamous “rock pile”, we could easily see the rocks on either side of the channel that could do serious damage to any boat that hit them. They are hidden at high tide but high enough to seriously damage a boat.



Rocks alongside the ICW in the "Rock Pile"

The ICW passes behind Myrtle Beach and each time we pass this way we see more new houses being built. Most are “cookie cutter”, three story square boxes, but some are impressive mansions with elaborate landscaping on the slope down to the water.



Homes on the ICW behind Myrtle Beach, SC

The canal behind Myrtle Beach eventually runs into the Waccamaw River. A beautiful river twisting and turning as it runs through the woods. Many folks would say it’s the most beautiful part of the entire Intracoastal Waterway. We saw some turtles on logs on the banks and our second alligator of the day, swimming across the Waccamaw River. We also called the Socastee Swing Bridge and had it opened so we could continue south.



An alligator swimming on the Waccamaw River

The current finally reversed and we picked up speed for a while. Then the tide cycle reversed and we had the current against us again. Captain Ron had to go below for a power nap so Patti ran the boat for a while.



Another different boat (an air boat) on the ICW

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Captain Ron resumed the helm as we neared Winyah Bay and in a few minutes we turned into the Sampit River and Georgetown, SC. Captain Ron had to spin the boat around and back into the slip, but everything went well and we got tied up and plugged in without issue.



HIGH COTTON at Harborwalk Marina in Georgetown, SC

Kiki took Patti for a walk. She stopped and peed and then went straight for the ramp and to the door of the air conditioned captain's lounge. Did she remember this from the last time we were here? It seems like it.

We waited a while for the boat to cool down and then went to the office to check in and pay. After that we went to the boat to put things away and cover up.

We were too tired from today's voyage to explore the town and we have been here several times before so we just "chilled". We didn't feel like a heavy meal so we ate more sliced tomatoes. We did have pie for dessert later, though.

Captain Ron went for a shower followed by Patti. The showers at Harborwalk Marina are excellent. Patti took a load of clothes to the washer. Later, she went back and switched them over to the dryer.

When it was time to retrieve the clothes, we decided to combine that task with walking the puppy so off we went. The puppy had her own agenda, but it began to rain so we hightailed it to the building and retrieved the clothes.

We sat on the porch for a few minutes but it didn't look like the rain was letting up so we made a dash for the boat. The forecast did not call for rain today.

Tomorrow, the plan is to cruise about six and a half hours and then anchor in a spot we know to stage for the next day so we can arrive at the new marina near slack current to make docking easier.

Captain Ron turned the thermostat in our house back down to the normal temperature remotely so we can arrive to a nice cool house. The water heater is tankless so we will automatically have hot water.

Captain's Log, day eighty seven (July 26, 2023)

Well, there was a change in plans and we are home now. More on that later.

Since we planned on anchoring today, we were in no hurry to get underway. We got up, got dressed and walked the hound. There is a restaurant near the marina that serves breakfast and lunch and is somewhat of a hangout for the local folks. It opens at 7:00 AM so we were there shortly after that for breakfast. Already there when we arrived were about a dozen guys eating breakfast and having some sort of Bible discussion meeting. It took a while to get served.

We topped off the water tanks and got underway at about 9:00 AM. We had some really shallow water leaving Georgetown, but we made it out into the river and then Winyah Bay.

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There was an outgoing tide so we had the current with us and made good time. The ICW exits Winyah Bay into the Estherville Minim Creek Canal and past a rather unique pontoon bridge that allows vehicles to cross the creek to Cat Island.

We often see bald eagles along this stretch, but saw none today. We did see an alligator though.

We crossed over the North and South Santee Rivers. Boat traffic was light, just a few guys heading for the fishing grounds. We saw another alligator.



White pelicans along the ICW north of Charleston, SC

As we neared our proposed anchoring spot, Captain Ron used the Navionics app on his tablet to estimate that if we continued on our way, we would arrive at Clark Island Marina (our new “home port”) at 6:00 PM. That turned out to be wrong by about forty five minutes, Navionics calculates an ETA based on the speed at the moment and doesn’t take into consideration the effect of currents or no-wake zones. Captain Ron had also misread the current information for Clark Island marina and slack current was not when he expected it to be.

Based on this combination of incorrect information, he suggested to Patti that we continue on to the marina instead of anchoring and coming home tomorrow. Patti agreed so we

passed the anchorage and continued south, thinking we had three hours to go.

Captain Ron went below to take a power nap. While he was below, we passed through Isle of Palms and Patti observed a manatee. Manatees aren’t normally seen in this area, but they occasionally show up when the water is warm.



The Ben Sawyer Bridge means we are almost home

Captain Ron returned to the helm while we were still in Isle of Palms and we continued towards the Charleston Harbor. Boat traffic had picked up by this time and we had to avoid a few boats.

Charleston Harbor was a bit choppy and the current was against us, slowing us down a bit. Then there was the long seasonal no-wake zone in Wappoo Creek.

There was a strong opposing current in Elliott Cut and that is when Captain Ron began to realize that his current predictions were wrong. Our friend Kim was to meet us at Clark Island Marina at about 6:45 PM and Captain Ron realized that we were behind schedule so he sped the boat up to try to make up a little time.

We had seen our slip at Clark Island Marina, but had never actually put HIGH COTTON into it. Captain Ron had planned on backing in, but because of the very strong current, quickly realized

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that that wasn't going to work. He pulled away from the dock and had Patti move the lines to the other side.

Captain Ron isn't going to embarrass himself by describing the docking in detail, but it was clearly the worst docking exercise of the entire trip! In the end though, High Cotton was tied up, bow first in her new slip and the power was connected.



HIGH COTTON at her new home at Clark Island Marina

Kim was already waiting in the parking lot by this time. Captain Ron walked to the parking lot looking for a dock cart. There were two and he should have brought both back to the boat but he didn't realize how much stuff was going home.

By the time he brought the cart back to the boat, he was overheated (it was over ninety degrees most of the day today) and had to lie down for a few minutes.

Eventually, two carts full of "stuff" were wheeled up the ramp to the car and the boat locked up and secured to the dock with extra lines.

Kim drove us home (many thanks Kim for helping to make our cruise possible) and we unloaded the stuff. Kiki insisted on taking Captain Ron for a walk in the neighborhood as soon as we got home.

It's time to go through large pile of mail and packages that have accumulated while we were gone and then start planning our next cruise.

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Epilogue

Duration	87 Days
Distance	1,423 NM
Time underway	203.3 hours
Fuel used (diesel)	467 gallons
Fuel consumption	2.3 GPH
Fuel mileage	3.05 NMPG
Fuel cost	\$ 1,735
Nights anchored	5
Nights on free docks	3
Nights in marinas	78
Marina cost	\$ 4,750

Our HOA dues cover maintaining the lawn and shrubs so that was nothing to worry about. Our neighbor kept a couple recently planted trees watered and our friend Kim got our mail and packages and put them inside our house. She also drove us to the old marina and picked us up at the new one.

For anyone else considering an extended boat cruise, we have to say “Go for it!” For us, it’s time to start planning the next trip.

People often ask us if we would do a trip like this again. Well, we have been doing this since 2012 with one exception, so our plan is to continue cruising for the foreseeable future.

All in all, we had a great time on this cruise. We visited many familiar destinations but also found some new and interesting places to visit. Weather conditions caused us to miss a couple spots we had planned on visiting.

Having a portable wireless hotspot and a laptop PC on board allowed us to pay our bills online and keep in touch with friends and family. It also allowed us to find anchorages, fuel stops and marinas and read reviews of these places by other cruisers.

Our main “online” source of cruising information was Active Captain. Cell phones, of course, made it easy to contact marinas ahead of time to inquire about slip availability and make advance reservations.

Other resources were:

Dozier’s Waterway Guide Atlantic ICW
Dozier’s Waterway Guide Chesapeake Bay