

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

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

The following is an account of a cruise north on the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway from Charleston, SC to Oneida Lake on New York's Erie Canal and back, including the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor and the Hudson River.

Captain's Log, day one (May 3, 2018)

Where are the Widmans? That's how these "blogs" started out. Back in 2012, we started out on our first extended boat cruise and a good friend posted on Facebook "Where are the Widmans?" so we told her where and what we were doing. It caught on so we've continued it with each extended cruise. So

As usual, we spent the night on HIGH COTTON so we could get an early start. 7:20 AM isn't early for some folks but for retired people it's early enough. We actually got up earlier, dressed, walked Kiki the Sea Dog, unplugged our cords and cast off our lines. The trip could have ended right there because just as we were exiting the marina, another trawler passed the entrance in the Stono River channel. Captain Ron was able to avoid the other boat and with a little delay, we fell in behind it and headed for the ICW (Intracoastal Waterway).



Leaving our home port at St. Johns Yacht Harbor

As we headed across Charleston Harbor, we spotted several dolphins. Of course we stopped to let Kiki watch them. She knows them as "big fishies" and loves to watch them play. Later on, as we were cruising, she jumped up and ran to the side of the flybridge and started barking. Two dolphins were swimming alongside HIGH COTTON in the bow wave. This continued for several minutes with the Sea Dog closely watching and talking to them. We also saw an alligator swimming along the shore and a bald eagle in a high tree. Kiki doesn't notice the alligators and that's probably for the best. We heard some boaters talking about seeing wild hogs along the shore but we didn't see any this time.



Alligator on the ICW north of Charleston, SC

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



A bald eagle on the ICW north of Charleston, SC

As we got near Georgetown, SC, the winds picked up and as we were passing through Winyah Bay, we had the wind with us and the current against us which made for a somewhat uncomfortable ride. The waves also tend to push the boat off course so steering was tiresome.

It seems like we had the current against us most of the day but we finally reached our planned anchorage just off the ICW behind Butler Island. It's a few miles north of Georgetown, SC on the Waccamaw River and a very quiet and scenic anchorage. It's a well-known anchorage among ICW cruisers. We are sharing the anchorage with two other trawlers tonight.



Sunset on the Waccamaw River

Captain's Log, day two (May 4, 2018)

Captain Ron deserves forty lashes with a wet noodle!! It's the second day of the trip and he's already fallen behind. His excuse is that we spent the night on land, not on the boat so he didn't have his computer handy.

Captain Ron wouldn't lie, that's exactly what happened. We have friends, Bob and Curtiss who have a home directly on the ICW with their own dock. They called and invited us to spend the day and night at their house so that's what we did.

We had a nice, quiet night anchored on the ICW last night and slept well. We were tired after a ten hour day and vowed not to do that again if possible.

The trip up the Waccamaw River was beautiful as usual. It's almost all wooded wilderness with birds and turtles. It's one of the most beautiful parts of the ICW and is a worthwhile cruise if you get the chance.

After about four hours we came to the Socastee Swing Bridge, a low bridge that we have to have opened for HIGH COTTON. Bob and Curtiss's home is about a quarter mile north of the bridge and they were waiting for us when we got there.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

We socialized and let Kiki the Sea Dog and their dog Joey get reacquainted and play a bit. We went out for lunch, came back and socialized and then went out to dinner. Then we took showers and went to bed.



Our home for the night with Bob and Curtiss

Captain's Log, day three (May 5, 2018)

We were in no rush to get up and get underway this morning because our planned destination, Calabash Creek was only about four hours away. We socialized and watched the other boats heading north while the dogs played. Finally, we got ready and cast off. Things were quiet until we got to the Myrtle Beach area. We had forgotten that it would be a sunny Saturday in the Jet Ski rental capital of South Carolina. Actually, beside jet skis there were a lot of boats on the waterway and most of them seemed to be trying to see how fast they could go. One larger boat in particular was travelling about 25 MPH and its wake sent everything flying that wasn't fastened down. A few boats slowed down for us and a few called on the radio to arrange a proper "slow pass". We actually passed our first boat of the trip, a sailboat going slower than our cruise speed.

It was only a little after noon when we reached our planned destination so Captain Ron found an

alternative another two and a half hours north. This was the town dock in Holden Beach, NC. It's not free but it's relatively inexpensive and has electric power and water, restrooms and a shower.

We pulled in and were met by the town police officer who checked us in and took our payment and told us about the facilities, local restaurants and the ocean beach.

Once we got checked in and hooked up, we walked the K-9 to the beach. Her eyes lit up when she saw the ocean and she ran to the surf, played in it and dug a few holes in the sand.

After the pooch tired herself out, we walked back to HIGH COTTON, dropped her off and walked to one of the beach restaurants for dinner.

After dinner, we took turns in the single shower, watched a bit of TV and will soon go to bed. Tomorrow's destination is yet to be determined.



HIGH COTTON settled in for the night at Holden Beach, NC

Captain's Log, day four (May 6, 2018)

We slept well last night. There was a light rain early and a heavy rain just before dawn. Not heavy enough to clean the boat completely but it did rinse some of the dirt off.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

We got a late start so we called and made reservations at Southport Marina. The weather looked questionable when we made the reservations but it got better as the day continued. We could have continued on but we didn't, we pulled into the marina, took on fifty gallons of diesel and moved to our slip for the night. We did stop for dolphin watching a couple times along the way.

We took the pooch for her walk and after doing her business, she found a grassy ditch with a foot or so clean rain water. She decided to walk right in and go for a swim. Later on, we took her for another walk and she swam again.

We (just the humans, Kiki decided to take a nap) started out to walk to town but halfway there we changed our minds and went to one of the waterfront restaurants for a late lunch/early dinner. After that, it was back to the boat for some cleanup chores and another walk for the Sea Dog.

Captain Ron and Patti took turns taking showers and will soon hit the sack. The Sea Dog is already sacked out for the night.



Captain Ron at the helm

Captain's Log, day five (May 7, 2018)

We are heading north at seven knots but we seem to be outpacing spring! We got up this morning, walked the K-9, returned the shower key and bought a bag of ice. We topped off the water tanks and got underway to warm sunny skies. We were dressed in shorts and tee-shirts. That all changed by the time we got to the Cape Fear River. The sun went behind the clouds and the wind picked up. The waves weren't bad but we were travelling against the strong river current so we were doing about five knots. Eventually, we did pass a sailboat that was going slower than we were. We also changed to long sleeved shirts and long pants.

We heard the marina calling to a fast moving boat that sent a damaging wake into the marina so when it passed us on the Cape Fear River we got its name and homeport and called the marina so they could file a claim if necessary. Some people just don't care!

As we passed through Snow's Cut, a group of people on the beach waved and made a signal for us to blow our horn. Captain Ron is proud of his new air horn so he gave them what they asked for.

We've been staying in too many marinas so far so we decided to pass through Wrightsville Beach and anchor a little farther up the ICW. It's probably just as well, as we passed by where we usually stay there were work barges and cranes there replacing the docks and we couldn't have stayed there anyway.

We ran about four hours today. There's another anchorage about four hours north of here where we'll stay and then it's about five hours to Beaufort, NC where we will stay for a couple days.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Then it's on to New Bern, NC for a couple more days.

Our plans are a little loose after that but hopefully, spring will catch up with us and we can enjoy more comfortable weather.

We are sharing the anchorage with a small sailboat but it doesn't look like anyone is on it. As for the small boats passing through, none have shown any consideration as far as speed or closeness to the anchored boats.

Captain's Log, day six (May 8, 2018)

We broke out the extra blankets last night, the ones we had recently put away. It was in the fifties outside and in the sixties on the boat but with the extra blankets and the puppy we slept well. So well in fact, that as of 8:30 AM, the crew was still in the sack! It's OK, it's cold outside and we only have about a four hour ride to our next anchorage.

We got underway about 9:30 AM. We considered setting up to drive from the lower helm, but decided to bundle up and drive from up top. We actually passed five boats today! Of course they were all sailboats. A few powerboats passed us but they were the sleek, high powered "Euro style" boats and were soon out of sight. The Sea Dog got to see some "big fishies" along the way.

We had to wait nearly one half hour for the Surf City Swing Bridge to open which wasn't too bad since it only opens once an hour. Three sailboats behind us couldn't make it and had to wait nearly an hour for the next opening. This bridge is thankfully being replaced with a high rise bridge but it won't be complete for another year or so.

All day long we were hoping the sun would come out and it would get warmer but it never happened. Also the wind never stopped blowing.

We briefly considered going on to Swansboro, NC but decided to stay with our original plan of anchoring in Mile Hammock Bay on the Camp Lejeune Marine base. We were the first boat in and had our choice of spots.

As early evening approached, the US Marines began blowing things up. The K-9 was not impressed. Later, a helicopter circled the anchorage for a half hour or so. Captain Ron was not impressed.

There are now eight boats in the anchorage; two power boats and six sailboats.

We will leave early in the morning in the hopes of not being stuck while the Marines practice whatever they practice when they close the ICW to boat traffic. Destination – Beaufort, NC.

Captain's Log, day seven (May 9, 2018)

Well, Captain Ron is late again. His excuse is, since he had to get up at 6:00 AM, he was too tired and went to bed. That's his story and he's sticking to it.

We did actually get up at 6:00 AM and were underway a little before 6:30 AM. The last time we made this trip, the Marines closed the ICW to practice shooting and blowing things up and we had to wait four hours for them to open it again. The trick is to get through before they start so we wanted to get through the Onslow Beach Bridge at its 7:00 AM opening.

We made it through and were on our way for the day. It was cold, dreary and windy, almost but not quite cold, dreary and windy enough for us to

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

drive from inside. The view from the flybridge is much better than from inside so that's why we stayed "up top".

It took a little over five and a half hours to reach Beaufort, NC. We eased into our slip, got tied up and took the K-9 for a walk. After three days and two nights on the water, she was glad to feel solid ground under her feet.



HIGH COTTON safely docked in Beaufort, NC

Beaufort is pretty much a tourist town, at least the part we see. Restaurants, tee-shirt shops, beach wear, etc. but it's still a cute, historic town and a nice place to visit, especially by boat.

There's a restaurant that advertises "The best burgers in Beaufort" and it's well known among cruising boaters. We've walked by it before but never went in. Well, Captain Ron was in the mood for a burger after three days on the water so we left the pooch to guard the boat and walked to the restaurant.

The place was more of a bar/pool hall than a restaurant although there was a counter and a cook in full view.

The cook took our orders although when Captain Ron asked for onion rings, he apologized and said they were out of onion rings. Patti asked for a double hamburger and fries and Captain Ron

asked for a double cheeseburger. We also ordered two Cokes.

We got a table and sat down. Shortly, the cook came over and said that his partner had thrown the order ticket away so he needed to know what we wanted on the burgers. We told him again.

Eventually, he came back with a bag and asked if this was to eat there or to go. By this time we had had enough of the extra loud jukebox and other patrons so we said it was to go.

He said "six dollars". Two double burgers would have been four dollars each and another four dollars for a large order of fries. There were no cokes.

We paid the six dollars and gave him two for a tip and took our bag back to HIGH COTTON. In the bag were two double cheeseburgers and a big bunch of fries.

The burgers were good. Not the half pound burgers with fancy rolls and a choice of toppings you get at some restaurants for ten dollars and up, but they were comparable to a fast food restaurant but perhaps a bit tastier. At least we can say we've been there.

The cable TV at the marina doesn't work because the local cable provider went to digital and each outlet would need a converter and our antenna only picks up seven channels and four are shopping channels so we will miss the season finale of "The Big Bang Theory". Oh well, we didn't set out on a boat cruise to watch TV and there will be reruns.

We walked the main street and checked out the shops. Captain Ron bought a book on the Erie Canal where we hope to be eventually. Patti tried on some clothes but didn't buy any. The Sea Dog got petted everywhere we went. She likes that.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

We went to the marina's restaurant for a light supper only to find out that they are not open for dinner this early in the season. They suggested a place across the street where Patti got a salad and Captain Ron got soup.

Then, it was back to the boat, off to the (much needed) showers and to bed.

Captain's Log, day eight (May 10, 2018)

The giant mega yacht that was docked on the T head next to us yesterday left early in the morning. This is a boat about three times the length of HIGH COTTON and carries a hired captain and crew. They were taking it from Florida to New England. The owner wasn't on board.

After they left, we rolled over and went back to sleep until 8:30 AM or so. We got up, got dressed and took the pooch for a walk, then returned and Patti whipped up breakfast in the galley.

After breakfast, we set out on a longer walk. People in this town seem very friendly and we had several conversations along the way. Kiki, of course, loves this as everyone stops to pet her.

While we were walking, the Sea Dog spied a muddy "beach". She ran down through the mud and out into the water and swam around. Patti got some sticks and threw them out for her to fetch. Of course the nearby people thought this was hilarious. After her swim, we sat on a bench while she dug a hole in the sandy soil. Kiki writes: *I love to swim and I love to dig in the sand. I'm so glad my mawmaw and pawpaw own a boat and take me with them on their cruises.*



The Sea Dog goes for a swim

Of course this meant she would get a good shower in the cockpit of HIGH COTTON before she was allowed back inside.

This brought us to lunch time so Aqua Dog took a nap while the humans went for lunch. It wasn't so much that we needed another meal but when you dock at this marina, each person on board gets a token for a free beer and since Captain Ron is no longer allowed to drink beer; this means that Patti gets to drink two!



One tired Sea Dog!

After lunch, Captain Ron performed his first "boat repair" of the trip. There's a small valve in the toilet that needs to be replaced every year or two to keep sewage from backing up into the bowl. Well, its time had come so Captain Ron had at it. It's not too difficult but it can be a bit unpleasant.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

He got it done and Patti did a quick cleaning of the flybridge deck and the inside of the boat. The Pooch slept through all the chores.

Captain Ron took a short nap after his chores while Patti cruised the shops again. Dinner was at a steakhouse we had eaten at on previous trips. We brought enough back for another meal.

We took turns showering and it was time for bed.



Wild horses graze on Carrot Island across from the marina

Captain's Log, day nine (May 11, 2018)

The first trip north we made, we met a couple on a sailboat in Beaufort who talked about how nice New Bern was and convinced us to take a side trip there even though it's about three hours out of the way. We did and we liked it so much that it's now a regular stop for us.

It's about a six hour trip from Beaufort to New Bern so we wanted to get a relatively early start. There's a drawbridge leaving Beaufort that used to be restricted but since a new high rise bridge has been completed, the drawbridge opens on request until they remove it so as we approached, the bridge tender raised the bridge and we didn't even have to slow down.

We did see a few dolphins as we headed north. The Sea Dog saw them as well. We got to the Neuse River and left the ICW route for New Bern. That was the three hour "out of the way" part.

On the approach to the New Bern Grand Marina there is a drawbridge with about fourteen feet of clearance. Normally we would be expected to fold down our bimini top so the drawbridge wouldn't have to open but as we neared New Bern, we were behind a sailboat so we just followed it through after the bridge was opened for it. No problem.



Heading for New Bern, NC

The sailboat was going to the same marina as we were and there was another boat in front of it. Apparently, there was only one person on duty at the marina and he was getting frustrated trying to dock three boats at the same time, not knowing where they were supposed to be. After circling around for about ten minutes while more boats arrived, we managed to contact him again and he told us if we knew what slip we were supposed to be in to just go there so we did. Captain Ron backed the boat into the slip, Patti stepped off and tied the lines and we were good to go.

We set off for the office with our credit card and the K-9. We paid for our dockage and she got a dog biscuit. After a short stroll, we took the pooch back to guard HIGH COTTON while we

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

walked to the wood fired pizza shop we had enjoyed on our last visit. We devoured an appetizer and an entire medium pizza so we decided this would be our meal for the day. It was 2:00 PM by then anyway. After that we walked to the old time hardware store where Captain Ron got his forgotten acetone to clean dock rash and sticker adhesive from the boat.



No, this is not Home Depot or Lowes

After the hardware store, we stopped in a couple shops where Patti found some dresses she apparently really needed.

Back at the boat, Captain Ron hooked up the cable TV with a hundred and fifty channels and everyone took a nap. Then it was walk the pooch again, showers for the humans and off to bed. There's a farmer's market and a nautical flea market tomorrow.

Captain's Log, day ten (May 12, 2018)

Today was a day in port so there's not a lot of boat news. We got up and walked the K-9. Captain Ron went into the hotel for some free coffee. Then we all three walked to the farmer's market where we learned that only "service dogs" are allowed inside. Captain Ron's thought is, a dog is a dog so they should all be allowed in or kept out

but he wasn't in the mood to argue so he and the pooch sat outside while Patti shopped.

When she was done we all walked back to HIGH COTTON to put the food away. The humans left the Sea Dog to guard the boat and set out to walk the town. Somehow, we decided to go back to the farmer's market for more green beans. This somehow led to stopping by the sausage stand where we bought sausage and then more vegetables to make a meal with the sausage.

Of course we had to go back to the boat to put the food away. Then we headed out again, this time to the marine flea market where Captain Ron was convinced that he really needed an additional boat pole for HIGH COTTON.

This purchase resulted in Captain Ron walking around town the rest of the day with a six foot long boat pole.

There was an antique car show in town so we walked (with the boat pole) up and down the streets admiring and photographing the antique cars. Captain Ron was a bit depressed when he realized that the car he took his driving test in is now considered an "antique".

We stopped in a small shop for lunch (again with the boat pole), looked at more cars and then walked back to the boat.

Patti took a load of laundry to the marina's machines. On her way back, she met the people on the Camano one boat over from us so she had a conversation with them and then Captain Ron walked over to see their boat and talk to them. Theirs is like ours but three years older. There are only minor differences.

We asked Aqua Dog if she wanted to go swimming and of course she did so we walked several blocks to a small dog beach. She ran out into the water

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

and came back and dug holes. There were ducks there and she had fun chasing them. The ducks were in no danger, Kiki was on her leash.

After the walk back to the boat, the pooch had a shower in the cockpit and the humans had showers in the marina facilities. We're heading out tomorrow, weather permitting.

Captain's Log, day eleven (May 13, 2018)

As planned, we pulled in our lines and headed back down the Neuse River. Before leaving though, we walked the pooch and Captain Ron hit the hotel for coffee. He had a plan this time though, he got two cups so he wouldn't have to go back. He also topped off the water tanks, knowing that we would be anchored for two nights and might need to take showers on the boat.

We motored about three hours back to the ICW and then another three to an anchorage in the middle of nowhere. For those with a map handy, we are on Goose Creek just a bit south of the Pamlico River.

Navigation today was just a matter of following the ICW line on the chart plotter or as Jimmy Buffett would say "keep it between the buoys".

Dinner was leftover steak and potatoes from Beaufort and asparagus from the farmer's market in New Bern. What did people do before microwave ovens?

Anyway, the sun is setting and it's time for bed. Tomorrow is another day.



Sunset on Goose Creek, NC

Captain's Log, day twelve (May 14, 2018)

We got up and got underway relatively early today, pulling up the anchor about 8:00 AM. This took a bit longer than usual because the anchor chain was full of mud and Captain Ron had to go back inside to turn on the washdown pump. We exited Goose Creek, crossed the Pamlico River and headed up the Pungo River.

Captain Ron looked at the fuel figures and figured out that we couldn't make it to Norfolk, VA without fuel so we stopped at the River Forest Marina and took on about 56 gallons of diesel.

We had planned on anchoring where the Pungo River - Alligator River Canal meets the Alligator River but decided to continue to an anchorage just before Albemarle Sound so we could cross it early in the morning when hopefully the winds will be relatively calm. Albemarle Sound can be uncomfortable or even dangerous in high winds.

As we approached the Alligator River Swing Bridge, we noticed several sailboats waiting for it to open. It is supposed to open on request so we called and asked to be let through also.

Well. It didn't open. There was no explanation offered to the boaters but apparently they were

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

working on the bridge. We all waited, running in circles and trying not to hit each other. After about a half an hour, the bridge did open and a workboat snuck in before the other boats. We were last. Captain Ron usually makes it a habit to thank bridgetenders for opening the bridge. He was silent today.

We headed into an anchorage a bit past the bridge but before Albemarle Sound and dropped the anchor. Three more boats (sailboats) joined us in the anchorage but there's room for dozens. We'll be heading out early in the morning, headed for Elizabeth City.

Dinner tonight was pork sausage links, buttered boiled potatoes and broccoli, all from the farmer's market in New Bern and cooked to perfection by Chef Patti. We eat good on HIGH COTTON!

Captain's Log, day thirteen (May 15, 2018)

First, last night: We hit the sack as usual, shortly after dark. Patti on one side, Captain Ron on the other and the Sea Dog in the middle (sideways). About 11:00 PM we awoke to lightning and high winds. Very high winds, apparently up to forty miles per hour we learned later. We heard no thunder and there was just a short period of light rain. HIGH COTTON was bobbing up and down like a cork in a storm sewer. This lasted about a half hour and then it quieted down and we went back to sleep.

Knowing that it would be windy today, we set out at first light to cross Albemarle Sound. We should have started sooner. The first hour or so was pretty calm but the winds picked up and made things uncomfortable.

Once we got across the Sound and onto the Pasquotank River, the water calmed down some

but previous experience caused us to rethink our plans to stop in Elizabeth City. The slips at the town dock are exposed to the wind and can be uncomfortable.

As we waited for the drawbridge to open, a dog on the balcony of an apartment building began to bark. Well, the pooch decided to reciprocate. As she barked, her bark echoed off the apartment building and she thought another dog was barking at her. She was actually barking at her own echo and this went on until the bridge opened and we moved on.

When we got to the start of the Dismal Swamp Canal (the South Mills Lock) there were three boats ahead of us but the lock gates wouldn't open for another hour so we had to raft (tie up) together. Once the lockmaster opened the gates, we untied and took our places in the lock to be raised about eight feet. Three more boats joined us after we entered.



Locking up to the Dismal Swamp Canal with other boats

Once we exited the lock, we headed north on the Dismal Swamp Canal. A couple of the boats tied up just past the lock but four headed for the Welcome Center which welcomes vehicles on US 17 and boats on the canal.

Since the dock isn't long enough for all the boats, we had to raft up again. HIGH COTTON is tied to

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

the dock and a trawler about twice as big is tied to HIGH COTTON.



HIGH COTTON at the Dismal Swamp Welcome Center

One of the nice things about this arrangement is, the boaters usually sit on the wall and exchange boating stories. And the dogs meet and play with each other.



Kiki makes a friend at the Welcome Center

We'll try to get to the next lock in time to tie up and walk to Food Lion to restock the larder. After that, it's on to Norfolk, VA.

Captain's Log, day fourteen (May 16, 2018)

We got up early as planned and walked the Sea Dog. The two sailboats behind us had already left and the boat rafted to us was getting ready to

leave as well. The sailboat in front of us said they planned to go to the grocery store at the lock also and they left a few minutes before us.

The trawler that was rafted to us told us to go ahead and they would bring up the rear. So – there were three sailboats in front of us and one trawler behind us.



Entering Virginia on the Dismal Swamp Canal

The sailboat in front of us wasn't going quite as fast as we would have liked and it was forty five minutes before the scheduled lock opening by the time we got to the lock. There was only enough room at the tie up for one boat so the first sailboat was tied to the wall and the second sailboat was rafted to it. The third sailboat rafted to the other two and we rafted to it. The other trawler travelled slower and didn't arrive until the scheduled opening time.

The rest of us wanted to shop at the Food Lion so we all had to scramble over the sailboats. Once we got our shopping done we got word that the opening would be delayed so we took our time finishing and getting back to the boat.

The woman from the other boat had a cart full of groceries and Captain Ron asked her how she planned to carry it all the two blocks back to the boat. She said she was going to take the store's grocery cart and then return it.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

That sounded like a good idea so we did the same. Now, the issue was how to get all this stuff across three sailboats. Captain Ron offered to take both grocery carts back to the store, leaving Patti to orchestrate the move.

By the time Captain Ron got back, all the groceries were on HIGH COTTON and stored away. After another half hour or so, the lockmaster came and opened the bridge to let two southbound sailboats out and let our flotilla of five assorted boats in.

Just about the time we got HIGH COTTON secured to the lock wall, it started raining. Not drizzle, a hard rain. Since we had to remain outside and work the dock lines through the entire process, we dug out our rain gear and put it on even though we were already wet.

Once we were lowered back down about eight feet into Deep Creek, it stopped raining and we headed for Norfolk, VA. The rain resumed and we decided to operate from the lower helm until we neared the marina.

That's when we learned that the windshield wiper on the starboard side (the one on the side the steering wheel is on) didn't work. Oh well, something else to fix.

We got to the marina, backed into our assigned slip and got our lines and power set. By this time, the rain had pretty much stopped. We walked the pooch, took much needed showers, walked to a restaurant we had enjoyed on our last visit, walked the K-9 again and it's time for bed.

Captain's Log, day fifteen (May 17, 2018)

Sometimes we have a quiet spot for the night, sometimes not. It turns out our slip is directly

across from the Blue Moon Tap House. They had a special event last night with a live band. It was supposed to be outside on their stage but fortunately, it was moved inside because of the rain. We could hear every song. Fortunately, the event was over at 10:00 PM but Captain Ron was so tired he drifted off in spite of the noise.

The Waterside Marina is on the waterfront in Norfolk and it's a busy place even without the bars. Ships are being repaired; tugs are moving barges back and forth, helicopters are flying back and forth and the water taxi blows its horn each time it leaves its slip.



HIGH COTTON at the Waterside Marina, Norfolk, VA

Each day the sun rises earlier as we move towards summer but in addition, because we are moving east as well as north, the sun rises earlier than we expect. Daylight actually comes more than twenty minutes sooner in Norfolk than it does in Charleston. So, we tend to wake up sooner than we planned. Days are still twenty four hours long, though.

We got up, walked Aqua Dog and then came back to HIGH COTTON for a home cooked breakfast. Well, a boat cooked breakfast but the boat is our home for a few months.

We mentioned the windshield wiper that quit working. Captain Ron figured he would have to

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

take it apart and grease everything, but on a chance, he sprayed some penetrating oil onto the shaft where it passes from the motor inside to the arm outside and surprisingly, it started working again. We'll see how long that lasts but it seemed to work just fine.

We've met several interesting boat people on our trip. There was a family of a man, woman and two children living on their boat and returning to the north east from the Bahamas. The mother homeschools the children. Other people are doing the Great Loop or heading back north from Florida or the Bahamas.

After Captain Ron fixed the windshield wiper and cleaned up his mess we walked to the nearby three story mall where Patti found a dress and a blouse she just had to have. Then it was back to the boat for a short rest.

A lady we talked to told us about a restaurant that served oysters for fifty cents each and large shrimp for one dollar each during "happy hour" so that's where we went for dinner. Patti ordered six shrimp and Captain Ron thought he ordered a dozen oysters but the waiter apparently heard "a half dozen" so that's what he brought. It doesn't take Captain Ron long to devour six oysters so he ordered six more. By that time, Patti had finished her shrimp so she ordered a calamari appetizer. Captain Ron ordered a full dozen oysters. Once those were gone, Patti was still eating calamari and drinking her second beer so Captain Ron ordered six more oysters for dessert.

On the way back, we walked through the new Waterside complex. It's really just a bunch of restaurants and bars with some common seating. They had a guy and girl playing guitar and singing but we walked back to the boat, waited for the rain to slow down, walked the pup and headed back to HIGH COTTON for the night.

Captain's Log, day sixteen (May 18, 2018)

Captain Ron awoke this morning with a sore foot so the task of walking the Sea Dog fell to Patti. Once they got back, Patti fixed everyone another home cooked breakfast.

There was a lot of commotion at one of the repair docks across from the marina where they were working on a military ship. Captain Ron wondered if they were getting ready to move it.

Anyway, he did some Internet research and found a pharmacy about a half mile away and called and found that they had arch support shoe inserts in stock. The only problem of course is, he had to walk that half mile to see what they had, buy them and walk a half mile back to the boat.

Well, despite much pain, he and Patti set out for the pharmacy. They had what looked like would help but they only had one pair. Captain Ron bought them, borrowed a pair of scissors to release them from their hard plastic packaging and installed them in his shoes right then and there. They seem to help but he will have to stay off his feet as much as possible and move them from one pair of shoes to the other as necessary.

We stopped at a sub shop and got a sandwich to take back to the boat for lunch. Captain Ron went below to ease his aching feet and Patti and the Pooch went for a walk. Captain Ron came up from the V berth just in time to see the large military ship that he had seen earlier passing the marina, presumably on its way out to sea. There were several tug boats assisting it.

It's been raining off and on today but during a non-rainy period we walked to Waterside for ice cream. Kiki is not supposed to have ice cream so we didn't tell her where we were going. Kiki writes: *Yea, you think I don't know about the ice cream but I can smell it on your breath!*

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



Yea, I know where you two are going

Dinner was leftover Italian food from the pizza place. We skipped showers yesterday but we took long refreshing ones tonight.

Captain's Log, day seventeen (May 19, 2018)

Well, it happened again. Even though the door was locked and all the windows were closed, the Birthday Bunny somehow got into the boat and left birthday cards for Captain Ron. He is beginning to think there's inside help.

Even though he is now three quarters of a century old and suffering from a sore foot, Captain Ron managed to get himself out of the sack to do his pre-departure checks and fill the water tanks.

We left Waterside Marina and headed down the Elizabeth River past all the shipyards to the Chesapeake Bay. Once clear of Hampton Roads, we turned north up the western shore of the bay. We saw very few boats once we got on the Bay.

The weather was mild and mostly calm but we did have some rain. As soon as we would go below to drive from the lower helm, the rain would quit and we would go to the flybridge again.

It took under five hours to get to our anchorage today. It's quiet but there's no real protection if

the winds kick up. It looked better on the computer than it does in person. We shall see.

We had more leftovers from the pizza/Italian place, accompanied by a can of string beans. Tomorrow we have reservations at a marina with laundry facilities and a loaner car to get to a nice grocery store. They also have a pool but it might be a bit cool for that.

There's no rush to leave early tomorrow except to have more laundry time.

Captain's Log, day eighteen (May 20, 2018)

Well, it's funny how quickly things can change. About the time we tucked ourselves in for the night, the winds kicked up and the boat began to rock. We kept waking up every hour or so. Then the anchor drag alarm sounded. Captain Ron got up but couldn't determine if we had actually dragged anchor or just moved out of the circle he had set on the chart plotter. Worried, he got his clothes, shoes and life jacket on and went to the bow and let out more rode (anchor line) just to be safe. None of us slept very well. Even the puppy couldn't decide if she wanted to sleep with us or in her own bed.

Daylight came and since we couldn't sleep, we decided to go ahead and get underway. 7:00 AM saw us heading out to the main part of the Chesapeake Bay.

The winds were up and so were the seas. We were doing OK until a particularly big wave hit and Captain Ron's coffee cup slid off the dash and hit the deck. The lid popped off and an entire cup of coffee, minus one sip, ran everywhere. To add to the confusion, the Sea Dog thought the coffee was something to chase so she had to be reeled in. Captain Ron wasn't as upset about the mess as he

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

was about the fact that it was too rough to go down the ladder and brew another cup.

Compounding the rough seas was the fact that there were crab trap buoys everywhere and they had to be avoided.

It took a bit over four hours before we turned into the quiet creek in Deltaville, VA where Dozier's Regatta Point Marina is located. We tried calling them on our fixed radio, our portable radio and even the phone with no answer so we just backed into a slip and tied ourselves up (well, tied the boat up). Captain Ron stepped off the boat with the K-9 on her leash and she made a beeline to the grass. She had some serious business to do and didn't have time to fool around.



HIGH COTTON tied up at Dozier's Regatta Point Marina

Patti gathered up the dirty clothes, sheets and towels and headed for the laundry room.

About 1:00 PM the staff showed up (It was Sunday and they had gone to church) so we checked in and talked to a couple who had come in after us. They are part of a Monk (a boat manufacturer) owners group and several more boats will be joining them tomorrow.

Once the laundry was done, we got the keys to the loaner car (which had the tire pressure and one other warning light on and pulled to the left if

you let go of the steering wheel) and drove to the local grocery store. In addition to groceries, they sell fried chicken and cooked vegetables so we got our dinner for tonight.

We ate, took showers and went to the captain's lounge where we were able to watch some of our favorite country music shows on cable TV. Our boat TV gets nothing in this remote area.

Tonight we should make up for our lack of sleep last night. Tomorrow, we might try the swimming pool. Or not!

Captain's Log, day nineteen (May 21, 2018)

One would think that being docked at a marina would mean a nice healthy cooked breakfast. Well, the grocery store we went to yesterday had a nice selection of fluffy, sugary things so today's breakfast consisted of glazed donuts!

The Sea Dog got her usual walk and did her business. Captain Ron reported the problems with the loaner car to the manager so he took it to the shop. That meant the marina was down to one car. We wanted to exchange an empty propane tank and get a few more things from the grocery store so we got the other one and headed for the home and garden center, West Marine, the Dollar store and the grocery store again. Patti had a hankering for 7-11 hot dogs so we stopped and got some and took them back to HIGH COTTON for lunch.

The dockmaster had promised the Monk owner's club that they would all be together so we were asked to move to a different slip. This marina is out of the wind and current so this was a simple task.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain Ron decided to tackle the sewage leak so he cleaned out the area and went to work. He found a broken hose clamp and a hose that had pulled slightly off the fitting. He had a spare clamp and was able to reattach the hose properly to the pump. Hopefully, that solves the problem. Patti is tired of mopping up sewage.

More worrisome is a gallon or so of water that was in the bilge. Captain Ron will have to figure out where that came from. We did run a little faster yesterday because the boat tracks better at a faster speed in rough seas. Maybe that had something to do with it but he will have to figure out where the water came from. One of the most important rules of boating is to make sure the water stays on the outside!

After Captain Ron got done with the sewage problem, Patti cleaned the head area and vacuumed the boat. Maybe we'll get to washing the outside soon.

Dinner tonight was the rest of the fried chicken and mac and cheese from the grocery store. Tomorrow, we've got to get the car and make another trip to West Marine.

Captain's Log, day twenty (May 22, 2018)

Today was a day in port with not a lot to report. Captain Ron awoke before the ladies so he went to the captain's lounge for coffee. He also took his electric razor to the head to shave without waking the ladies. Breakfast was the rest of the glazed donuts from the grocery store.

Captain Ron figured out more things he needed from West Marine and the hardware store so we got the remaining loaner car and headed for town. Kiki wanted to go for a ride in the car so she went along as well. She received a treat in each store.

Since we were already in town, Patti decided we should go back to the grocery store again for more goodies. Kiki and Captain Ron stayed in the car.

Back at the boat, we ate lunch and took short naps. The Monk owners were showing their boats and even though we aren't Monk owners they invited us to tour their boats. We had nice conversations with several of them, not only about boats, but about places to go and things to see.

Patti whipped up a delicious dinner of Swiss steak, baked potato and Brussel sprouts.

We had planned on taking showers after dinner but as we took the pooch for her evening walk, it began to thunder and rain. We might get showers in the morning or we might not but we're shoving off for Tangier Island for the next two days.

Captain's Log, day twenty one (May 23, 2018)

Captain Ron had good intentions of getting up early and taking a shower but it didn't happen. He did get up and go to the captain's lounge to make the coffee but he couldn't get to the water. By this time, Patti and Aqua Dog showed up so he left them to finish making coffee and headed for the head. The marina staff was busy setting up for the Monk owner's group meeting.

Once the coffee was ready he filled his cup and headed for the boat to fill the water tanks. We disconnected our power cord and lines and headed for the adjacent marina for 56 gallons of diesel fuel.

From there it was a little under four hours to Parks Marina on Tangier Island. For those who don't know, Tangier Island is an isolated island in the Chesapeake Bay where the same families have

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

been making their living from the water for hundreds of years. There are no roads or bridges connecting it to the mainland, everything and everyone comes and goes by boat. Milton Parks (the owner) is a retired crabber in his late eighties who still runs and works the marina. It's essentially in his back yard. Like many older folks, he's not shy about saying what he means. He supports President Donald Trump but he believes Abraham Lincoln should be dug up and shot again.



HIGH COTTON at Parks Marina, Tangier Island, VA



We mentioned that Tangier Island is isolated, there's no cell phone service and no Verizon Internet. We had a phone message from our next stop wanting to confirm our reservations and we had to use the marina's land line phone to call them. Surprisingly though, we can get TV stations from several different surrounding cities.

Captain Ron had been hankering for crab cakes so once we got tied up and settled in we headed for the closest restaurant, just a couple hundred yards away. Actually, Mr. Parks drove us there in his golf cart. There are very few cars or trucks on the island, most people use golf carts or mopeds. Some of the roads are only wide enough for a golf cart.

Captain Ron got his crab cake sandwich and a bowl of cream of crab soup. Patti had a hamburger and fries.

We walked back to HIGH COTTON where all three of us took naps. After the naps, the entire crew walked to the ice cream shop for (you guessed it) ice cream! The K-9 didn't get as much as she wanted but we have to remember her special diet.

Kiki walked through every puddle she could find on the way to and from the ice cream shop so she had a shower on the back of HIGH COTTON. The humans used the bathhouse. It's a tired crew that should sleep well tonight.

Captain's Log, day twenty two (May 24, 2018)

Up at the crack of nine, we set off to walk the dog. There were two sailboats leaving the marina and Mr. Parks was nowhere to be found so we talked to them a bit and helped them get away from the dock.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Patti whipped up breakfast for the crew. We saw a sailboat having trouble docking so we went back out and helped them. Then a trawler we met in Deltaville came in so we helped them.

We set out (just the humans) for a walk around town. A lady came by offering guided tours in a long golf cart for \$5 per person so we hopped on and got our guided tour of the island including the fire house and school. This year's graduating class will be six students.

After the tour we visited some gift shops and got a soft pretzel at the ice cream shop. By then we were tired so we returned to the boat to take the K-9 for a walk and then rest.



Yes, I believe I would like to go for a walk

We decided to go for dinner and met up with one of the other boaters at the marina so we invited him to join us. We talked about boating of course. Places he had been, places we had been, places we were heading, etc. He has been coming to Tangier Island for many years so he knows the place pretty well.

We decided to skip our showers tonight so there will be some TV watching and then off to bed. Tomorrow we head out to Solomons, MD.



Tangier Island work area

Captain's Log, day twenty three (May 25, 2018)

Yes, Captain Ron is late again. He was too tired to post last night.

We woke up early today and since we had nothing better to do, we got up, walked the dog and got underway. Leaving Tangier Island, the seas weren't too bad but as the day wore on they got a bit rougher. Not as rough as we've had the last few days but a bit uncomfortable.

We saw a few boats and a few ships along the way including an old rusted ship that the military uses for target practice. At least they weren't shooting at it today, that would have been uncomfortable.



Target practice ship on the Chesapeake Bay

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

It took us about five hours to get to the mouth of the Patuxent River and another half hour to get to Calvert Marina. Calvert Marina is well known among cruising boaters because of its \$1.00 per foot rate (for Boat US members). It is on an old Navy base dating from World War II and some of the facilities may possibly be from the same time frame. It's best described as "rustic" but everything is clean and well maintained. There's also a loaner car for quick runs to the grocery store or West Marine. It's a Mercedes of undetermined age that had over two hundred and twenty thousand miles on it when the odometer stopped working

They have two nice, new floating transient docks and that's where we were put the last two times we stopped, but this time they had more boats coming than would fit so because we were the smallest boat, we were put in an ancient fixed slip with wood docks and pilings.

Once we got settled in and let the Sea Dog investigate the place, we got the loaner car and hit the grocery store and CVS drug store for necessities.

When we got back from the stores, we took Kiki to the little "doggie beach" where she first learned to swim four years ago. She ran right in and swam around. We tossed sticks and she swam out and got them and brought them back to shore. She also dug a few holes in the sand. As usual, she had to get a shower before she was allowed back inside the boat. Kiki writes: *One of my favorite parts of these boating trips is going to the beach where I can swim and dig in the sand.*



Kiki doing what she does at the beach

We went to the little café for dinner, came back and Patti went to take a shower. When she finished, Captain Ron went to shower and Patti and Kiki waited outside. A fox came by and the K-9 thought she was supposed to chase it. Patti thought otherwise and since Patti is the larger of the two, there was no chase.

By this time it was time for bed so we hit the sack. A couple hours later, Captain Ron noticed that it was getting a bit warm so he got up to lower the setting on the air conditioner thermostat. That's when he realized that we no longer had shore power.

After checking the master circuit breaker on the boat, he got dressed and went on the dock and reset the breaker on the dock pedestal (actually, a piece of lumber, not a pedestal). Before he could get back on the boat the breaker tripped again.

Being half naked and walking around in the dark with a flashlight, he decided to find a different outlet that worked. After several tries, he found one that worked, the air conditioner came back on and he was able to undress and get back in bed.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain's Log, day twenty four (May 26, 2018)

Patti noticed at the café last night that they serve breakfast on the weekends so after the customary dog walk, we (the humans) walked back to the café for breakfast. Captain Ron was quick to notice that in addition to the customary bacon and sausage; they also offered scrapple so that's what he ordered with his eggs and home fries.

For those who are not scrapple aficionados, scrapple comes in a loaf, already cooked and all you have to do is slice it about a half inch thick, fry it in a pan on both sides until it's brown on both sides and heated in the center.

Well, as we were waiting for our food, Captain Ron heard something being put in the deep fryer. Time went on and on until our plates arrived. Captain Ron's scrapple had obviously been deep fried and for far too long. It was crinkled up like bacon and crusty through and through. Not how scrapple should be cooked.

We noticed yesterday that the boat's fresh water pump (that supplies the sinks and showers) was making a loud noise. It was fine the day before. Captain Ron decided it would be a good idea to replace it or at least buy a spare so we got the loaner car again and went to the West Marine store for a replacement.

Now a word about the loaner car; as we mentioned, it has over two hundred and twenty thousand miles on the odometer and nobody knows how long ago that stopped working. The driver's side window will not go down and the air conditioning does not work. It's anybody's guess if the shock absorbers have ever been replaced and the transmission feels like it will blow up at any moment. Also, the right turn signal does not work.

Since the driver's side window will not go down and the right turn signal doesn't work, that left Captain Ron (who is old enough to remember using hand signals for turns) signaling turns through the sun roof!

After our trip to West Marine we took Aqua Dog to the doggie beach again and let her swim and play in the water and sand. Dinner was bratwurst, sauerkraut and baked beans. We walked the puppy so she could do her business and talked to some of the other boaters. It started to rain so we sought the shelter of HIGH COTTON. Tomorrow is another day in port.

Captain's Log, day twenty five (May 27, 2018)

It's often said among experienced cruisers that "cruising" means fixing your boat in exotic places. Well, Solomons, MD isn't exactly "exotic" but it is away from home. Captain Ron decided that since he bought a replacement pump and the old one sounded like it could dispense its last drop of water at any moment, this would be the time to replace it.

This would seem like a simple job, right? Disconnect one pump, unscrew it, screw on the new pump and connect it. Things don't always go the way they are supposed to. First, West Marine didn't have the exact pump but had a slightly less powerful pump from the same manufacturer. Even though the replacement pump was fractionally less powerful than the original, the mounting holes did not match up and the base was thinner as well. Captain Ron had to shim the pump with rubber washers and drill new mounting holes for the screws. Then the old "quick connect" couplings leaked so he had to replace them with the new ones. At least running the water doesn't wake the neighbors any more.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Patti decided that we needed more green beans for the pooch and lunch from Subway so we got the loaner car and headed for town again. The turn signal had been fixed (probably a burned out bulb). Captain Ron looked in the glove compartment while Patti was in Subway and found the insurance certificate. The car is a 1987 model. That's probably older than some people reading this.

Captain Ron found us a marina for the next day or two so we're slowly heading north. Not as quickly as we should be but we are on the move.

The Sea Dog wanted to go swimming again so we headed for the doggie beach. She practiced swimming out and fetching sticks again and rolled and dug in the sand. Once we returned to HIGH COTTON she had to get a "real" wash with the hose and dog shampoo. She was one dirty dog.

The humans took showers and just barely beat the rain. Then it was dinner and soon, bed.

Captain's Log, day twenty six (May 28, 2018)

We seem to be travelling north ahead of spring, at least that's how it feels. We woke to cloudy skies with a light drizzle and temperatures in the mid-sixties. By the time the K-9 finished her walk the drizzle had stopped but it wasn't any warmer.

We unplugged our power cord and cast off our lines and headed back down the Patuxent River towards the Chesapeake Bay. Once we rounded Drum point we had to skirt the heavily guarded compressed natural gas terminal and the rest was a straight shot to Herring Bay. We actually passed two sailboats along the way.

It was still in the sixties and cloudy when we reached Shipwright Harbor Marina. This is a new

stop for us and seems really nice. The one issue we would have is the showers. They are nearly new and done nicely in tile and chrome but the water doesn't get very hot and the pressure is low. Most importantly, someone forgot to install shelves and hooks for clothes and towels and there's no place to sit while changing.



HIGH COTTON in her slip at Shipwright Harbor

We did walk to a nice restaurant for lunch/dinner.

On the way to the restaurant, Captain Ron remembered that he was supposed to change the oil in the engine and transmission so when we got back from the restaurant, that's what he did. The marina has a tank for used oil so that problem was dealt with quickly.

It was then that Captain Ron went for his lukewarm shower. Patti followed; after that, we had veggies and dip for a snack. Then the pooch got her customary evening stroll.

It's time for bed. This boating and dog walking is tiring work!

Captain's Log, day twenty seven (May 29, 2018)

We forgot to mention that yesterday when Captain Ron was changing the oil in the transmission, he set the transmission dipstick

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

down in a place where there wasn't a place and it went bouncing down between the engine parts until it landed in the bilge. It's important to understand that this is not like the dipstick on your car's engine; it's a plastic cap for the transmission with a six inch extension that measures the oil level. The bilge at this point is very hard to access and Captain Ron said a few words that won't be repeated here.

Patti suggested trying to fish it out with a shelling net that she had purchased a year ago to dig shells out of the water at the beach. Captain Ron didn't think it would work but he got it on the first try. Three cheers for Patti's idea!

We've decided to stay here another day so after the usual morning activities we walked to the office to pay. There's an "office cat" and of course Kiki barked at it expecting it to run away. Well, the cat stood his ground so Kiki got a close look at the fearless cat. No matter what the puppy did, the cat just sat there and looked at her.

On the way back, the pooch stopped and looked off the dock into the water. There was a snake swimming by and she thought that was pretty interesting.



The crew posing for photos at Shipwright Harbor Marina

People sometimes ask us what we do about washing clothes when we're cruising away from

home. Many marinas have laundry facilities and this is one of them so Patti put two loads of clothes in the washer. This should hold us for a couple weeks.

While we were waiting for the laundry to finish, we walked around the marina grounds. This is a nicely landscaped marina and well maintained. The marina is on a peninsula with slips on both sides. At the point of the peninsula is a fire pit and a swing set. Not an ordinary swing set, a patio swing set with all steel tubing and an awning. We sat in it and liked it so much we looked it up on the Internet. It sells for \$2,700! Captain Ron was thinking of getting one for the house but probably won't at that price.



The \$2700 swing set.

Patti found out that the nearby restaurant had prime rib on Tuesday nights so of course, that's what we had for dinner. It was good and we have enough left over for another meal.

We walked back to the boat, took lukewarm showers and walked the pooch. Tomorrow we head for Annapolis, MD for three days. We're hoping to meet family and friends as that's the closest we come to their homes.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain's Log, day twenty eight (May 30, 2018)

We awoke to cloudy skies but little wind. We took our time walking the K-9, got a bag of ice that we had paid for the night before and cast off our lines heading toward Annapolis, MD.

The trip was mostly a straight shot once we got back onto the Chesapeake Bay. We saw just a small tug and a couple crab boats until we neared Annapolis. At that point we had to start dodging sailboats and a motoryacht that cut in front of us twice. We did pass five anchored commercial cargo ships waiting their turns to dock in Baltimore. This is one of the situations where AIS comes in handy. We were able to tell that they were not moving so we would have no trouble avoiding them.



Thomas Point Lighthouse near Annapolis, MD

We hailed the Annapolis Harbormaster and were assigned a slip. A dockhand met us and helped to tie us up. After settling our bill we walked the Sea Dog around the dock area. The Annapolis city dock is basically a canal about two blocks long with slips for the smaller boats and side ties for the larger boats. It's known locally as "Ego Alley" because many boaters just go to the end, turn around and go back out without stopping just to show off their boats.



HIGH COTTON at "Ego Alley", Annapolis, MD

We had a visit from Captain Ron's daughter, Robyn Harter who came in from northern Virginia to visit. She treated us to a lunch of oysters, shrimp and nachos and we thanked her for that.



Captain Ron, Patti, Kiki and Robyn in Annapolis, MD

We took the K-9 out for another walk around the dock area and then left her to guard HIGH COTTON while we snuck away for bowls of ice cream. She will probably get some before we leave.

Captain Ron scanned for TV stations and came up with eight. It's actually four because the other four are duplicates of the same public broadcast stations. Captain Ron was disappointed because at the last stop he had about thirty stations and we were further from the cities and actual transmitters.

There is a lot of foot and car traffic behind the boat and lots of boat traffic in front. Hopefully it

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

will quiet down as it gets dark and we can hit the sack.

Captain's Log, day twenty nine (May 31, 2018)

Yes, Captain Ron is late again. We had guests and the last ones left after Captain Ron's bedtime so he didn't stay up to write.

As many of you know, Captain Ron and Patti are originally from Maryland and still have friends and family in the area. Annapolis is about as close as we get to our old stompin' grounds so this is where they come to visit us. Kiki is the only native South Carolinian.

Our first visitor was Jeanie Hutchinson who was a classmate of Patti's in high school and later, the wife of one of Captain Ron's old music playing buddies. We went to lunch and reminisced about the good old days. She lives on Kent Island which is just across the Bay Bridge from where we are.

Next was Captain Ron's son, Andrew Widman who lives outside of College Park, MD but works in Philadelphia, PA during the week. He stopped by on his way home and we walked around the Naval Academy grounds and stopped for ice cream.

Last was Patti's nephew, Brock Ormond, his wife Aimee and their daughter Aubree. We talked while Aubree played with the Sea Dog.

As we said, then it was time for bed. One more day here and then we'll move north.

Captain's Log, day thirty (June 1, 2018)

We had a tired crew this morning, both the humans and the K-9. All were late getting out of the sack.

There was the customary dog walk and the customary cup of coffee. Then, it was time to leave the Sea Dog to guard the boat while the humans walked the town to find things we didn't really need like tee shirts and souvenirs.

Captain Ron found a knit hat and gloves for those chilly days at the helm. It's not that he didn't already have them but they are in the closet in South Carolina and we are in Maryland.

We ate lunch at the famous Chick and Ruth's Deli and headed back to HIGH COTTON.

A guy in the next slip walked behind our boat and waved for us to come out. It turns out that he is from Summerville, SC, the next town to our hometown and he is doing the Great Loop by himself. We talked to him for a while and then took the pooch for a walk. She seems to love the new sights and smells in each town we visit.

Dinner was frozen breaded fish fillets and fresh corn on the cob brought to us by Jeanie from Kent Island yesterday. It was good!

We filled the boat's water tanks and took our showers. Tomorrow night will be at an anchorage so we need to be prepared and self-sufficient.

Captain's Log, day thirty one (June 2, 2018)

Looking at the weather forecast last night, we wanted to beat the predicted high winds and thunderstorms so we set the alarm for 5:30 AM. We got up (the sun was already up), walked the dog and got underway at 6:10 AM. The water was smooth with just gentle breezes.

We neared our anticipated anchorage about 10:30 AM and decided that since conditions were so nice, we would skip on to the next planned stop,

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

the city dock in Chesapeake City, MD on the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal.



About to pass under the Chesapeake Bay Bridge

We got there about 1:00 PM and decided it would be best to continue to the Delaware City Marina at the end of the C&D Canal because we would need fuel and an early start down the Delaware Bay the next day.



Heading east on the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal

We pulled into the marina a little before 3:00 PM, topped off our tanks with fifty four gallons of diesel fuel and got tied off on the dock. We went to the office to pay our bill and that's when we learned that we might have to change our plans; tomorrow's weather is calling for thunderstorms and 20 MPH winds. On the Delaware Bay, that would be unsafe in a boat as small as HIGH COTTON.



HIGH COTTON at the Delaware City Marina, DE

We came back to the boat to find the guy who had been docked next to us in Annapolis and who had passed us at high speed just before we entered the C&D Canal. He is travelling about four times HIGH COTTON's speed.

There are a few interesting sounding restaurants within walking distance of the marina but we had leftover prime rib and baked potatoes from a few days ago along with a can of green beans. It looks like we'll be here an extra day or two so we can try the restaurants.

The K-9 needed to go for a walk after dinner and it was pouring down rain. After it slowed a bit, Patti and the pooch set off for land and grass to take care of business.

Seeing that we got up at 5:30 AM this morning, bedtime will come early tonight.

Captain's Log, day thirty two (June 3, 2018)

Well, our attempts at getting ahead by a few days have come to naught. Today, the winds on Delaware Bay were over forty miles per hour and tomorrow won't be much better. It looks like we'll be leaving Tuesday morning at best. We've had pretty decent weather so far but it looks like our luck has caught up with us. It also looks like

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain Ron will get some use out of the knit hat and gloves he bought in Annapolis when we do leave here.

Captain Ron noticed on one of the restaurant menus the marina gave us that one had sausage gravy over biscuits for \$5.00. Captain Ron isn't normally big on breakfast but sausage gravy over biscuits for \$5.00 got his attention so after the dog walk we headed into town. When we finally found the place, we found that they were closed for vacation. So much for the \$5.00 sausage gravy over biscuits. On the way back to the marina we met another group headed for the same restaurant so we warned them and they headed off in a different direction.

We walked back to the boat and had cookies and powdered (bag) donuts for breakfast. And watched the rain. We were considering heading down the bay tomorrow but other boaters we talked to said that wouldn't be a good idea.

About 2:00 PM we walked back into town (in the rain) to a pizza restaurant and had a late lunch/early dinner. We have enough left over for another meal.

The dockmaster has a "captain's meeting" at 5:00 PM each day so we went. He explained about the winds and currents on the Delaware Bay and how best to deal with them. After his presentation he asked how many boats would be heading down the bay tomorrow. Nobody raised their hands. It looks like everyone will be pulling out Tuesday morning.

One last dog walk where the K-9 ran through every puddle, two showers, and we're about ready for bed. Patti said she may do laundry tomorrow so that's a good use of time. Kiki writes: *Puddles are like little beaches. They are fun to play in and they keep me cool.*

Captain's Log, day thirty three, (June 4, 2018)

Greetings from Delaware City, Delaware! We're thinking of having our mail forwarded here.

Seriously, as of now, the weather forecast has us leaving tomorrow morning for Cape May, NJ but we'll have to wait and see. One good thing about this marina is, nearly everybody here is headed down the Delaware Bay and the dockmaster holds a captains meeting each day at 5:00 PM where he discusses the weather for the next day in detail focusing on the wind and current. If he says "go", we'll go. If he says "don't go", we won't go.

Patti got the laundry done and changed the sheets on the bed. Captain Ron and the Sea Dog stayed out of the way. Several more boats came in today, all headed down the Delaware bay to New Jersey and points north. The marina is about full.

We walked to the crab place where we had a late afternoon meal. A crab cake sandwich for Captain Ron and a hamburger for Patti. The puppy stayed to guard HIGH COTTON.

After our meal we went to the captains meeting where it was determined that tomorrow morning would be a good time to head down the bay. This means a dozen or so boats will be pulling out at daybreak. The dockmaster said he will come in early to untie everyone and direct traffic.

After the meeting many of the crews walked to another restaurant for dinner and conversation so we tagged along. There was lots of conversation about places we have been and places we are headed. Since we had already had a meal, Captain Ron had soup and Patti had salad.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



The group from Delaware City Marina

We walked back to the boat and Captain Ron topped off the water tanks while Patti took the K-9 for a walk. The marina we planned to stay at in Cape May is booked and may not have a slip for us tomorrow so we may have to anchor out. Best to be prepared.

Captain's Log, day thirty four, (June 5, 2018)

Well, apparently there is another five o'clock, this one in the morning! Before the sun comes up!

So, at oh dark thirty, the alarm sounded and we got up to get ready to shove off. The dockmaster was there as promised and boats started heading up the canal and to the Delaware River. Just as we were ready to leave, a boat ahead of us decided to pull out on their own and got caught in the current so the dockmaster had to go get them safely tied up before we could leave.

Once we got out of the canal, we started down the Delaware River and passed the Salem Nuclear Power Plant on the New Jersey side of the river. Either Kiki is an anti-nuclear activist or she was scared of it because she barked at it the entire time (about twenty minutes) we were passing it. Kiki writes: *It was big and smoke was coming out*

of the top. I was protecting my people by barking at it.



The Salem Nuclear Power Plant

We had the current running with us (this was part of the plan) for the first part of the trip and we reached speeds of over ten knots (eleven and a half miles per hour for you landlubbers reading this). Unfortunately, the trip down the Delaware River and Bay takes us more than one tide cycle so by the time we were nearing our destination we were making about six knots running against the current. Also, the wind had picked up out of the south west making for a very rocky and uncomfortable ride. Total time was six hours and fifty minutes so that's better than expected.

We did get a slip at Utsch's Marina as we had hoped so we got tied up with the help of a dockhand and walked to the office to pay our bill and receive our gift bag. We saw the menu for Lucky Bones Backwater Grille and a featured item was a "clam pizza". Captain Ron saw a TV show about a restaurant that served clam pizzas several years ago and had always wanted to try one.

We walked the Sea Dog back to the boat and set out for Lucky Bones and Captain Ron's clam pizza only to find the restaurant "closed for today only". So much for the clam pizza.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

We went to a different restaurant and had our meal for the day. After we walked back to the boat, some of the loopers we had been travelling with called and asked if we wanted to join them for dinner. Of course we had just eaten so we had to decline.

Utsch's Marina is an OK place to stop for the night and it's the least expensive marina in town but it's getting a bit "long in the tooth. It does, however, have a fairly new shower and laundry building and the showers provide what we have been missing lately; plenty of hot water, plenty of pressure and complete privacy. And the staff is friendly and helpful.



HIGH COTTON tied up at Utsch's Marina, Cape May, NJ

Tomorrow we expect to continue north but after waking at a respectable time.

Captain's Log, day thirty five, (June 6, 2018)

We did get up at a more or less respectable time and got underway about 8:45 AM. Our plan was to travel about five hours and anchor for the night.

It was windy when we left the marina, windy enough that keeping the boat under control was a bit difficult but we got out of there without any scratches or dents.

The New Jersey ICW twists and turns and reminded us of stretches of the ICW in Georgia. There are also many shallow spots and places where the markers have been moved since our charts were made. We have the low water alarm on the depth sounder set at five feet (HIGH COTTON draws three and a half feet) and it sounded sixteen times today. Each time we would slow down and find the deeper water. We didn't actually hit the bottom at all.

After a few hours underway, we decided to go ahead and head for Atlantic City and not anchor. We figured it would take about seven hours but because of the numerous long no-wake zones and having to wait for some drawbridges it actually took just short of eight hours.

We are staying at New Jersey's Farley State Marina which is attached to the Golden Nugget Casino. Captain Ron hadn't been in a casino in sixty years or so and Patti wanted to try her hand (again) at the slot machines so in we went. Patti did not break the bank so she quit and we each had a bowl of ice cream.



Patti challenges the one armed bandit

We will probably extend our stay and visit the boardwalk via the jitney bus. For now, it's time to hit the sack.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain's Log, day thirty six, (June 7, 2018)

Today is a day in port. We decided to stay an extra day and visit the famous Atlantic City boardwalk. Captain Ron made his morning coffee and planned our next stop on the way to New York. We walked the pooch and walked to the office to extend our stay. We asked about the jitney and they told us to wait outside the door.

Soon enough, the jitney arrived and we got on. These jitneys are pretty much a van with a bus body. They hold about twelve people and apparently have only two speeds, full and stop.

So off we go, bouncing over every speed bump, pothole and a few curbs. The jitneys connect all the casinos together so customers can go from one to the next and gamble their day away without having to worry about traffic or parking.

We got off in front of Caesars Palace and walked the one block to the boardwalk.



Captain Ron and Patti on the beach at Atlantic City, NJ

Even though there are gigantic casino/hotels everywhere, the decades old tee shirt shops and dinky food shops remain. Patti got souvenir tee shirts for all her nieces and nephews, even the yet to be born one and we got a few for ourselves. We each had a foot long hot dog and fries for lunch. Ice cream was consumed as well.

As we have mentioned in the past, Captain Ron was once a full time professional musician, playing mostly in Washington, DC, but sometimes touring in the summer time. Well, somewhere around nineteen sixty eight, he played in a club in Atlantic City for a week. We found ourselves walking down the street where it was and low and behold, it was still there, fifty years later. It's vacant now, the sign is gone and the building is for sale, but after fifty years of changes, it is still standing.



The Chez Paree nightclub fifty years later

We had run out of string beans for the K-9. She is on a restricted diet with prescription dog food but is allowed to have carrots and green beans and these are her "treats". We asked our phone for a grocery store and found two just a block west of the jitney route so we walked from the boardwalk to the grocery store.

The first store was a little hole in the wall with two bags of green beans. Patti didn't like the looks of them so we walked over to the Sav-A-Lot. They had no green beans at all so we walked back to the hole in the wall and bought one of their bags of beans.

What we didn't realize is, we had walked into the "hood". Groups milling about, loud cursing, etc. We walked the one block back to the jitney route and were driven at high speed back to our casino and marina.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

We went to one of the restaurants in the casino for a light supper, took showers and walked the puppy. There is some semi-famous “all girl” band playing outside on the patio tonight and even though the temperature is in the low sixties, it hasn’t dampened their volume.

Tomorrow we head out for what we expect to be a pleasant four hours on the New Jersey ICW.

Captain’s Log, day thirty seven, (June 8, 2018)

It seems Captain Ron is suffering from CRS (Can’t Remember Stuff). He forgot one of the important details about yesterday’s walk on the boardwalk.

Shortly after we started our walk we passed by an open storefront and two Asian ladies came rushing out saying “You want Chinese massage? Make you feel good. Twenty minute only twenty dollar.”

We thought about it and after a little more coaxing, we went in, emptied our pockets, took off our shoes and laid down on the tables. The ladies each set kitchen timers and began our massages. It’s a bit unclear to us how Chinese massages differ from American massages other than we were clothed, there was no oil and no conversation because their English was apparently limited to the above “You want Chinese massage “. The massages were relaxing though and we both felt better afterward.

This morning, we got up walked the dog, made coffee, etc. We noticed that the new water pump Captain Ron installed seemed to be making the same noise as the old one and in addition, the pressure was getting lower. Captain Ron considered what might possibly cause this and decided to do what he should have done in the first place, check the filter just before the pump.

Well, it was nearly blocked. He had to take it to the bath house to clean it because he had to shut the water off to remove it. Anyway, it has been cleaned, the water works fine and we have a spare water pump (but not a filter) on board.

After all this activity, it was nearing 9:00 AM so Patti went to the office to check us out and pay our bill. We filled the water tanks, disconnected the power cord and lines and headed out past the Coast Guard station to the New Jersey ICW.



Atlantic City, NJ behind us

We lost track of how many times the depth sounder alarm sounded but we did end up hard aground twice. Both times we were able to get free and back on our way although it took a bit of effort. It seems our “updated” chart is not updated enough to match the actual waterway.



Kiki spots another Camano Troll on the waterway

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

What started out as a warm day got cooler and windier as the day went on. We got to our anchorage about 2:00 PM. We rocked a bit for the first couple hours but it settled down after that and after all the boaters went home for the night.

Captain Ron had the remains of his fish dinner from Cape May and Patti had an instant noodle dish. We have reservations for a marina in Brielle, NJ, just before we enter the Atlantic Ocean for our trip to the Statue of Liberty opposite New York City. We'll have to check the weather before we start out on that leg of the trip.



The sun sets on Barnegat Bay, NJ

Captain's Log, day thirty eight, (June 9, 2018)

Our anchorage was OK last night. Not a lot of waves or wakes and no noise. We got a good night's sleep. The most important thing was, we were still in the same place in the morning as we were the night before.

We got underway about 8:45 AM, heading up Barnegat Bay. Being a decent Saturday, there were a lot of boats out and the later it got the more boats we saw. Big boats, small boats, jet skis, you name it, we saw it. "Cigarette boats" (long, fast, loud boats) are popular here and they

can be heard from miles away. One boat (equipped with AIS) passed us at thirty nine knots.

As we passed one creek, we saw another Camano Troll coming out to join the ICW. It travelled behind us for an hour or two and then turned off somewhere. We thought it might have been the same one we met yesterday but since they didn't call us on the radio, it probably wasn't.

We had been warned about currents and traffic in the Point Pleasant Canal but we weren't prepared for the boat wakes bouncing off the sides and back into the canal. This must be how our shorts feel in the washing machine!



New Jersey's Point Pleasant Canal

Anyhow, we got to the end of the canal and turned into the Manasquan River. There's a busy railroad bridge over the river and Hoffman's Marina has docks on both sides of the bridge. Each set of docks has its own telephone number so we called and made reservations at the section on the other side of the river so we wouldn't have to be bothered with it in the morning.

Just as we were approaching the marina, the bridge went down and two trains crossed it, one in each direction. By the time the bridge went back up there were a dozen or more boats waiting on each side to go through and no traffic cop to direct them.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



Boats waiting for the train to pass

We pulled up at the fuel dock and topped off our tanks. Then the dockmaster sent us back through the bridge to the other side for dockage. By this time, another train was coming so we had to wait for the bridge again.

They put us on the “T” head but our boat was too small for us to get on and off so they moved us to a slip. The slip has a floating finger pier so we (and the pooch) can get on and off easily.

The K-9 waited patiently through all of this and finally got to go to land and make her marks.



Patti and the pooch return from shore duty

Being just a few miles from the ocean, this is a busy fishing marina. There’s apparently a fishing tournament going on so that adds to the fishing boats. As we write this, people up and down the

dock are cleaning their fish for the day, mostly tuna.

We went to a nearby restaurant for our only meal of the day and returned to take showers and get the boat ready for an early departure. The weather looks a bit “iffy” so Captain Ron plotted an extra stop in case the going gets rough.

Captain’s Log, day thirty nine, (June 10, 2018)

The weather forecast was calling for light winds in the morning but increasing around 10:00 AM so once again, we got ourselves up at 5:00 AM and got underway at 5:40 AM. Forty minutes has been our best time getting up and underway so far.

A couple hours after we started, we decided to operate from the lower helm so we brought the pooch down and set up the folding helm chair. It wasn’t that the water was rough; it was the temperature was in the mid-sixties and the sun wasn’t shining. It seems we’ve outpaced spring in northern New Jersey.



The Verrazano Bridge leading into New York Harbor

This was our first trip in the actual ocean and it actually went pretty smoothly although as we approached the Verrazano Bridge, it got a bit rougher and the current was against us, slowing us down two knots or more. It also began to rain.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

We could see the New York skyline for two hours or so before we ever got there.



Approaching the “Big Apple”

Once we got inside New York Harbor, we went back up to the flybridge so we could sightsee, take pictures and most importantly, keep track of all the boats and ships coming at us from all angles.

We slowed down to pass the Statue of Liberty and take pictures. It’s an impressive sight, even on a cold and cloudy day. Of course there were several tour boats of all sizes doing the same thing so Captain Ron had to keep on his toes as far as running the boat was concerned.



Passing the Statue of Liberty

Next we passed Ellis Island where presumably the Widmans and Sirons first set foot on this continent. Both of these attractions can be visited by tour boat but not by private boat.



Passing Ellis Island

From Ellis Island it was just a few hundred yards to the channel to Liberty Landing Marina. We called and got our slip assignment and backed into our slip.

Liberty Landing marina is the least expensive marina in the New York City area (it’s actually in New Jersey) but at five dollars a foot, it’s by far the most expensive marina we’ve ever stayed at. Location, location, location.



HIGH COTTON at Liberty Landing Marina, New York City, NY

We walked the Sea Dog of course, ate at one of the restaurants, walked the Sea Dog again and took our showers. We also met up with some of the Loopers we’ve been running into.

It’s a nice place but at these prices, we’ll be moving on in the morning.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain's Log, day forty, (June 11, 2018)

After a long day yesterday, we slept in. We needed the rest. We did get underway by about 9:00 AM.

Leaving the marina channel, we were met by the wakes of the ferries taking people from Jersey City to Manhattan and vice versa. These are large boats travelling in excess of twenty knots and completely unconcerned about their wakes or other boats in their path. They don't just cross the river; they travel up and down it diagonally. We thought the Point Pleasant Canal was rough, but it was a piece of cake compared to the Hudson River in mid-Manhattan on a Monday morning.



New York City from the Hudson River

Anyhow, it was over in a half hour or so and the water smoothed out as we left the business district. We passed a large (over three hundred feet long) private yacht anchored just south of the George Washington Bridge. This boat was so large it had compartments at the stern to store tenders (smaller boats) to take people to and from shore. We're talking millions of dollars here.

North of the George Washington Bridge, the scenery becomes spectacular. On the New Jersey side are the Palisades, cliffs several hundred feet high. Further north we passed New York's Sing Sing Prison.



The New Jersey Palisades



New York's famous Sing Sing Prison



The view from the helm

We haven't figured out this weather yet. We started the day wearing coats, gloves and hats. By 1:00 PM, Captain Ron was shirtless in the sun. As is the custom in this country, Patti kept her shirt on.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

The boaters we had been travelling with mentioned the Half Moon Bay Marina so we decided it would make a good stopping point. We were asked to dock ourselves on a T head until the dockmaster could return as he had left for a family emergency. Apparently, this is a one man show. Once he returned, we were moved to a slip with better protection.

The marina is nice but it is connected to a condo association, apparently one with lots of "rules". One of the strangest rules is: No Dogs Allowed. Yes, people who own homes in this association are not allowed to have dogs. The strangest part is, people docked in the marina are expected to carry (yes carry) their dogs from the docks to the public street outside the condo gates. We witnessed an elderly lady accost a couple who unknowingly were walking their small dog on the walking path. After this she went to talk to some other residents about it and then the dockmaster.



Yep, no dogs allowed in the entire neighborhood

Captain Ron got on the Internet and paid his bills. After that we walked to town and had dinner at the diner. We each had a very good meal and enough left over for another meal on the boat later. We walked to the CVS for a few things and then back to the boat.

Patti took a shower but Captain Ron was too tired. He will take one in the morning.

Captain's Log, day forty one, (June 12, 2018)

As promised, Captain Ron got up and took a shower. The bathrooms and showers are a bit dated here but functional. One advantage of older showers is, they haven't yet been fitted with water conservation devices required in new fixtures so the flow is usually strong and the water is usually as hot as you wish to make it.



HIGH COTTON docked at Half Moon Bay Marina

Patti fixed a "real" breakfast. After breakfast, Captain Ron took his second cup of coffee and was headed for the flybridge to enjoy the sun and morning air when he noticed another Camano Troll pulling into the marina.

It turned out to be Steve and Bonnie Quinn, on the same boat that we have been playing hopscotch with for the past few days. They are actually from Greenville, SC but bought their Camano in Maryland and immediately set out on the Great Loop. They toured our boat and asked questions and we toured their boat. Kiki seemed to enjoy their dog, Daisy.

Captain Ron worked on route planning while they took showers and then we all decided to walk to the restaurant and grocery store together. We had an enjoyable meal and found out that Steve had grown up in Laytonsville, MD, not all that far from where Patti grew up.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

After dinner, we walked to the grocery store and then CVS for essentials. We took turns pushing the cart but Captain Ron was pushing it when a wheel hit something and the cart stopped but he didn't. At least the cart full of groceries broke his fall. Only his pride was hurt.

Back at the boat, things were put away and Steve came over to ask a few questions about the Camano. We have had ours for ten years; he has had his for less than a month.

So no showers again tonight, probably tomorrow before we leave. If the weather is bad, we may not leave. We shall see.

Captain's Log, day forty two, (June 13, 2018)

We decided not to leave today because the forecast was for rain and we had some sprinkles when we got up. The sprinkles stopped and although it was cloudy, it didn't rain the rest of the day. We should have headed out.

A crew of carpenters showed up and began working on the dock a few slips down from us. They actually tore up the dock to where other boaters couldn't get to or from their boats. A different crew began painting the bath house (inside) and restrooms, closing them off for a time.

We decided to walk along the river walk and the Sea Dog wanted to go along so we hooked her up and headed out, being careful to carry her in our arms to avoid the wrath of the "condo commandos". Kiki writes: *I don't understand why anyone wouldn't like a cute little puppy like me. I don't bite and I like to be petted.*

Once we were clear of the "no dog zone" we set her down and began walking north on the river

walk. It wasn't long before we spotted several young groundhogs feasting on the clover between the river walk and the road. The K-9 spotted them as well and felt the need to investigate. She was on her leash of course but the groundhogs decided to retreat into the bushes.



Something new for Kiki to investigate

We walked a bit further and came to a town park with a boat ramp and a small mud beach. The pooch headed straight for the water, ran in and swam around. We found a couple sticks for her to fetch and threw them in. She brought them back to land as usual.

Once she tired of the beach, we walked back towards the marina and the ground hogs were out again. Of course they retreated to the bushes again. We walked back to the boat where Kiki got her usual shower in the cockpit.

We called a local sub shop and they delivered two subs. They were huge so we split one and put the other in the refrigerator for tomorrow.

Captain Ron and the puppy went to the V berth to watch TV but soon fell asleep. When they awoke, Patti was sleeping on the lounge.

Patti decided to take the pooch for another walk so while Captain Ron worked on travel plans, she carried her to the river walk again. This time, the

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

momma ground hog was out. She didn't retreat to the bushes; she sat up and hissed at the puppy. Patti kept the two apart and the momma ground hog ambled away.

Captain Ron gathered his things and headed for the shower to find that the painters had painted everything in the men's room including the bench and it was still wet! He managed though and then Patti went to take her shower. We have to wonder though, why wouldn't they do projects like this in the off season when there are fewer boaters around?

Because of our late lunch, we didn't feel like eating dinner so we had veggies and dip.

It's time for bed and we're leaving tomorrow unless there's a hurricane.

Captain's Log, day forty three, (June 14, 2018)

We woke up this morning expecting to break our promise. The boat was rocking from side to side and up and down. The weather forecast was for 16 MPH winds all day and we were rocking inside a protected marina.

Now 16 MPH isn't fast if you're driving it in a car but that's some pretty strong winds on the water if you are on a boat.

We had pretty much resigned ourselves to another day at the marina with the dog haters and Patti had started cooking breakfast when one of our new looper friends called and said that friends of theirs had gone out and called them saying that once they got on the river, the mountains blocked most of the wind. They were going to go ahead and leave and we decided to leave also.

For the most part, that turned out to be a good decision. For about three hours, we were

shielded from the wind and the ride was smooth and the sun made it pleasantly warm. Then the river turned where the wind was coming directly down the valley and it got rough. Very rough. Rough enough that Captain Ron's camera bounced off the seat and onto the deck. It doesn't zoom any more. Oh well, he has another one, just not as good.

The Hudson River is a huge river, very wide and very deep. The mountains on each side are high by east coast standards and the scenery is spectacular. We passed the West Point Military Academy and several mansions along the way.



Scenery on the Hudson River



West Point Military Academy

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



A scenic lighthouse on the Hudson River

We made it to Roundout Creek and the Kingston City Marina and got tied up about 3:30 PM. We've talked before about "rustic" marinas. Well, this place fits that category but it's out of the wind and current and it's right in the middle of town.



HIGH COTTON at the Kingston, NY town dock

We walked around a bit and had planned to eat our leftovers for dinner but the loopers asked if we wanted to go to dinner with them and we accepted so off we went. We'll probably stay another day just so we can see the town. Then we'll continue north again.

Captain's Log, day forty four, (June 15, 2018)

We had nothing special to do today so we slept in late. Once we got up and walked the puppy, we

ate breakfast. There was a glassblowing demonstration on the Corning barges so we went to that. After that we visited the Hudson River Maritime Museum to learn about the history of the area.

We decided to have lunch at the Mexican restaurant. The food was good, the service, not so much.

After lunch we decided to walk around Kingston to see what we could see, not realizing that Kingston is built on the side of a pretty steep hill. It wasn't easy getting to the top. We saw some old homes but many were lacking in upkeep.

We walked back down to the boat where Captain Ron called Verizon to find out why his bill was so high. He never really found out for sure but was able to negotiate a discount and change to unlimited data.

One of the other boaters mentioned that there was a booth for the Erie Canal on the museum grounds so we went back over and picked up some free charts and other information on the canal.



Patti at the Hudson River Maritime Museum

We took turns taking showers. There's a single shower for everyone at the marina but at least it's a large stall with plenty of hot water.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

We weren't hungry after our lunch so we snacked. Tomorrow we pull out for a leisurely cruise up the Hudson River to a marina with laundry facilities.

Captain's Log, day forty five, (June 16, 2018)

Up until now, every day has been more or less the same; get up, walk the dog and either get underway or visit the town. Today started out no different, get up, walk the puppy, check the engine, uncover the flybridge, start the engine, etc. This is when the day changed. Captain Ron was at the wheel as usual and Patti stepped off the boat to untie the lines. Captain Ron heard a thud and looked over the side to see Patti face down on the dock.

He came running down the ladder to see what had happened. It seems Patti had tripped over one of the lines and fell on her shoulder on the dock.

After a few minutes, it was determined that she should go to the hospital so she called 911 while Captain Ron turned off the engine and brought the Sea Dog down from the flybridge.

A fire truck showed up followed by the ambulance they asked what happened and where she hurt and put her in the back of the ambulance. Captain Ron rode up front. The firemen were concerned about the puppy so Captain Ron got the shorepower cable back out and connected the power so she would have air conditioning. Off we went to the hospital just a little over a mile away.

At the hospital, Patti got X-rays and they showed nothing broken. The doctor gave her advice and exercises to do so it wouldn't get stiff. She also got a sling for her arm and bandages on her elbow and knee. We answered a lot of questions and did a lot of paperwork. Captain Ron called the next marina and cancelled our reservations for tonight.

After a few hours, Patti was released. The firemen had said to call them and they would bring us back to the boat but in all the confusion we forgot to get their number and couldn't see dialing 911 to ask for a ride so since it was just a little more than a mile and mostly downhill, we decided to walk back.



Patti in the emergency room

We stopped at a hot dog restaurant for lunch and then a drug store for Tylenol and bandages for Patti and then continued on down to the river. Captain Ron was going to buy Patti a get well card but she said it wasn't necessary. We saw a lot of the town that we otherwise would never have known about. We saw some old and interesting buildings and homes. The walk wasn't bad and they say walking is good for you.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

We eventually made it back to the river and HIGH COTTON. We rested for a while, walked the Sea Dog and then rested some more. The firemen showed up (in their fire truck) to check on Patti and Kiki. That was nice and unexpected.



The Kingston firemen check on Patti and the puppy

Dinner was leftovers from somewhere down the river. Earlier in the day we saw people walking with ice cream cones and asked them where they got them. So, after dinner, the humans snuck off for ice cream, leaving the K-9 to guard the boat Kiki writes: *Yea they think they are fooling me but I can smell ice cream on their breath.*

One more dog walk in the park and it was time to shut things down for the night. If Patti is up to it, we'll head out in the morning.

Captain's Log, day forty six, (June 17, 2018)

Patti had a hard time sleeping last night and Captain Ron had to get Kiki in and out of bed but eventually morning came and it was time to get up and test the shoulder. We walked the K-9 and then came the test: Could Patti make it up and down the ladder to the flybridge?

She passed the test so we got the boat ready to go. Patti took the helm while Captain Ron played the part of "line wench". All went well and soon

we were back on the mighty Hudson River headed north. Unfortunately, today we had the tidal current running against us so our normal speed was reduced by almost two knots. We called the Shady Harbor Marina and told them we would be there about 2:00 PM. At almost 3:00 PM, they called to see where we were.



Another scenic lighthouse on the Hudson River



There are big ships on the Hudson River

We were in sight of the marina (you can see a long way on this river) and the guy on the phone told us to pull into the fuel dock (we also needed fuel). We got there and there were boats on the fuel dock and waiting. We asked one of the boats and he said they had been waiting for a half hour.

Captain Ron called the marina back and asked if we could just go to our slip and get fuel when we left. That was OK so we were given a slip

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

assignment and backed in with the help of a dockhand.



HIGH COTTON in her slip at Donovan's Shady Harbor Marina

We were planning on staying for two days so we could do the laundry and a few other things but they have a deal where you pay for two days and get the third day free. Captain Ron seldom turns down "free" so we will be here for three days. They have a pool and it's going to be hot for a while.

We walked the pooch of course and then headed for the restaurant for dinner. After that, Kiki had a shower and the humans headed for their much needed showers.

Tomorrow we do the laundry and straighten up the boat.

Captain's Log, day forty seven, (June 18, 2018)

Today was a day in port. No early departure, nothing pressing to do. It was well past 9:00 AM when the crew rolled out of the sack. Closer to 10:00 AM for two of them! There was a dog to walk so that was taken care of. Patti fixed breakfast for everyone although some would have counted this as "lunch".

We gathered up the dirty clothes including our "cool weather" things that we hope we won't need for the rest of the trip, got out the cart and headed for the marina's laundry room. The washers and driers were commercial grade and big enough that we only had two loads.



Patti takes care of business

We learned that the marina has a loaner car for transients to get to town but since we had laundry in the machines we decided to reserve it for tomorrow.

We talked to some of the other boaters for a while and finished the laundry. Captain Ron decided to take advantage of the swimming pool. It was not as warm as he would have liked so he swam a few laps and got out.

The weather forecast was calling for thunderstorms but it just sprinkled a bit. Enough to get the dock wet but not much more.

We finished up all our leftovers for dinner. Maybe we'll find something we like at the grocery store when we get the car tomorrow.

For now, it's off to bed.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain's Log, day forty eight, (June 19, 2018)

Another day in port today. We got up late, walked the K-9, talked with other boaters and took it easy. We had the loaner car reserved for 11:00 AM so we walked to the office to get Captain Ron's driver's license copied and then off we went. We drove up the hill, turned, drove up the hill, turned again and drove up the hill some more. It's a long way from the river to the top of the hill.

We had two choices; a local supermarket just a few miles away or Walmart, about twenty miles away. We didn't really need anything from Walmart so we chose the local supermarket. It was still two towns away.

We stocked up on green beans for the puppy, drinks for the humans and a few other essentials. There's supposed to be a walkable grocery store at our next stop so if we missed anything we can get it there. Speaking of our next stop; that will be at the beginning of the Erie Canal.

Back in New Baltimore, we unloaded the car, turned in the keys and loaded everything onto HIGH COTTON. The Sea Dog was ready to explore the marina grounds again so off we went.

Once the puppy was back on the boat and everything stowed away we walked to the restaurant for our midafternoon meal. For a change, we decided to sit outside on the deck overlooking the mighty Hudson River and watch the tugs and barges go by.

Captain Ron thought about jumping in the pool again but had second thoughts so instead, we got the puppy off the boat and sat in the chairs facing the river. A small private plane was flying up the river a few feet above the surface but it was gone before Captain Ron could get his camera out. *Kiki writes: Yes, like most dogs, I like to sit outside and*

see what's going on in the world. Sometimes it's boring being cooped up on the boat.

Back at the boat there was some TV watching and napping and then it was time for showers and snacks so we could take our evening pills.

Tomorrow we have to move to the fuel dock at 9:00 AM for diesel fuel and then it's up the river to Waterford, just north of Albany and Troy.

Captain's Log, day forty nine, (June 20, 2018)

*"I've got a mule and her name is Sal
Fifteen miles on the Erie Canal"*

Yep, we've made it to the Erie Canal. Not fifteen miles, we are at the very beginning at the welcome center in Waterford, NY. Dockage is free for two nights and electric power is ten dollars for the stay.

But, we're getting ahead of ourselves. We couldn't get diesel fuel until the marina opened at 9:00 AM but we did have breakfast and do the dog walk and engine checks and move the boat around to the fuel dock.

As we were getting ready to leave the fuel dock we saw a tanker ship heading north so we waited for it to pass before we pulled out of the marina. It was going a bit faster than our cruise speed so we followed it all the way to Albany where it slowed to two knots. Captain Ron tried to contact it on the radio to find out its intentions but couldn't get an answer on channel 16 or 13 so we just went on by. Apparently it was stopping at one of the terminals in Albany but the crew was too busy to answer us.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



Albany, NY from the Hudson River



Parts of Troy, NY have seen better days

A few miles past Albany we came to the Troy or “Federal” lock. We had to wait a few minutes and then the lockmaster let us in. This lock is different than the ones we’ve been in before, there are long pipes in recesses in the walls and you take a line from a midship cleat and loop it around the pipe and back to your boat. We found we had to do this through a window because the side decks are too narrow to stand on safely for something like this.

Another boat that we have been playing “hopscotch” with was behind us and they came in and tied up on the other side. Captain Ron asked them what their cruising speed was and since it was faster than ours, he suggested that they pass us as soon as we exited the lock. It turns out that

they were going straight to the Champlain Canal and we were turning west to the Erie Canal.

Soon we turned west and saw the dock at the welcome center. It was nearly full but there was a long empty space so we headed for it. It turned out to be reserved for pumping out (the holding tank). There was a space further along the dock between two boats so Captain Ron slipped in there. Two other boaters grabbed our lines and helped us tie up. Kiki was in a rush to get off and explore so we took her for her exploratory walk.



HIGH COTTON at the Erie Canal Welcome Center



Kiki checks out the mule statue at the Welcome Center

Once she got her idea of what the town smelled like we went inside the welcome center and registered and paid our ten dollars for electric power. Kiki found someone to pet her and didn’t want to leave. Then it was back to the boat to

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

drop off the watchdog and head to town to find someplace to eat.

We had heard about a restaurant, Dan and Paul's so that's where we headed but first, we climbed the hill to watch another boat go through the first lock. This lock raises boats about thirty seven feet and it's impressive to watch. Heading from the lock to the restaurant we passed some of the remains of previous locks on the canal.

Our meal at Dan and Paul's was delicious and cheap and we will probably go back for breakfast tomorrow morning. Waterford is a much bigger town than many we have visited lately so we'll walk around tomorrow.



Captain Ron's \$12 lobster roll

Back at the boat, we gathered up the pooch and set out along the waterfront. When we came to the junction of the Erie Canal and the Hudson River there was a small boat ramp. Kiki recognized what she saw and immediately ran to the water for a swim. After her swim, the humans sat on a convenient park bench. What we didn't know at first was, the K-9 decided to dig a hole in the sandy soil under the bench. She ended up throwing dirt all over the walk and covering herself in sandy mud.



Yes, that little dog made that big hole

We convinced her (it didn't take much convincing) to take another swim but she still had to have a bath on the back of HIGH COTTON before she was allowed inside. She and Captain Ron went to the V berth for naps.

Since our meal was about 3:00 PM, we weren't very hungry so some apple slices were sufficient. It's just about time for bed.

Captain's Log, day fifty, (June 21, 2018)

We're still at the welcome center. It's free but the limit is two nights. Electricity is ten dollars. We have showers and water and a space on a long floating dock.

We lingered in bed this morning, finally rolling out of the sack and walking the Sea Dog in time to make it to Dan and Paul's by 10:00 AM for breakfast. The place was nearly full and we got two of the last four seats available. While we were looking over the menu the couple from the boat behind us walked in so they joined us for breakfast. We've seen them somewhere along the way.

We had a nice conversation with them and of course, delicious and inexpensive meals. We had appointments for manicures and pedicures at the

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

closest nail salon which was across the bridge in Troy, NY so we excused ourselves and walked on over.

After the salon, we stopped at the grocery store and drugstore on the way back to the marina. Captain Ron hadn't planned our next stop yet so he spent some time with the computer and the cruising guides. He also cleaned the water tank strainer again. We're going to have to figure out what is causing the blockage and eliminate it.

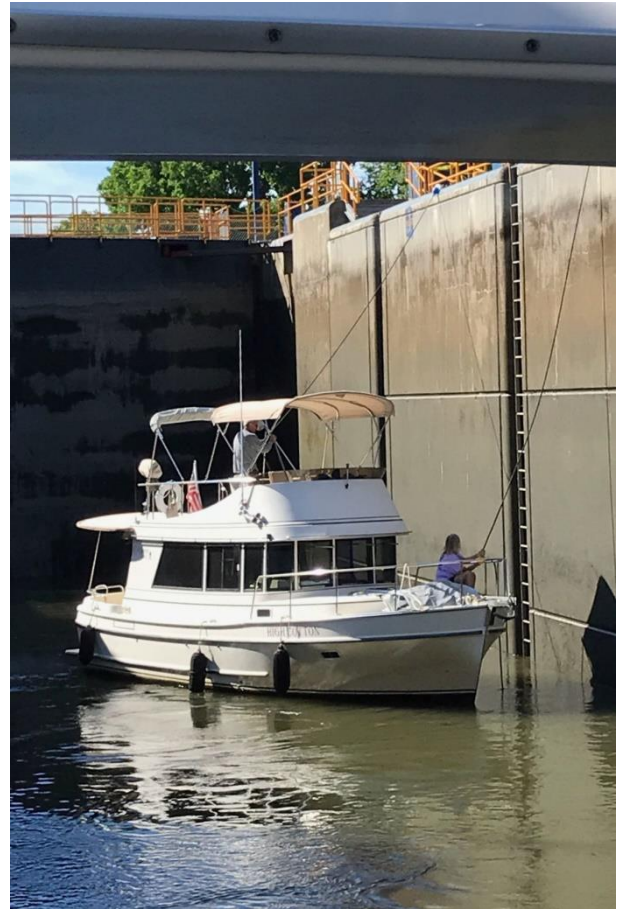
We walked back to town to the "fancy" restaurant. Not fancy enough for cloth tablecloths and napkins, but apparently one of the town's nicest restaurants. The food was good and we have enough for another meal.

We walked back to the boat, walked the pooch and then took showers. We won't be in a hurry to leave in the morning but we won't be sleeping until 10:00 AM either.

Captain's Log, day fifty one, (June 22, 2018)

We posted the other day about driving the marina's loaner car to the top of the hill. Today we did it in HIGH COTTON! We didn't drive the boat up the hill; we passed through seven locks which raise the boat different distances each time. We are now two hundred and twenty five feet above sea level. The first five locks are one after the other. You exit from the upper pool of one into the lower chamber of the next.

Each locking involves entering slowly, next to the lock wall and grabbing two wet and slimy lines hanging from the top of the lock to keep the boat from drifting into other boats in the lock. For most of the trip there were four boats travelling together.



HIGH COTTON getting ready to lock up on the Erie Canal



Locking up with three other boats on the Erie Canal

We've gotten ahead of ourselves though. Captain Ron's acid reflux acted up on him last night and he got very little sleep. We planned on leaving later but when we got up, the boats were lining up to

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

lock through and we figured we had better join them because we didn't know when our next chance would be. We scurried around and were able to join the group as the last in line. That was around 9:00 AM.



A guard gate on the Erie Canal

Because going through seven locks required far more time than steady cruising, we realized that we would be pretty late getting to our planned destination. Captain Ron got on the computer and was able to find a small combination marina and campground. We are the only cruising boat here and by far the largest but it's a beautiful place with decent heads and showers, all for twenty dollars.

Kiki likes it because there's a fenced in dog run where she doesn't have to wear her leash and a small boat ramp where she can swim. If it rains tomorrow we may ask to stay another day

So we took our showers and ate dinner, something Patti fixed from scratch, not leftovers. Captain Ron seems to be feeling better but we will see tonight.

Captain's Log, day fifty two, (June 23, 2018)

Yes, Captain Ron is late again with his post but he had a good reason this time. More on that later.

Someone at the boat landing across the river decided to set off fireworks once it got dark last night. We were already in bed and it woke the crew. Apparently, the watch puppy was pretty worn out because after the first few barks she rolled back over and went to sleep. This lasted twenty minutes or so and then ended and the humans went back to sleep. We had a quiet night on the river.

We got up, walked the ship's puppy, and had our coffee. We saw the owner of the campground walking his puppy so Captain Ron took Kiki to make a friend. Captain Ron was talking to the owner about the weather and he assured Captain Ron that it wasn't going to rain today. He even pulled out his phone and showed him the radar proving it.

Being assured that it wouldn't rain, we got HIGH COTTON ready for another day's journey, cast off our lines and headed west. An hour or so later, it started to rain. Not heavy rain, but rain none the less. We made it through the first lock but eventually decided to drive from the lower helm. This was fine until we got to the second lock of the day so we put on our rain gear and navigated the second lock. Then we went back inside.

Not long after the second lock, we had our destination, Amsterdam, NY's Riverside Park in view so it was back to the rain gear to dock the boat.

Some of the people we have met along the way were already docked at the park and one of them came out and grabbed our lines for us. Once we were docked it stopped raining.

Our friend said it was supposed to rain the next day so he had paid for two days. We decided that was a good idea so that's what we did.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

The docks are managed by an on-site restaurant that seems to have variable hours. The chef said they would be closed to the public tonight (they are normally open on Saturdays for dinner) because it was supposed to rain again but he would feed the boaters. We made plans to meet and go to the restaurant at 6:00 PM.

About 5:00 PM, he came to the dock and told us he had changed his mind but we should walk over the new pedestrian bridge to an Italian restaurant on the other side of the river.

Well, Captain Ron and Patti met the other couple about 6:00 PM and walked across the river to the restaurant. We had to wait a long time for our table, a long time for the server, a long time for our salads and a very long time for our food. To make a long story short, it was 9:20 PM and nearly dark when we got back to the docks. But the food was good and they gave us free desserts for our wait.

So that's Captain Ron's reason for being late. He was kept up past his bedtime.

Captain's Log, day fifty three, (June 24, 2018)

Since it was supposed to rain today and we had already paid for two nights, we slept in late. Embarrassingly late. Anyhow, the dog was walked and Patti cooked breakfast. A better term would be "brunch". The sun was shining and no rain was to be seen.

The laundry here is free. Not the usual "free", the machines take quarters but the coin box is left unlocked so you pull it out, take four quarters out, put them in the machine and push the lever in. The machine starts and the quarters drop down into the box for the next user. We decided that since we had already paid for dockage and it was

supposed to rain, this would be a great time to do the laundry so we gathered up the dirty clothes and bedding and started the process.

Meanwhile, the restaurant was catering a graduation party in a big tent on the grounds. Captain Ron speculated that the ones graduating were graduating from middle school. Also, most of the people appeared to be of Middle Eastern descent and the music we heard reinforced that appearance. They weren't loud though and didn't interfere with our day.

After the laundry was done and put away and the bed made we decided to go for a walk and explore. First though, we took the Sea Dog for a walk. Up the elevator to the pedestrian walkway, across the railroad tracks and highway and then to the (mostly closed) mall. We walked back and waited for a train to pass under us but none came so we came back down the elevator and back to the boat.



The docked boats from the pedestrian walkway

By that time we were too tired to go back out so we walked up to the restaurant and ordered dinner. Our friends from last night walked by just after we placed our orders so we invited them to join us.

After dinner we walked the puppy and then took showers. Tomorrow we'll get up when we feel

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

like it and be on our way. We heard another boater say they will be at the lock when it opens at 7:00 AM. We won't be with him.

Captain's Log, day fifty four, (June 25, 2018)

Surprisingly, we were up relatively early this morning and again ended up leading the flotilla through the first two locks. Then, a faster boat, New York natives who claimed they were travelling to Buffalo for "wings" decided to exercise their engines and were soon out of sight.

We had powdered bag donuts for breakfast. A couple hours into today's trip we passed a dock on the side of the river with a McDonalds within sight. Don't think there wasn't a strong temptation to stop for an Egg McMuffin or two!

We resisted though, partly because we had people following us and partly because we were speeding along at seven knots. We should have stopped and if it's the right time on the way back, we probably will.

Our cruising partners dropped off one town before us at Canajoharie, NY. We didn't stop there because we couldn't pronounce it! Apparently there is more there than we could see from the water so we might stop there on the way back.

We got to our planned destination at St. Johnsville Municipal Marina to find ourselves docked against a "sea wall". Basically, this is a wall about six feet above the river level with rings and cleats along the top. This is fine for a big boat but for HIGH COTTON, it means climbing onto the side deck, walking to the bow and stepping over the bow rail onto the sea wall. It's doable but care must be exercised.



HIGH COTTON tied up at St. Johnsville Municipal Marina

We were able to lift Kiki off the boat but to get back on, she had to walk along the side deck from the bow to the cockpit. She was reluctant to try this until she watched Patti do it.

We walked to town to a little food market and deli. We got a foot long sub and ate it on a picnic table on Main Street watching the cars and trucks go by. Then we went back in and bought some deli salads and carrots for later.

From there we walked to the other end of town to a restaurant and ice cream shop for, you guessed it, ice cream! The people from the boat in front of us happened to walk in so we chatted with them for a bit, stopped in the Dollar General store and then walked back to the boat.

There was a local man walking with his dog towards his boat and he and Captain Ron stopped to chat. It turned out that he was from Silver Spring, MD, Captain Ron's home town. It's a small world sometimes.

This marina is also a campground and they are renovating the closest bathhouse so we have to walk the length of the campground to the bathhouse. But, it's brand new and really nice.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Tomorrow we'll move on to Utica. From there, it's a short hop to Sylvan Beach and Oneida Lake, our planned "turning around" point. We shall see.

Captain's Log, day fifty five, (June 26, 2018)

We didn't take showers last night because of the walk and the fact that it was beginning to get a bit chilly. Instead, we took them this morning after getting up and walking the K-9. We were able to buy ice from the manager's grandson and we topped off the water tanks before we left the marina.

We've neglected to mention the trains. The railroad tracks run alongside the Erie Canal for much of its length. These are busy tracks with both freight and passenger traffic. This is fine while we are travelling as we can see them coming and going and it adds to the trip. The only problem is, they keep going when we stop and keep going all night long. Many of the docks and marinas we've stayed at are between the railroad tracks and the river. High Cotton is not soundproof.

We got underway a little before 10:00 AM and immediately had a lock to pass through. Our travelling friends who had stopped at Canajoharie caught up with us in the lock. We locked through four locks today, one with a forty foot lift which took a good while. We are now four hundred and four feet above sea level. That's approximately twenty seven HIGH COTTONs placed on top of each other!



Our travelling companions behind us in the 40' lift lock

We rounded a corner and spied the Utica Historical Marina on the port side so we went on by, turned around and docked so our electrical connection would be on the most convenient side. Normally, we dock into the current to have the best control but there is no appreciable current on the Erie Canal so we are able to dock on the most convenient side.

There's probably a good reason why this is called the "Utica Historical Marina" but for all practical purposes, it's a dock in front of a restaurant and you go into the restaurant and pay the dollar a foot fee.

There is a grocery store on the other side of the river in North Utica. The bartender at the restaurant told us not to go there after dark so we got our folding cart out and headed over the bridge and under the freeway. It seemed a nice enough area and the store was well stocked and beautiful. Captain Ron sat on a bench while Patti stocked up on necessities.

We took turns pushing and pulling the cart the seven tenths of a mile back to the dock. We got our exercise for the day.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



Patti pushing our fold-up cart back from the grocery store

Dinner was leftovers from a couple nights ago augmented by frozen baby lima beans (cooked of course). Tomorrow we should reach Sylvan Beach and Oneida Lake.



HIGH COTTON at the Utica Historical Marina

Captain's Log, day fifty six, (June 27, 2018)

We had a surprisingly quiet night last night. No noise from the restaurant or the bridge and apparently the railroad tracks veer off away from the Canal at this point. Captain Ron had to rouse the crew out of bed at 8:30 AM so we could get underway.

With the different boats choosing to stop at different places along the way, the traffic had become spaced out. Two boats passed us before

we got underway. This meant that by the time we got to the first lock, there was a boat in the chamber going up so we had to wait for it to finish and for the lock to be emptied before we could lock up.



HIGH COTTON tied up waiting for the lock to open

This was the last lock "up" for this portion of our trip. We reached four hundred and twenty four feet above sea level. The next two locks let us back down to the level of Oneida Lake. We passed some dredge boats working on the canal. At the second of today's locks, the lock tender held us up until two other boats caught up so all three could lock through that lock and the next lock together. This also made it easier for the dredge boats because they only had to move out of the way once.

The boat directly behind us was a fast boat and the crew was delivering it to its owner in Chicago so after the last lock we let it go on by and disappear into the mist (it was raining by then). The last boat was our travelling companions who caught up with us.

We called the marina and were given a space on the face dock. We had planned on topping off our fuel tanks but Captain Ron didn't want to fuel up in the rain and risk getting water in the tanks so we'll get fuel before we leave. Our friends

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

decided to take a slip also so they pulled in after us.

Once we got the power connected and checked in, we all walked (in the rain) to town for an early dinner. It was a bit further than we thought and raining harder than we would have liked but we had a nice dinner and conversation. By the time we got back though, Captain Ron was wet and tired (even though we were wearing our raincoats).



Dinner in town with Chuck and Margaret

Patti walked the puppy and took a shower. Captain Ron decided he was wet enough for one day so he will take one tomorrow.

It's still raining but there are several TV stations to choose from. We'll be here two or three days and then turn around and head home.

Captain's Log, day fifty seven, (June 28, 2018)

We woke this morning to the sound of someone knocking on the boat's window. It turned out to be our travelling buddies Chuck and Margaret saying goodbye. They are continuing west on their second Great Loop adventure while we will be turning around and returning to Charleston, SC the way we came. We will miss their company.

Captain Ron gathered his supplies and walked to the shower while Patti and the hound went back to bed. Once Captain Ron returned, Patti and the puppy got up and there was a short dog walk to take care of business, followed by breakfast on HIGH COTTON.



Patti and the puppy on their morning walk

Patti decided this would be a good place to do a load of laundry so she gathered a up load and headed for the machines.

This marina, Mariner's Landing, is a bit like a few we've stopped at recently; a combination of marina and campground. We decided to walk around the grounds a bit. Most of the campers here are permanent and the owners come for the summer or summer weekends.

We stopped to talk to a group of the residents and one lady asked if Kiki would like a dog biscuit. Kiki followed her into her camper for it. The people here seem friendly and glad to make new friends.

We took the Sea Dog back to the boat and set out on foot to see the town without the rain. We walked along the beach a bit and then walked through the amusement park. This is an old time park with rides and arcade games. It reminded Captain Ron of the 1960s but is apparently much older than that. It even smelled old.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



The roller coaster at Sylvan Beach Amusement Park

We stopped in a restaurant for a light meal and then headed back to the marina. Tomorrow we will visit the beach again when it's supposed to be much warmer.

Captain's Log, day fifty eight, (June 29, 2018)

One thing we haven't mentioned yet is wildlife. On a trip like this we would have expected to see all manner of wildlife. That hasn't been the case. We've seen a deer, a couple turtles, a small snake, geese and ducks at marinas and a hawk or two. The Hudson River is too wide to see much on shore but the Erie Canal is not that wide in most places and passes through some very rural areas. We can only wonder.

We got up late today, walked the K-9 and had breakfast. Captain Ron did some figuring and has nine hours before the next oil change is due. That's about two days travel at our customary rate. It's OK to go a little over; we're not going to anchor the boat at one hundred hours to do an oil change.

Captain Ron also spent some time trying to plan our return trip while trying to stop at different places on the way back. Most of the places we

have stayed have been nice enough but variety is nice also.

One of Captain Ron's goals was to swim in Oneida Lake so once it got warm, he changed into his swim trunks, gathered up a towel and we walked the long walk to the beach, leaving the ship's puppy to guard the boat. Patti wasn't going to go in the water but once Captain Ron waded in, she took off her shoes and waded in as well. Oneida Lake at Sylvan Beach is very shallow for a long distance from the beach so Captain Ron eventually gave up on his dream of swimming and just waded back to shore. At least he got his feet wet.



Captain Ron gets his feet wet



Patti wades in Oneida Lake

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

On the way home we stopped in a couple shops and then got ice cream. This town comes to life on the weekends.



Patti tries on a new hat



Patti and Captain Ron enjoy some ice cream in Sylvan Beach

Patti's sister from Little Valley, NY called and said they would drive to visit us and celebrate Patti's

birthday if we could stay another day. At first the marina told us we couldn't stay because other boats were coming but eventually it was worked out where we could move behind another boat if necessary so it looks like we are staying and her sister and her husband will be driving here.

Dinner was leftovers from a couple nights ago, and then it was take showers and walk the puppy and to bed.

Captain's Log, day fifty nine, (June 30, 2018)

We got up, walked the puppy and went for a boat ride – out into the river and back to the dock behind the boat that was behind us. Of course that meant reconnecting the shorepower cable and dock lines. It turns out our space was never filled and we could have stayed where we were.

Patti's sister Bobbie and her husband Al called and asked if we wanted to go to breakfast so we put away our bagged donuts and waited for them to get here. They had heard good things about a place called "Flo's Diner" so that's where we went.



Al, Bobbie, Patti and Captain Ron

The food was good and there was plenty of it. They advertised "Home of the ten cent coffee." Well, it was ten cents but Captain Ron found it to

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

be pretty weak. Perhaps twenty cents would have allowed them to brew it a little stronger.

After breakfast they drove us to a CVS drug store so we could refill some prescriptions that were running low.

We went back to the boat to walk the K-9 and visit. After a couple hours we decided to walk to town for ice cream. It was a hot walk but the ice cream was worth it. Once we were back to the boat and visiting again, the power went off. Apparently it was off in the entire marina but it came back on after about ten minutes. It was too hot to be without air conditioning.

There was more visiting and dog walking and then we all decided to drive to a restaurant in town for dinner. By the time dinner was over and we were back to the boat it was time for bed so Bobbie and Al drove back to their hotel and the crew of HIGH COTTON went to bed.

Captain's Log, day sixty, (July 1, 2018)

"East Bound and Down, Loaded Up and Boating"

Yep we've turned around and are heading east and we are slowly coming back down. But first: We got up early today so we could move to the fuel dock as soon as one of the cruising boats left. We didn't make it though, there was a short line. Once we got docked again, we found that they couldn't pump diesel fuel anyway, the nozzle was broken. We paid for our extra day, turned around and headed back the way we came.

We complained about the cool weather on the way up, well winter turned directly to summer here. It's in the mid-nineties and brutal.

We did manage to make about forty miles today and stopped at a marina where we could add

about fifty gallons of diesel to our tanks. It was almost time for an oil change so Captain Ron got busy and had everything taken care of in about an hour. Patti and the puppy took a nap.



HIGH COTTON on the wall at the Village of Ilion Marina

After an hour of "mechanicing", Captain Ron was in dire need of a shower so off he went. The showers here are a bit "rustic" (as we've come to expect in this area) but had plenty of pressure so in short order he was soaped and rinsed and ready to get back to HIGH COTTON for his nap.

Dinner was leftovers from somewhere (they all run together after a while). Then Patti took her shower and the K-9 got her heartworm medicine. Some people walked by eating ice cream but we decided that we were too tired to get off the boat again and walk to the other end of the marina.

We'll try to get underway early tomorrow to beat the heat. We have two possible destinations in mind. If one is full, we'll continue on to the next.

Captain's Log, day sixty one, (July 2, 2018)

Greetings from scenic Canajoharie, NY! We're nestled between the railroad tracks on one side and Interstate 90 on the other but it's a nice floating dock with free electric power to run the air conditioning.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Getting here was pretty uneventful; walk the dog, fill the water tanks and shove off from the sea wall. We went through five locks today, lowering us a hundred feet or so. The locking thing is getting to be pretty routine, although it's time consuming, especially when we have to wait for westbound traffic. It upsets our calculations on how long it should take to get to a particular destination. In this heat, we are trying to find stops with electric power so we can have air conditioning.



The view from the flybridge on the Erie Canal

So after the five locks, we pulled up to the free floating dock at Canajoharie and tied up and connected the shore power cord. Ah, cool air!



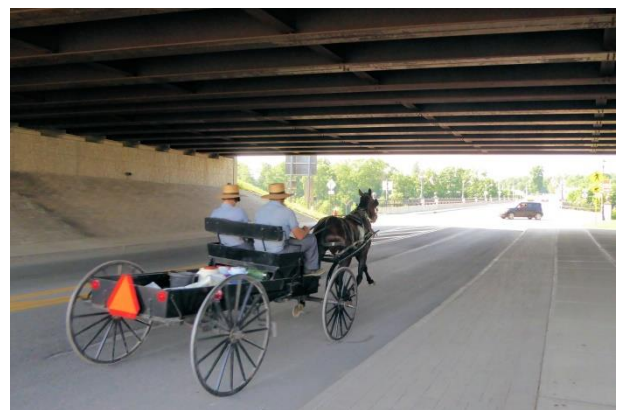
HIGH COTTON at the Canajoharie free dock

We walked the Sea Dog of course. Being next to the river, she found a way down the bank and into

the river for a cooling swim. Then it was back to HIGH COTTON where everybody settled in for a short, cooling nap. Captain Ron found no channels on the TV so we won't be watching reruns of "Tool Time" tonight.

The sign on the power pedestal stated that the electricity was provided by the merchants of Canajoharie and suggested that we patronize them. We headed to a meat market that was supposed to have produce (green beans and carrots for the puppy). Well, frozen vegetables don't count as "produce" in our book so we left. The next stop was the Village Restaurant that we found on the Internet. It was closed for vacation. The Internet mentioned an Irish Pub so we walked there. We walked in and headed for a table when a woman came out of the back and announced that they don't serve food on Mondays.

We gave up and walked across the bridge to a McDonalds in Palatine Bridge. Quarter Pounder (now made with fresh, never frozen beef), fries and a soda. And ice cream for dessert. The meal of champions!



One way to get around town in Canajoharie, NY

Walking back, the wind picked up and the sky darkened. We walked the puppy, got back on the boat and took much needed showers. It has started to rain and that's fine. Maybe it will wash some of the dirt off the boat.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain's Log, day sixty two, (July 3, 2018)

We were worried about the trains and the highway noise but we drifted off to sleep and had a good night's sleep. The only problem was, it ended too early as we had a long day planned.

We walked the hound, talked a bit to a couple on one of the other boats and then shoved off. We went through a couple of locks and there it was; the free dock near the McDonalds in Fultonville, NY. We pulled in, tied up and Patti walked to McDonalds while Captain Ron kept the Sea Dog company. Actually, there's also a Dunkin' Donuts next to the dock so when Patti got back with breakfast she went and got us donuts for tomorrow.



Breakfast stop in Fultonville, NY

We hopped back onto HIGH COTTON, untied the lines and continued east with our Egg McMuffins and hash browns. The depth sounder was flashing at 6.4 feet but we knew there was over ten feet of water so we ignored it. It does this now and then. Later in the day Captain Ron went below, unplugged it and plugged it back in. That fixed it. In the computer world, that would be "rebooting".

The locks in this part of the canal are about six miles or so apart so the lock keepers call the next lock and tell the person there to expect you. This is nice because in most cases it means the lock is

ready when you get there and you don't have to wait for it to be filled. Of course this doesn't work if there's a boat coming the other way so we did have to wait at one lock.

We decided to stop at the Schenectady Yacht Club for the night. You would think that the Schenectady Yacht Club would be in Schenectady but it's not. It's actually in Rexford, NY, just a little further down the river (and easier to spell). We had planned on just stopping for one night but the dockmaster pointed out that tomorrow would be Independence Day and we might have a hard time getting into a marina so he talked us into staying for two nights.

It's a nice place with docks along the river. Best of all, it has a swimming pool. On a hot day like today, a dip in the pool was just what the doctor (Doctor Ron) ordered.

We had a nice conversation with the club Commodore who was in the pool with his wife. They told us about the club and the town.



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

Dinner was leftovers. After dinner we walked the pooch and met some more of the club members. The people here seem very friendly and not how you might think yacht club members would be. No white sport jackets and captain's hats at this yacht club.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

The K-9 has been walked and mawmaw and pawpaw are ready for bed. No rush to get up tomorrow.

Captain's Log, day sixty three, (July 4, 2018)

Independence Day! The day for celebrating America's independence from England by eating hot dogs, drinking beer and setting off fireworks.

We slept in, got up and exchanged anniversary cards. Yes, July fourth is our wedding anniversary. We got dressed, ate our donuts from yesterday and walked the dog. Patti was talking to some of the members of the yacht club and lamenting the fact that we had no hot dogs on board and it was a long walk to the store. One of them said "Take my car, the keys are in it." We thanked him and set out for the convenience store/gas station. They had hot dogs and buns but no sauerkraut or hot dog chili. Captain Ron saw a can of sloppy joe mix so he picked it up thinking we could put that on the hot dogs instead of chili. Once we started to prepare dinner, Patti opened it only to learn that it was nothing but seasoned tomato sauce meant to be mixed with hamburger for sloppy joes. Now we have to find hamburger meat somewhere to use with the sauce.

We spent a couple hours or more loafing in the pool and talking to club members and other boaters. The pool was the place to be on a hot day like today.

Eventually we left the pool and came back to the boat for hot dogs and baked beans (no chili). We walked the Sea Dog and she found a place to swim in the river. There were some ducks there and they weren't happy sharing their river with the puppy but she ignored them. After her swim, she decided to roll on her back in the gravel dust road

so she had to get a good shower before she was allowed back inside the boat.

A few of the club members are heading up the river to see fireworks displays. Not us. If we see some, fine. If not, we'll watch them on TV.

Captain's Log, day sixty four, (July 5, 2018)

We left the nice folks at the Schenectady Yacht Club and headed east on the Erie Canal. Today was to be a rather short day but that didn't happen. We got held up at two of the remaining locks because boats were heading west. We were hoping to get to the Welcome Center before all the space was taken up on the docks so we could walk across the river to the grocery store and restock the boat. The delays had us worried but when we cleared the last lock we saw plenty of space, in fact it was nearly empty. We turned around to dock and that's when we saw the reason why. Posted all along the wall were signs saying "No Docking". Apparently there was some sort of boat show going on the rest of the week.



More sights on the Erie Canal

There was nothing left to do but circle around again and head on out to the Hudson River towards Troy and further south.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

We got held up for another half hour at the Troy Lock waiting for northbound boats. They will probably be disappointed when they get to the Welcome Center and find they are not welcomed.

The plan at this point, since we didn't have a plan anymore, we decided to continue south and figure out something. When we got to Albany there were two tugboats turning a giant barge around and Captain Ron tried calling each for instructions with no answer. He decided to continue down the river and that's when one of the tugs called us and asked us to wait while they finished.

Once they got going, Captain Ron called them and made arrangements to safely pass them as they were going a bit slower than we normally go. This was one of the times when having AIS on board was an advantage. The tugs were able to call HIGH COTTON by name.

We eventually came up with a plan and that was to stop at Shady Harbor, a nice marina that we had spent three days at on the way north. They have a loaner car and importantly, a swimming pool just waiting for Captain Ron.

We called and made arrangements even though this meant a pretty long day on the water. Once we arrived and got ourselves docked with the help of two skilled dock hands, we went to the office (with the hound, of course) checked in and made arrangements to get the loaner car.

It was up the mountainside again to the next town to the grocery store but we got what we needed and returned to the marina. Captain Ron donned his swimsuit and headed for the pool.

After his dip in the pool (he didn't actually swim, he just cooled off and talked to the other boaters), we walked to the restaurant for a nice meal. We just had sandwiches and an appetizer so there wouldn't be any leftovers.

It had been a long day so there wasn't time for a report at night. That's Captain Ron's excuse and he is sticking to it.

Captain's Log, day sixty five, (July 6, 2018)

Since Captain Ron had been too tired to shower last night, he got up early and took one this morning. By the time he got back to the boat, the rest of the crew was awake and dressed. We looked up the weather and saw that it was supposed to rain this morning. As soon as we stepped out the door to get ready to depart, it began raining. We got unplugged, untied and underway but forgot to top off the water tanks.

We set up the helm chair for driving from inside. It rained for an hour or more and then stopped so we moved back to the flybridge for the rest of the day.

We passed several cruising sized boats heading north as we motored south. They are going to be disappointed if they expect to stop at the Erie Canal Welcome Center.

We didn't have a plan for today either so we decided to find an anchorage.

Captain Ron used the "Active Captain" website to search for a convenient one and we headed for it. We had our doubts because the wind had picked up and the anchoring spot had the boat bouncing back and forth but we really didn't have a better choice at that point.

We mentioned having an opened can of Sloppy Joe mix and we had bought some ground beef at the grocery store so we had Sloppy Joes, baked beans, macaroni salad and cole slaw for dinner. Of course we're having to conserve water because

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

we forgot to fill the tanks and it's been several days so that was a concern when cleaning up.

For anyone who likes trains, this is a perfect anchorage. There is a commuter rail line on the nearest shore with a train every twenty minutes or so and on the far shore are the freight train tracks. We'll sleep through it though, it was a long day.



We anchored behind this island



Looking down river from our anchorage

Captain's Log, day sixty six, (July 7, 2018)

We got up, and since we were anchored, we didn't have to worry about walking the puppy. She was trained to use puppy pads but she has decided she would rather scratch on the back door and use the cockpit for her "needs". That's

OK, we have a shower in the cockpit that we use to rinse it off.

We got underway and passed West Point again. There was a large private yacht in front of the Academy with a tender and it looked like they were trying to find a way to visit. We just kept on going.

We needed fuel so we called Haverstraw Marina. We knew the general location of the marina but there are a couple more marinas in that area. We were trying to get directions but were apparently talking to someone who had never come there by water.

Eventually we found the marina and fuel dock but had to wait for a big boat taking on lots of diesel. We waited our turn, filled up and then filled our nearly empty water tanks.

Back on the water, we came upon a bunch of sailboats stretching across the river. Captain Ron tried to go around them but apparently he didn't go far enough. The local town police boat stopped him and after a thorough safety inspection, gave him a ticket. Oh well, stuff happens.



An interesting boat on the Hudson River

We decided that we were close enough to New York to continue on to the anchorage behind the Statue of Liberty. We saw the buildings in

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Manhattan again and endured the heavy river traffic even though it was Saturday. Ferries and tour boats were going in every direction and some were travelling at thirty knots or more.



Manhattan from the Hudson River



The Staten Island Ferry

We finally turned into the anchorage and found a spot among the half dozen or so boats already anchored. The anchorage was still subject to river wakes and we rocked. After a while, a helicopter appeared overhead and several law enforcement boats came through the anchorage making considerable wakes. We were trying to eat at that point and things were flying off the counters. We never did find out why and they eventually left. It was rough trying to get to sleep.

Captain's Log, day sixty seven, (July 8, 2018)

The alarm was set for 5:30 AM so we got up bright and early and in forty minutes we were on our way south. Even as early as 6:10 AM, tugs were pushing barges and ships were entering the harbor. We saw a tanker and two of the huge cruise ships coming into New York Harbor.



The Statue of Liberty at 6:00 AM



Patti and the puppy at the Statue of Liberty

The weather forecast had called for calm winds this morning. This turned out to be untrue. Our journey down the New Jersey coast on the Atlantic Ocean was rough, very rough. Rough enough that we were stuck on the flybridge with no safe way to get down and back inside.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Eventually, the seas calmed a bit as we approached Manasquan Inlet. We turned into the inlet to find a dozen or so boats drifting in the channel fishing. We assume the fish use the inlet as well as the boats. Captain Ron managed to weave his way between the boats without hitting any and continued through the Point Pleasant Canal, another very congested waterway.



Leaving New York City in our wake

Being a warm summer Sunday, it seemed everyone who owned a boat had it on the water today.

Barnegat Bay (where the ICW is) is a large but shallow body of water. Even in the ICW channel it's often just five or six feet deep while the rest of the Bay may be three or four feet deep. People with shallow draft boats often whiz by in any direction but boats like HIGH COTTON or larger boats must try to stay in the channel to avoid hitting the bottom. Many folks with larger boats avoid the New Jersey ICW altogether and go from Delaware to New York along the coast on the Atlantic Ocean.

After about eight hours on the water we began looking for a place to stop. That could have been a marina or an anchorage but we had already been anchored for two nights in a row and were ready for nice long showers.

Captain Ron looked on the Internet and found a marina called Spenser's Marina in Waretown, NJ that was nearby so we called and made arrangements for a slip for the night.



HIGH COTTON docked at Spenser's Marina, Waretown, NJ

It's a good thing we did because shortly after getting tied up and checked in, Captain Ron started experiencing stomach pain. The marina owner (Spenser) loaned us his car to go to a restaurant and the grocery store. Captain Ron ate very little of his dinner and sat in the car while Patti did the shopping.

Once we returned to the marina, we debated going to the emergency room but didn't. Captain Ron couldn't tell if it was something minor or a return of his pancreatitis. Spenser called his friend in the fire department and told them we might be calling them later. We didn't though.

Captain's Log, day sixty eight, (July 9, 2018)

We woke this morning with the option to get underway or stay another day. Captain Ron felt better this morning but still had some pain. Patti offered to do some laundry and clean the boat if we stayed so after some thought, Captain Ron agreed to stay.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

We had scrambled eggs for breakfast, and then Patti got to work. Captain Ron and Kiki stayed in the V berth watching TV and staying out of the way.

The marina is closed on Mondays but just the office. Boaters can stay. It turns out that Spenser had minor surgery today so he sent his wife to check on us and collect our payment. This is a nice small, family run marina and we would recommend it to anyone passing through. They also have a well-stocked marina store but we didn't have time to check it out.

Captain Ron spent some time on the computer paying his bills. Unfortunately, they don't all come due at the same time so this is a three time a month chore. He is thinking that having them paid automatically might be a better option for the future.

If you are reading this, you may have figured out that he also spent some time catching up on his "Captain's Log". The severe rocking two nights ago and the stomach pain last night kept him away from the keyboard.

The dog has been walked and showers taken. Hopefully we will make it to Atlantic City tomorrow.

Captain's Log, day sixty nine, (July 10, 2018)

Ok, we woke at around 7:30 AM and decided to get underway. Patti walked the puppy and got the third bag of ice we had paid for yesterday. Someone other than Spencer opened the marina but we had already paid. Captain Ron was walking around with his coffee cup and the guy asked if he would like a cup of fresh coffee. Captain Ron said "yes" and he said "come inside". He put on the pot of coffee and said "let's sit outside." Well, he

talked and he talked but never mentioned the coffee again. Finally it was time to head out so Ron went back to the boat without any more coffee.

We pulled out of the marina and into the channel when Captain Ron noticed that the depth sounder wasn't working. The New Jersey ICW is a bad place to be without a depth sounder so he put Patti at the wheel and went down and disconnected it for thirty seconds or so and reconnected it. This made it work again but it's something we'll have to look into when we get back.

We did our best to follow the winding and shallow channel south towards Atlantic City. About an hour from Atlantic City, the green headed flies appeared. Patti got the fly swatter and began swatting them but it seemed for every one she smashed, two or three more would appear. Eventually it got to where she was doing nothing but swatting flies and the Sea Dog was trying to get them with her mouth.

We realized that we were losing the battle so we grabbed the K-9 and headed below to the comfort of the saloon. Unfortunately, this resulted in a few flies getting inside so Patti and Kiki had to continue the battle.

We did hit the bottom once a little ways before Atlantic City, directly between the channel markers. Captain Ron had to go up top and brave the flies to figure out how to get back in deeper water.

We eventually made it to our destination, Farley State Marina (again) and backed into our slip. Kiki was glad to get off the boat and away from the flies. We all were.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



Approaching Atlantic City (again)

After checking in, we went back to HIGH COTTON for a rest. We had to decide what to do, take the Jitney back to the boardwalk or try out the hotel pool. We decided on the pool.

This wasn't your typical hotel pool. It is on the sixth floor but outdoors. The rest of the hotel goes to the twenty seventh floor but there is no thirteenth floor so it's really twenty six stories tall. The pool furnishes towels and has waitresses selling food and drinks pool side. There is a swimming pool, a lounging pool and four hot tubs. There is loud music blaring from each end of the pool deck (not the same music, BTW). For some reason there were several security people walking around but no lifeguards.

We swam for a while and lounged for a while, then walked back to the boat, changed our clothes and walked back to the outdoor bar/restaurant for a light meal. There was a disc jockey playing songs we mostly didn't recognize. After our meal it was back to the boat to walk the puppy and take showers.

We had made it from Cape May to Atlantic City in one day on the way north but it was a long day. We'll probably split the trip back into two days and anchor somewhere.

Captain's Log, day seventy, (July 11, 2018)

We woke up about 7:30 AM so we decided to go ahead and get underway. There was the usual dog walking and the water tanks needed to be filled. Also, unlike most marinas, at the Farley State Marina (Golden Nugget) the slips are treated like hotel rooms so you have to "check out" when you leave. Patti took care of this while Captain Ron filled the water tanks. She also got us a reservation at Utsch's Marina in Cape May for Thursday.

We got underway before 9:00 AM and for a while we thought we had gotten away from the green headed flies. Once we got away from the city and into the marshes, they reappeared. They weren't as bad as yesterday and we didn't go below but Patti was busy swatting at them. The Sea Dog decided to just hide from them under the dash behind the spare propane tank.

We had to go through three drawbridges. The first was about a five minute wait but we had to wait almost a half hour for the second one. Unlike many of the bridge tenders in the south, this guy wouldn't deviate from his schedule one minute. The third was almost as soon as we requested it.

Most of our trip today was through winding and very shallow channels. We hit the bottom a few times but were able to back off and find deeper water. Finally, after not quite five hours, we decided to find somewhere to anchor. With the channel at five feet or less and the side waters just a foot or two deep, this wasn't as easy as it might have been. We finally found a deeper channel behind the barrier islands that's wide enough for any other boats to pass our anchored boat.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



One of dozens of marinas along the New Jersey ICW

We rested up a bit, found nearly nothing to watch on TV and ate leftovers for dinner.

We have about three hours to go to get to Cape May where we'll fuel up and stage for the trip up Delaware Bay. Captain Ron is hoping to get his clam pizza that he missed on the way north. Patti isn't too sure about a clam pizza so she will probably try something else. We shall see.

Captain's Log, day seventy one, (July 12, 2018)

We slept well last night after the local boats went home. We woke up around 7:30 AM so we got up and made the boat ready to get underway. We opened the cabin door to let the pooch out to do her business but the flies soon appeared so the door had to be closed again. The anchor rode came up with a large bunch of seaweed on it so Captain Ron had to deal with that. We eventually got ourselves headed back towards the ICW.

Once on the ICW, we found ourselves dealing with the same shallow conditions as yesterday. Apparently, because of storms over the last few years, our charts were not as accurate as they should be and areas that are supposed to be deep were shallow and vice versa. Several times we had to back away from a shallow spot and search

for deeper water. We would go from twenty feet to three feet in a short distance. We also had numerous extended no-wake zones to deal with.

Eventually though, we made it to Utsch's Marina where we took on fifty or so gallons of diesel fuel and were directed to our slip for the night.

We got ourselves tied up, hooked up and checked in. We walked the hound who was really glad to set foot on solid ground. Kiki writes: *I love my boat and the boat trips but I need my breaks on land also. I like to check out new places and smells and I need to go potty.*

After that we rested a bit from the day's travels and set out for the restaurant and Captain Ron's clam pizza.

We were standing on the street corner, contemplating what seemed like an endless line of traffic when a motorist stopped to let us cross. Unfortunately, another motorist a few cars back didn't expect him to do that and ran into the car ahead of him.

We went into the restaurant and ordered. Clam pizza for Captain Ron and "meat" pizza for Patti. Captain Ron's pizza was OK but it didn't rate all the hype he had built it up to be. There was a lot more cheese than clams. Patti didn't care for the sliced meatballs on her pizza and picked them off and made a pile of them on the tray. The good news is, we brought the leftovers home so we each have another half pizza for later.

As we walked back to the marina, the police were still dealing with one of the drivers involved in the accident.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



The infamous clam pizza

We walked the puppy and took turns showering. It looks like the weather for transiting the Delaware Bay will be better Saturday than tomorrow so we'll stay here another day and then leave early Saturday morning.

Captain's Log, day seventy two, (July 13, 2018)

Since we decided to stay in Cape May another day, we had no reason to get up early. We finally rolled out of the sack at about 8:00 AM. We got dressed and walked the puppy. The staff at Utsch's Marina has really taken to her and her to them. She knows who is going to pet her and who is going to give her a dog biscuit.

Patti had planned on cooking breakfast for the crew this morning but as Kiki was being petted, one of the other transient boaters walked up and asked for a recommendation for a breakfast restaurant. They suggested a place across the street and suggested that we go there too. That sounded like a good idea so we took the pooch back to the boat and walked to the restaurant.

This restaurant is like an old time diner with just a counter with stools for patrons on one side and the waitresses on the other. It was busy when we

got there and we had to wait for seats. The food was good and plentiful. So much for our diets.

Back at the boat, it was time to walk the Sea Dog again and she walked straight to the marina office for more treats. We looked at the maps and considered where we might walk today but in the end we just walked back to HIGH COTTON where Captain Ron checked on conditions for tomorrow's journey. It looks like conditions will be OK but it's about an eight hour trip. Patti will have to spend some time at the wheel, Captai Ron can't do eight hours straight. Captain Ron also was able to repair the rubber rub rail that had been pulled out on one of the canal walls.

After a while two guys pulled into the slip next to us in a forty two foot Grand Banks. Once they got connected and checked in, the owner got out his hose and bucket and proceeded to wash his boat.

Captain Ron watched for a while but eventually he couldn't stand it and got out his own hose and bucket and began to wash the extremely dirty HIGH COTTON. After a while Patti joined him so now it's not embarrassingly in need of a washing. After washing the boat, we filled the water tanks so HIGH COTTON is fully fueled and watered and ready to go.

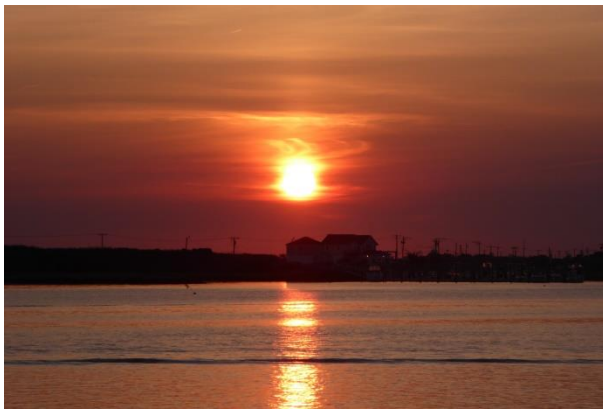
We walked back across the street to the same restaurant where we ate last night. This time there were no traffic accidents. Then it was back to the boat, showers and walk the dog again. Captain Ron couldn't help but notice that next to the heads above the office is a place where guests can plug their computers in for an Internet connection. The local AOL number is posted on the wall! This place has been around a while.

Tomorrow we plan to leave very early.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain's Log, day seventy three, (July 14, 2018)

We said "very early". We got up at 5:00 AM, pretty much the break of dawn. It took us our usual forty minutes or so to get all squared away so we cast off about 5:50 AM. Well, that's fifty minutes but Captain Ron had to top off the oil in the transmission. Even at that ungodly hour, several boats left earlier than we did. We did get a couple pictures of the sunrise on our way out of the marina.



A very rare sunrise photo, Cape May, NJ

We eased into the Cape May Canal, past the ferry boats loading cars and into the lower Delaware Bay. A quick fact: Cape May, NJ is actually further south than Baltimore, MD.



One of the Cape May ferries

We turned north at the buoy and settled in for what would normally be a seven hour cruise to

the mouth of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal. Lady Luck was with us today, the tidal current was in our direction and we made it in just over six hours.

Once we got to the Canal, we turned west for another nearly two hours to Chesapeake City, MD. We were in three different states today!

Chesapeake City has a small free dock that holds three full sized boats. The dockage is free but if you want electrical power or water you pay at city hall.

When we pulled out of the canal and into the lagoon there was no room on the dock but Lady Luck was with us again. A boat was pulling out so we circled around and took its space as it left.



HIGH COTTON at the Chesapeake City free dock

We got tied up and walked the Sea Dog who was very anxious to feel grass under her feet. Then we got the power hooked up, wrote a check and walked to city hall and put it in the drop box. \$15 for air conditioning on a hot day like today is not a bad deal and the dockage is free. There's an ice cream shop just a couple hundred yards from the dock so of course we stopped there and got some. While we were eating ice cream, the Sea Dog found a little beach on the canal so of course she had to go for a swim. She got a shower on the back of the boat before she was allowed back on.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain Ron took the K-9 to the V berth to rest up. It wasn't long before both of them were sound asleep.

At this point we have to mention the GFBL (Go Fast, Be Loud) boats also known as cigarette boats. These are long, fast boats with big racing engines and no mufflers. The Chesapeake Bay is home to a large number of them and they can be heard for miles and miles. Shortly after we docked, one of these GFBL boats pulled into the space in front of HIGH COTTON. We were leaving for the ice cream shop and thought nothing of it.

Captain Ron and the puppy were sound asleep in the V berth when the people returned to the GFBL boat and the captain fired the engine up. Remember, no mufflers! Well, that had them both wide awake instantly.

We found a little sandwich shop and brought a sub back to the boat for dinner. Later, after it had cooled down a bit we took the puppy for a walk again. We met some of the local people and had some nice conversations. Kiki hammed it up and got petted over and over. Then she found some small children to play with. She loves children and they love her.



The C&D Canal is a big ship canal, not just for small boats

It's been a long day for all of us. We're docked a couple hundred yards from a combination restaurant, marina and bar so it's anybody's guess how the night will progress. Tomorrow is not planned yet but there will be time for that in the morning.

Captain's Log, day seventy four, (July 15, 2018)

Dockage at Chesapeake City (the free city dock) is limited to twenty four hours so we couldn't have stayed there another day if we had wanted to. We got up, checked the engine as usual and walked the puppy. Patti walked up to the sandwich shop and got breakfast sandwiches for the humans and a scrambled egg for the four legged one.

We shoved off, exited the lagoon and soon realized that we were facing an opposing current of nearly three knots! It was a slow trip through the rest of the canal.



One of several bridges over the C&D Canal

Towards the end of the canal we saw another Camano Troll exiting a river. The captain called us on the radio and we had a short conversation with him.

Our original plan was to anchor tonight but we decided instead to go to Rock Hall Landing Marina

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

in Rock Hall, MD. This would allow us to take showers and have air conditioning. We called and made reservations and also made reservations at Higgins Yacht Yard in St. Michaels, MD for the next couple nights.

As we headed south on the Chesapeake Bay, we turned on the weather channel on the VHF marine radio. We heard a storm warning for the area we would be travelling through. At the same time, we looked around us and saw dark clouds forming. Then it began to rain so we gathered up the Sea Dog and headed for the comfort of the cabin and the lower helm.

It rained for an hour or so and then it stopped so we went back to the upper helm.

As we approached Rock Hall, we saw over forty boats in a small area in the Bay. As we got closer, they all headed for shore and were out of our way. Apparently there was a fishing tournament and they were participants.

We got to the marina and our assigned slip. We got tied up and plugged in and went to the office to pay. As usual, the K-9 went with us to beg for dog treats. She got a treat and began playing with it and throwing it. Then she started playing with a young female dockhand. Everybody was entertained. Kiki writes: *I like to visit the marina offices. Everyone pets me and they usually give me dog treats. Sometimes they get down on the floor and play with me.*

We decided a dip in the pool would be nice after a long hot day of boating. Well the pool was a bit cooler than we would have liked but we did swim and talk to some of the other boaters. After the pool, we took showers and Captain Ron suggested going to the well-known Waterman's Crab House for steamed crabs so we did.



Our evening meal at Waterman's Crab House

After our meal it was back to HIGH COTTON, walk the dog and hit the sack.

Captain's Log, day seventy five, (July 16, 2018)

There must be a special key combination in Microsoft Word that deletes an entire document. Captain Ron posted yesterday's log, saved his document and was well into today's log when the entire document went blank. He had saved it so he was able to get it back but today's entry was gone. Oh well, to start over:

We woke somewhat early, got dressed and walked the puppy. We went to the office to say goodbye, not because we needed to, but because they had been so friendly. Kiki got another dog biscuit and entertained the dockmaster by throwing it around the office.

We stayed and talked longer than we had planned but finally said goodbye, unhooked the boat and headed out of the harbor.

The trip from Rock Hall to St. Michaels was only about three and a half hours and was routine except for going through the Kent Narrows Bridge with a strong following current. We made it without hitting anything and continued on our way.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



This is how they catch crabs on the Chesapeake Bay

Just as we were entering the Higgins Yacht Yard in St. Michaels, a cruise boat decided to back out of its slip. Never mind that we were right behind it, the captain sounded his horn and began backing out.

Captain Ron considered sounding the danger signal on his own horn but decided the safest thing to do was make a quick turn to get out of its way so that's what he did. There are official regulations governing who has the right of way but there's also an unofficial "Law of gross tonnage" which basically means that you stay out of the way of boats much larger than yours.

Once the cruise boat was out of the way, we continued into the marina and backed into our assigned slip.

Once we got settled in and got the air conditioner running, we went to the office to pay. They had no dog biscuits but we learned that the nearby Acme grocery store where we had planned to restock the boat was closed. When we told them we needed green beans for the puppy, one of the ladies commented that she had just picked wax beans (like green beans but yellow) from her brother's garden that morning so she went downstairs and came back with a handful. Kiki gobbled them up. Supposedly there is a supermarket on the edge of town that will pick up

boaters at the town marinas and return them after they are done shopping. We'll try that tomorrow.

We went back to HIGH COTTON to straighten up and rest a bit. After that we walked the two blocks to town and checked out all the souvenir and tee shirt shops. We got our tee shirts of course and Patti bought a few things. We found a restaurant that looked promising and it was 4:00 PM so we went in and had dinner.

After dinner we walked to the other end of town to the little market. They had some nice meats and interesting things but their green beans were showing signs of old age so we didn't buy anything. We came back to the boat, got the K-9 and walked her to the town park where she went on the sliding board and sniffed and played.

Somehow, bed time crept up on us so we skipped the showers and went to bed.



HIGH COTTON at Higgins Yacht Yard, St. Michaels, MD

Captain's Log, day seventy six, (July 17, 2018)

We woke this morning, got dressed and walked the dog. It's getting to be a habit! We came back and Patti cooked a gourmet breakfast.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

We called the grocery store and a lady in a big SUV came and picked us up and drove us to the store. It was a very nice store with lots of interesting offerings so we got the things on our list and a few extras. We checked out and the lady drove us back to the marina.

After all the groceries were put away we walked the puppy back to the town park. It was high tide and she found a place along the walkway where the water was over the seawall so she ran in and swam around. We continued to the park where she went down the slide a couple more times. On the way back she ran in the water and swam some more. Needless to say, she got rinsed and dried before she was allowed inside the boat.



Elusive "wildlife", St. Michaels, MD

Patti wanted to check the shops in town again so she walked to town, taking the credit card and leaving Captain Ron and the K-9 to guard the boat. Captain Ron tried to plan routes and stops for the next few days but the puppy had other ideas so they both went below to watch TV.

Unfortunately, we're only getting the Maryland public TV channels here so we learned how to cook Japanese food and barbecue various meats.

Patti made it back to the boat with all her purchases just before a thunderstorm hit. She distracted the puppy long enough for Captain Ron to complete his routes as far as Norfolk.

After the rain stopped, the humans walked to town for dinner. Nothing fancy, just burgers. We walked back, got the Sea Dog and walked her over to the other town park. No swimming this time and no slide, just a walk.

Captain Ron and Patti took turns showering and now it's time for bed. We shove off in the morning for another town and another marina.

Captain's Log, day seventy seven, (July 18, 2018)

We got out of bed at our usual leisurely 8:00 AM. We did our engine checks and walked the Sea Dog. Patti took her upstairs to the office to say goodbye but the marina ladies weren't in yet, just the boatyard people.

We headed out of the St. Michaels harbor a little before 9:00 AM. There was another boat ahead of us but it was going a bit faster than us and we lost sight of it after an hour or so. The seas were rougher than we would have expected and we considered taking the puppy below but as the day wore on, they got smoother. It could have been that we changed direction or just that the winds died down.

Captain Ron had plotted a safe route around Poplar Island which is being filled in by sand dredged from other locations in the Bay but as we were rounding it, he figured we probably could have saved some time by going on the other side. Better safe than sorry though.

It only took a little over three hours to reach our destination of Knapps Narrows Marina and Inn. We've been through Knapps Narrows a few times before but never stopped at the marina until today.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Knapps Narrows Marina and Inn is a lovely place. Transients are accommodated on a long, modern floating dock just off the channel. Just pull over and tie up. There's a large swimming pool, free continental breakfast for the guests of the Inn and boaters and the place is beautifully landscaped.

We checked in with the puppy and then went back to the boat to get settled in and cover what needed to be covered and put away what needed to be put away. Patti cut open a cantaloupe that we purchased yesterday and we ate half along with left over ice cream.

The humans changed into their swimsuits and leaving the K-9 to guard the boat, walked to the pool. There was some swimming, some sunbathing and some chatting with other folks at the pool.



Patti takes advantage of the Maryland sun

Back at the boat, we rested a bit and then took the pooch for a walk. Exploring the grounds, we came to an area bordering on shallow water and a kayak landing area. Kiki immediately spotted a sandy area that led down to the water and she took off, splashing into the water. She was on her leash of course but she swam back and forth. Then she came back on the beach and began digging in the sand. Captain Ron threw sticks in the water and she swam out and fetched them and brought them back to shore.



Kiki checks out the swimming area

Once swim time was over, we all headed back to the boat where the four legged one got a good bath with shampoo and fresh clean water.

Patti and Captain Ron again left the pooch to guard the boat while they walked to one of the restaurants for a light dinner. Then it was back to the boat and get ready for bed. It looks like we'll stay an extra day here to take advantage of the pool.



Landscaping at the Knapps Narrows Marina and Inn

Captain's Log, day seventy eight, (July 19, 2018)

We got up about 8:00 AM this morning to take advantage of the free continental breakfast. It was a nice setup and we had our fill.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

After breakfast we walked to the local country store that everyone said we should visit. It was a country store alright but nothing special to us “city folk”. We did buy an Italian sub to take back to the boat for lunch. It was pretty good.

We took Kiki to her swimming hole and she had a good time swimming, chasing sticks thrown in the water and digging in the sand. Once she tired of that we walked back to the boat and she got her usual bath.

Patti decided to break out the vacuum cleaner and vacuum the boat so Captain Ron and the Sea Dog went to the V berth to watch TV and stay out of the way.

Once Patti was done vacuuming, we changed to our swimwear and headed for the pool, leaving the pooch to guard the boat. We swam and we napped on the lounge chairs. We finished at the pool and Captain Ron figured this would be a good time to take a shower so he did. Patti decided to wait until after dinner.

We walked to the other restaurant for a light dinner. Then we returned to the boat to take the K-9 for a walk. While walking we noticed a Knapps Narrows Marina courtesy car. We didn’t know they had one and they hadn’t told us about it. We went into the office to see about it but it was almost closing time so we couldn’t use it. We need to get to a CVS pharmacy pretty soon or we’ll run out of some prescription medicines. Nothing we can’t live without though.

Patti got her shower supplies and headed off to the ladies room, leaving Captain Ron and the Sea Dog to fend for themselves. Tomorrow we head out for another new adventure.



Sunset from the dock at Knapps Narrows Marina and Inn

Captain’s Log, day seventy nine, (July 20, 2018)

Knowing we had a seven hour plus trip today, we got up and got out early at about 6:15 AM. We got the drawbridge opened and headed through the narrows. Of course the professional watermen had been on the water for an hour or more by that time. They were everywhere. The wind was already up and the water was rougher than we would have hoped.

As we exited the islands and entered the main portion of the Chesapeake Bay, we noticed a ship docked at the Cove Point Liquefied Natural Gas terminal. Shortly after we passed the terminal, it got underway and soon overtook us on its way to Chile (according to its AIS transmission).



The compressed natural gas transport ship headed south

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Meanwhile, we veered off towards the east towards our destination, an anchorage near Deal Island (not to be confused with the town of Deal, MD on the western shore).



Fish traps on the Chesapeake Bay

We've anchored here before and just before the anchorage is a small local beach. Once we got anchored and finished up the cantaloupe we bought a couple days ago, we inflated the dinghy, hung the outboard motor on, loaded up the crew and headed for the beach.

Kiki perked up the minute she figured out what was going on as she loves riding in the dinghy because it means we are going somewhere exciting, usually a beach.

Unfortunately, the little girl has put on a few pounds since she last wore her lifejacket and it wouldn't fit properly. She is going to have to get a new one as soon as possible.

We got to the beach and she was the first one out of the dinghy, swimming in circles around it. Then she swam up and down the beach in the shallow water. Of course she had to dig holes in the sand as well.

Patti discovered some sea glass on the beach so she walked the whole length and collected a bag full (a small bag). Kiki and Captain Ron waited for

her to finish. Kiki also made some new (human) friends while she and Captain Ron waited.



Patti checks for sea glass while Kiki digs a hole in the sand

Finally, it was time to head back to the mother ship and put the dinghy and motor away. It's supposed to rain tomorrow so we had to let the air back out for visibility.

Everybody got a good fresh water rinse but especially the Sea Dog who was covered in sand and salt water.

Dinner was leftover brisket from a couple nights ago along with "sides". The ride tomorrow is only about three hours so we can sleep in if we wish.

Captain's Log, day eighty, (July 21, 2018)

Our luck as far as good weather has run out, at least temporarily. We got up and since we were anchored, there was no dog walking to be done. We got the boat ready, weighed anchor and were on our way.

We knew the weather was going to take a turn for the worse but it was fine for almost an hour. The seas began to get a little rough so we took the Sea Dog below. A few minutes later it started to rain so we went below. The waves picked up and it was difficult to stay on course. A wave would pick

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

the boat up and set it down pointing in a different direction. Fortunately, it was just a three hour trip and the worst weather was only the middle hour. By the time we neared Crisfield the winds and waves were not bad and the rain had slowed to a drizzle.

We need fuel and the original plan was to get fuel as soon as we got to the marina and then head to our slip. We decided not to do this because of the rain so we'll have to get fuel before we leave (whenever that is). The weather is not looking good for a few days so we may have to stay here for a while. There are much worse places to be stuck.



HIGH COTTON at Somers Cove Marina, Crisfield, MD

There is a troop of Sea Scouts here on a boating excursion so we talked to them and the scout master for a while as we waited for the rain to stop after checking in.

Patti did a load of laundry so we have clean socks and underwear for a while. If we stay longer she may do the bedding.

We took turns taking showers in the bathhouse. For a change we had plenty of hot water and pressure. The showers felt good after yesterday's wading in the salt water and no showers afterward.

We called several restaurants but got no answers so we got some of our microwave meals out from under the seat and had them for dinner. It's food and we didn't have to walk to town in the rain.

Patti took the puppy for her evening walk. It wasn't raining when they left but it was pouring when they returned. We'll see what the weather forecast looks like in the morning and make a decision on leaving or staying.

Captain's Log, day eighty one, (July 22, 2018)

Last night, before he went to bed, Captain Ron started to get down on his knees to check something on the boat. Somehow, he fell a few inches onto his left knee. He said it hurt but he thought no more of it. In the middle of the night, he woke to intense pain in his knee. So intense he could barely get out of bed and to the bathroom.

The weather here has been playing games with us but one of our choices was to leave early for the next destination and be off the water by noon. Well, that wasn't happening. We waited for the marina to open to see if they had a loaner car. They don't but they said they would drive us to the hospital and pick us up when we were finished.

To make a long story short, Captain Ron had his knee X-rayed and everything was fine. The doctor said it was just a sprain and to take over the counter pain medicine. He also said to rest it for a few days. Somers Cove Marina gives the fourth day free after paying for three days so it looks like that's the plan. The girl from the marina stopped at the grocery store on the way back from the hospital so Patti could pick up some necessities.

We forgot to mention that after we went to bed, the winds picked up. Even though we are in a

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

protected basin off the Chesapeake Bay, the winds were howling and the boat was rocking and rolling. A lady on another boat said the winds were over forty knots. That's a lot of wind!

High winds are the key to us moving along on our journey. At some point we have to cross from the eastern shore to Norfolk. We would prefer calm seas or at least something reasonable. Predictions are for winds in the twenty knot range for the next few days and that's way too strong for comfort and safety.

Patti cooked breakfast once we got back from the hospital. She also did another load of laundry since it was convenient and we had little else to do.

Captain Ron noticed that the on-board battery charger doesn't seem to be working. The batteries are charging when we're underway but not when we are plugged in at a marina. Most likely it's because the fuse in the charger is blown but of course it could be blown because of a fault in the charger itself. A replacement fuse might just blow.

Checking the fuse requires taking the cover off the charger but of course it's located in an awkward place and this could be difficult with his injured knee. The option is to walk to the marine store not far from the marina and see if he can buy a small, simple charger that he can attach temporarily until he can troubleshoot the main charger.

Patti walked to town and brought home fried chicken dinners. We walked the puppy of course, tried the TV in the lounge but couldn't find anything interesting to watch and walked back to the boat. Tomorrow is another day in port and hopefully of healing for Captain Ron.

Captain's Log, day eighty two, (July 23, 2018)

Captain Ron slept last night with a knee brace just to avoid the possibility of further injury. When he woke up his pain was tolerable enough to walk to the office for free coffee. Patti took the pooch for her morning stroll and met him in the office.

Captain Ron did some research on the charger. The manual that came with it just said that the internal fuse could be blown. It didn't say where the fuse was or how to get to it. A search on the Internet said to remove the cover but didn't say or show how.

He eventually decided that it wasn't going to fix itself and he might as well start working on it. He opened the hatch, removed everything stored in the way and crawled in (wearing his knee pads). There was no obvious way to remove the cover (no screws, clips, etc.). He crawled out and called the technical service number for the charger company. He was put on hold for several minutes and then told to leave a message which he did. A half hour or so later he called again and again was told to leave a message.

Finally, someone called back. He said there were several small screws on the side of the case that had to be removed. Captain Ron had looked for screws but hadn't seen any. He crawled back in and determined that there were no small screws. He dismantled the charger and disconnected the input wires (he had already disconnected the boat from the power pedestal for safety and there was no air conditioning).

By removing an end cover, he found a perforated plastic screen and by pushing the screen out of the way, he could see the fuse. He removed it and determined that it had blown.

About this time the phone rang again and it was a different person from tech support. Captain Ron

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

told him what he had found and the technician explained that we had an older model of the charger. He said to replace the fuse and if it blew, the charger was defective and would have to be replaced.

Captain Ron replaced the fuse and the end covers and with great difficulty was able to reconnect the power wires and remount the charger. The moment of truth came when he restored power to the boat, turned on the charger circuit breaker and the lights came on and the batteries began charging.

By this time, Captain Ron was dripping in sweat so he decided to take a shower. He closed the hatch, leaving cleanup and putting stuff away for later.

Once he got back from his shower, he went to the V berth to rest. There are no TV stations here that are strong enough to watch so he took a short nap. Then it was time to go to dinner.

We walked to town, bad knee and all, only to find most of the restaurants closed. Even the ice cream shop was closed. We found a little carryout restaurant with a few tables and ordered dinner.

After that we walked (Captain Ron hobbled) back to the marina. Captain Ron went to the lounge while Patti freed the hound from the confines of the boat and they joined him. We had ice cream from the marina store (not bad) and watched part of a TV show that we had already seen.

Then it was back to the boat for Patti to get her stuff and head for the showers and Captain Ron and the pooch to relax.

We're trying to figure out how to get back across the Bay with the high winds we have been having. These are fine for those with a wind turbine in their back yard but not for boaters. Many of the boats left the morning Captain Ron went to the

hospital but they went straight across the Bay and would have gotten home in four or five hours. We need to get to Norfolk so we have two more stops on the eastern side, then we cross. It's looking like we don't want to do that until Saturday.

Captain's Log, day eighty three, (July 24, 2018)

Today was another day in port so there's not a lot to report. It rained last night, hard and long but no thunder or lightning. We got up, walked to the office, stopping along the way for the Sea Dog to do her business. Captain Ron got his free coffee and the K-9 got petted.

Back at the boat, Patti fixed breakfast for the crew. After breakfast, Captain Ron found enough ambition to put the covers on the battery charger and put the tools and stored items away so the boat is ready to move when the time comes.

Patti decided to walk to town to see if she could help the local economy. Captain Ron and the K-9 stayed behind. Patti returned after a couple hours with lunch and fresh vegetables.

We walked the pooch a few more times and talked to the only other boaters we have seen here, an older couple who are cleaning out their houseboat so they can sell it. They live in Florida now but their boat is still here. Kiki got to visit with their dog and go on their boat to meet their cat. She also gets to go without her leash in the marina office. The people working there love her and she entertains them.

Captain Ron has been eyeing the marina's large swimming pool but so far the weather hasn't been conducive to swimming so eyeing it is all he has done. The weather forecast for tomorrow is worse than today's so he may not get to swim at all.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Patti brought back fresh tomatoes and cucumbers from town so we had that and a piece of chicken from the other night for dinner. For some reason, we have individual pies on the boat so dessert was pie with whipped cream.

We're here again tomorrow in the rain. Cruising has days like this. We've learned that there's flooding in the Norfolk, VA area and that may hold us up because of problems with drawbridges.

Captain's Log, day eighty four, (July 25, 2018)

By the time Captain Ron and the Sea Dog woke up this morning, Patti had gotten dressed, gone to the office and returned with Captain Ron's coffee. Captain Ron got dressed, the puppy got her harness and leash on and we went for a walk. Then we went back to the office so Kiki could visit with the staff.

Once Kiki tired of being petted, we returned to the boat where Patti once again fixed breakfast for all.

Patti made arrangements for one of the marina people to drive her to the bank and the grocery store and pick her up after she finished shopping. She wanted to see if she could get cash at the bank with her credit card or by writing a check but that didn't work out. Her debit card is not working because of an attempted fraud and her replacement is supposedly sitting in our pile of mail at home.

She went to the grocery store and got the supplies we needed and managed to get cash with her credit card. She called the marina and they came and got her.

Meanwhile, Captain Ron and the K-9 had been in the Captain's lounge watching TV. We got all the groceries and supplies unloaded and put away.

We've been at this same marina now three times and never gotten a chance to use the pool. The weather forecast had called for thunderstorms and rain all day but it was mostly sunny and pretty warm so we decided to change into our swimsuits and take a dip in the pool.

A "dip" is about all we took, the pool was pretty cold. We stayed in five or ten minutes and got out to dry in the sun. The sun went behind the clouds so we walked back to the boat.

There is a crab house in town and they are supposed to have medium crabs for two dollars each and large crabs for three dollars each. Craving crabs, we got dressed, walked to the crab house, sat down and ordered six large crabs. The waitress came back a few minutes later and said they were out of crabs. Understand now this is a "crab house", they open at 4:00 PM, we got there at about 4:30 PM and they are out of crabs!

We thought about leaving but didn't really have anyplace else to go and Patti had already been served her beer and salad so we decided to stay and order something else.

After we had finished our dinner and were leaving, we saw the couple from a boat that had just come in today so we stopped to talk to them for a while. They live in the Washington, DC area and were just cruising the Chesapeake Bay for a couple weeks.

We walked back towards the boat. Patti went into the marina office and got us two ice cream cups while Captain Ron continued to the boat to get the puppy and his shower supplies. We met in the lounge and all had ice cream and watched reruns on TV.

We took our showers and walked back to the boat. Tomorrow we have to fuel up when the

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

marina opens and head on out for another adventure.

Captain's Log, day eighty five, (July 26, 2018)

It was finally time to leave Somers Cove Marina. We got up, did the engine checks and took Kiki to the marina office to say goodbye. Captain Ron had already made himself a cup of coffee on the boat but he got one from the marina since they had brewed a pot just for him.

We started the boat and moved it a hundred yards or so to the fuel dock where we took on sixty gallons of diesel fuel. Then it was really time to go.

Crisfield has a long entrance channel and then we had to continue west to clear some shallow water before turning south towards Onancock, VA. Onancock is only about fifteen miles from Crisfield as the crow flies but twenty six miles as the boat sails (or motors). Of course, we aren't crows; we are boaters so that makes it a twenty six mile trip.

Onancock is a small town with a nice town marina (they call it a "wharf"). They recently upgraded to floating finger piers so it's much easier to dock and get on and off the boat. They are clean, nearly new restrooms and showers and free laundry. Patti took advantage of the free laundry to do a couple loads.

Onancock has a nice Irish Pub with actual good food. We stumbled upon it the first time we were here four years ago and go back every time we visit. We opened the door and it seemed like the entire population of Onancock was there. Captain Ron had the shepherd's pie and Patti had steak. As expected, both were excellent.

We walked back to the boat, walked the pooch, took our showers and went to bed.



HIGH COTTON at the Onancock Wharf



Dinner for tonight

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



Captain Ron takes a break

Captain's Log, day eighty six, (July 27, 2018)

Today's journey was to be about five hours and we wanted to get underway early to avoid afternoon winds so we got ourselves up, walked the K-9 and got underway about 7:00 AM. Onancock is located about five miles up the creek (it's called a "creek" but it's plenty wide) so again, we were travelling west before we could travel south.

We had some pretty rough water, rough enough that it wasn't safe to carry the puppy down from the flybridge to the cabin. Eventually it calmed down a bit so Captain Ron got her down. Apparently she had a little too much rocking and rolling and she got sick.

We continued south past Cape Charles Harbor and back north in the channel to the marina. We got tied up and Captain Ron began the process of changing the oil in the engine and transmission, something that is to be done every hundred hours of operation. That's about seven hundred nautical miles if anybody is counting. We shouldn't need another oil change before we get home.

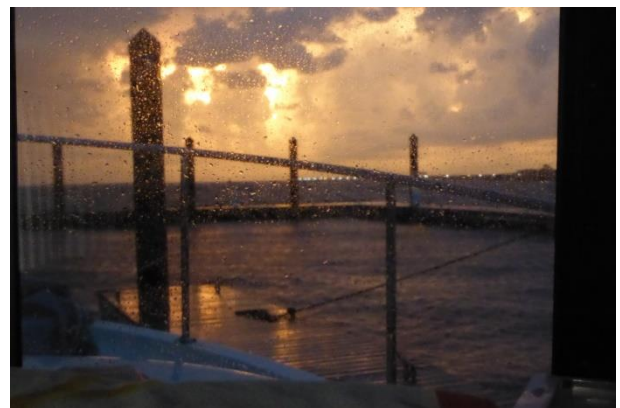
Changing the oil requires a lot of kneeling, crouching and twisting and wasn't the most fun

for Captain Ron with his sprained knee and other bruises related to the battery charger repair but he did it anyway. In years gone by his reward might have been a few cold beers but today it was a shower and a change of clothes.

The lazarette has been leaking when it rains and it had rained a lot in Crisfield. There were a couple inches of water in it and everything stored in it was wet. While Captain Ron was changing the oil, Patti cleaned it out and sopped up the water. After that, she took her shower.

Supposedly, the town of Cape Charles has come alive since our last visit with new shops and restaurants. The Governor of Virginia was here this morning cutting ribbons and such. He had already left by the time we got there. We were both tired from our trip and our chores so we just walked to the restaurant behind the dock and ordered a light meal. As we were finishing, it began to rain so we got wet walking back to the boat. Later it stopped long enough for Patti to walk the dog.

The rain above our heads makes a soothing sound and makes it easy to fall asleep.



Looking out the windshield through the rain at the sunset

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain's Log, day eighty seven, (July 28, 2018)

It may sound like a broken record, but again, our plan was to get an early start to avoid the wind and waves. Today's journey was to cross east to west (actually southwest) across the open Chesapeake Bay. Winds were supposed to be "calm". Well, they were not but the trip wasn't nearly as bad as we have experienced lately and we were only on the Bay for about three hours before we were in the protected waters of the Hampton Roads Inlet.

On our way across the Bay we passed through an anchorage with about twenty anchored cargo ships. They appeared to be empty so we can only guess that they were waiting their turn to load up some cargo and take it somewhere around the world.



Some of the anchored ships

A little later on, we came upon a large pod of dolphins, probably thirty or more. We motored over to them and stopped the boat. Kiki got to watch the "big fishies" for several minutes until they swam away. She tried to talk to them but they were too busy diving for food.



Kiki watching the "big fishies"

Between the Chesapeake Bay and Waterside marina we passed a couple dozen US Navy ships, docked but ready to head out and defend our country at a moment's notice.



We passed this container ship on the way to Norfolk



A US Navy ship ready to defend America

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



Heading for Norfolk, VA

Once we got to Waterside marina we called them on the radio and they assigned us a slip. We got ourselves backed in and hooked up and the pooch wanted to go for a walk. The marina is adjacent to a city park so there was a lot of grass and of course a lot of smells. We settled with the marina, brought the Sea Dog back to guard the boat and walked to town to the little pizza restaurant that we are fond of. We decided to split an Italian sub but the waiter must have misunderstood us because we were served an Italian sausage sub instead. We decided that would be fine so we ate it. It was very good. The owner apologized and offered to give us a free Italian sub but since we had eaten the sausage sub, we declined his generous offer.



Captain Ron with one of the mermaids in Norfolk, VA



Patti on the streets of Norfolk, VA

As we were walking to town, we learned that there would be a Latin food festival in the park tonight. What we didn't learn was that there would be several Latin bands, a DJ and a very powerful sound system. And of course, there would be hundreds of people attending.

When we returned from town, we heard one of the GFBL (Go Fast, Be Loud) boats in the marina. It turned out there were two of them and they were docked directly behind HIGH COTTON. We stopped to talk to the people (six on each boat) and figured out that the beers they were holding weren't their first of the day. One group said they had a hotel room for the night but the others said they would be sleeping on the boat. We'll see how this works out.



Kiki gats a bite of ice cream at the Latin Festival

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

The showers at waterside Marina are at the other end of the Waterside complex and taking showers would mean snaking through the hundreds of festival goers so it looks like we'll skip showers for the night. As for sleeping, hopefully the band stops at 10:00 PM. We don't know about the people behind us. At least we don't have to get up at the crack of dawn tomorrow.

Captain's Log, day eighty eight, (July 29, 2018)

Today was the day to go through the Dismal Swamp Canal. We didn't have to do it all in one day but the locks only open at 8:30 AM, 11:00 AM, 1:30 PM and 3:30 PM. There's a free dock at the welcome center where we stayed on the way north and a couple other places to tie up for the night if you want to. We wanted to get through and to Elizabeth City tonight for an early crossing of Albemarle Sound tomorrow when the winds are supposed to be light.

Since it takes over an hour to get from Waterside Marina to the first lock, we didn't try for the 8:30 AM locking. We did leave early for the 11:00 AM opening and it's a good thing we did. We had to wait over a half hour for a train to cross a low bridge.



Another US Navy ship ready for action



The railroad bridge is down and a train is crossing



This guy is keeping boaters away from the Navy facilities

We did get to the lock a bit early so we tied up to a dolphin (a collection of wooden pilings, not a marine mammal). Since we had to wait, Patti whipped up breakfast. At 11:00 AM, the gates opened and we entered the lock and got our dock lines situated. We were raised eight feet into the canal and were on our way.

The weather forecast was calling for rain and thunderstorms for most of the day but we had pleasant weather until about 2:00 PM, when it started to drizzle. We passed the welcome center with about five miles to go to the last lock when we heard on the marine radio that the lock wouldn't be opening if there was any lightning.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



Reflections on the Dismal Swamp Canal



Headed south on the Dismal Swamp Canal

We thought about spending the night at the welcome center but decided to press on and tie up at the bridge if we couldn't lock through. We got to the bridge (the bridge and the lock are near each other and operated by the same person). The lock tender told us again about not operating if there is lightning so we tied up to wait.

About 3:15 PM the lock tender told us to get ready to lock through so we got untied and turned around, went through the bridge and locked back down eight feet.

We had eighteen miles to go to Elizabeth City. We had some rain and alternated between the flybridge and the lower helm. Captain Ron had to take a short nap so Patti ran the boat for a while.

Finally the Elizabeth City drawbridge came into sight. We called to request an opening and the bridge tender replied "Bring it on." So we did.

Elizabeth City has a set of free docks for boaters. There is no electrical power or water but it's a strategic stop for crossing the Albemarle Sound the next morning. There used to be a group of local citizens who would hang around the docks and greet boaters but most of them have passed on it seems.

We got tied up and took the pooch off the boat to explore and leave her calling card. We walked across the street to check out one of the nice restaurants in town only to find it closed on Sundays. Oh well, we were dripping wet and hadn't had showers lately so it was just as well. We went back to the boat and had leftover chicken in condensed cream of chicken soup over rice, one of our staple boat recipes.

Tomorrow we get up early to cross the sound. We may stay in a marina or we may press on further. We'll see how it goes.

Captain's Log, day eighty nine, (July 30, 2018)

There was no wind last night so that meant no rocking. It also meant there was no ventilation. It rained on and off so we couldn't leave the hatch open anyway.

We had set the alarm for an overly ambitious 5:00 AM and it wasn't light enough to safely navigate by the time we were ready to go and it was raining so we waited twenty minutes or so for it to get lighter. The rain stopped so we untied our lines and headed out.

Once we got out of the harbor area we had to begin dodging crab pots. We often refer to them as "crab pots" but in reality, the pots (traps) are on the bottom of the river and it's the floats we

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

have to avoid. There is a piece of rope from each pot to the float and if we run over the float there's a good chance the rope will get tangled in our propeller and the boat will stop. At that point, operating in reverse might clear the rope but most likely we would have to get towed to a marina and pay a diver to cut the rope loose. It's best to avoid them in the first place.

We transited the Pasquotank River and entered Albemarle Sound. It was raining on and off and since visibility is far better from the flybridge, we were up when it was not raining and at the lower helm when it was raining. It was also windy and moderately rough.



The blimp hangar on the Pasquotank River

After about four hours of this, we looked at our options and decided to stop at the Alligator River Marina just north of the Alligator River Bridge. We considered our fuel situation and decided this would be as good a place as any to refuel. We took on about fifty gallons of diesel and then moved a hundred feet or so and tied up for the night.

The Alligator River Marina is a bit unique in that it fronts on a highway so it's a gas station in the front and a marina in the back. There's also a kitchen with a limited menu and a small "convenience store".



HIGH COTTON at the famous Alligator River Marina

Kiki went for a walk and found a large, deep puddle to run through. Then she found the boat ramp and ran down to swim. We brought her back to the boat and rinsed her off. Then we went to the restaurant for sandwiches.

We ate and rested. Captain Ron took a nap. Patti washed and dried a couple loads of laundry. Not all marinas have laundry facilities so we use them when we find them. Later, we took turns showering. The showers felt good after two days without showers.



Kiki checks things out from the porch

All cleaned up and with a change of clothes, we went back for dinner. There were about ten options for dinner, all of them fried. Captain Ron had fried fish and Patti had fried shrimp. Fried chicken was another option but we had chicken

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

last night. The food was decent and plentiful. We brought back enough for another meal.

After dinner, we took the pooch out and she went straight for the boat ramp, ran in and swam back and forth. One of the other transient boaters saw this and thought it was hilarious. We got to talking and he invited us to come to his boat later after he had taken his shower.

We took Kiki back to the boat and rinsed her off again. Then we went to the other boat (a fairly large sailboat) and visited with the man and his wife. We talked for an hour or more until Captain Ron realized that it was past his bedtime. We walked back to HIGH COTTON and hit the sack.

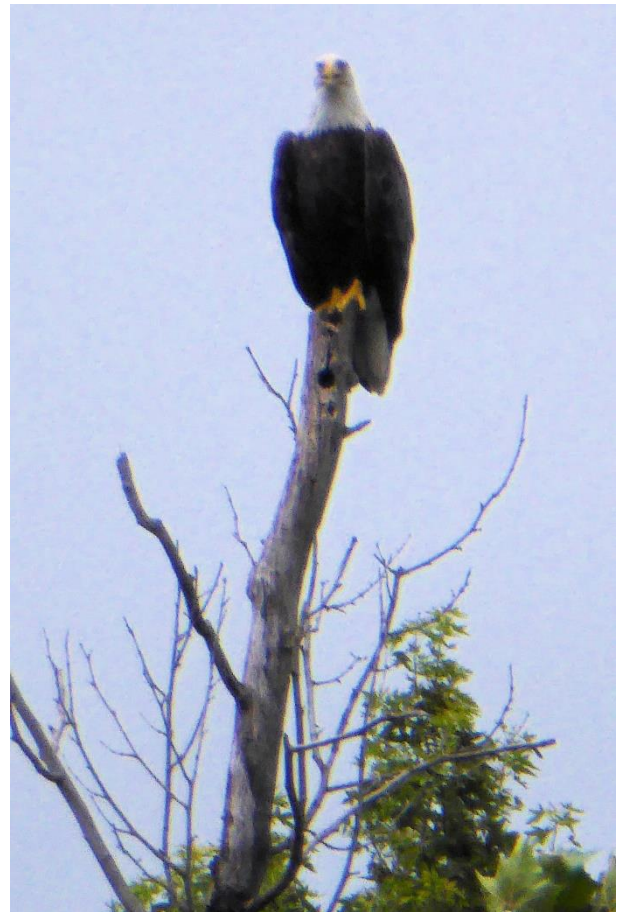
Captain's Log, day ninety, (July 31, 2018)

We took our time leaving this morning. We walked over to the restaurant for more fried food, this time breakfast sandwiches to go. We got unhooked and untied, backed out and waved to our new sailboat friends.

The Alligator River Bridge is being renovated and we had a long wait to get through on the way north. We weren't sure what to expect this time so we called ahead. The bridge tender said he would have to check with the guy directing traffic. Anyhow, we had about a ten minute wait and then he opened the bridge and let us through. Not too bad compared to the last time. And it gave us time to eat our sandwiches.

It's about a two and a half hour trip up the Alligator River to where the Alligator River - Pungo River Canal connects the two rivers together. As so often happens, there were jet fighter planes going back and forth overhead. Apparently there's an Airforce base nearby.

According to the cruising guide books, the Alligator River - Pungo River Canal is supposed to be teeming with wildlife. This was our sixth time transiting the canal and the most exciting wildlife we've see were two deer at the edge of the canal. Today we saw a few turtles on logs, some wild turkeys and a couple bald eagles.



A bald eagle on the Alligator River - Pungo River Canal

We called the Dowry Creek Marina and made reservations. They have a nice pool and a loaner car.

We got to the marina and the puppy had to get to shore. Patti took her while Captain Ron finished securing the boat and connecting the power.

Someone had reserved the loaner car for later but it was available when we got there so we got it

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

and headed for the grocery store. We got what we needed and got the car loaded. There was a Chinese restaurant in the same shopping center so we decided on Chinese takeout for dinner. There was a menu posted in the window so we decided what we wanted and went in. Patti told the lady at the counter what we wanted. She said "We no have that." Patti said "It's listed on the menu in the window." The lady took out a menu and it was different than the one in the window. To make a long story short, there were two piles of menus and some items were not on the menu she was using and not available. Why they don't get rid of the other menus is puzzling.

We picked something, they cooked it and we headed back to the marina with our groceries and our Chinese takeout dinner.

We unloaded the car, brought everything to the boat, ate our dinner and put stuff away.

We decided to try out the pool so we put on our swimsuits and walked to the pool. It was a bit chilly so we didn't stay in for long. After the pool, Captain Ron took his shower. He came out to find Patti and the pooch sitting on the porch talking to the marina owner.

Captain Ron sat down and joined the conversation. The subject of ice cream came up and he said that ice cream sounded like a good idea so we went into the marina office and got some. Patti had to share hers with the K-9 of course.

Patti took her shower while Captain Ron brought the puppy back to the boat.

We have the choice to stay here another day or move on. We'll decide in the morning.

Captain's Log, day ninety one, (August 1, 2018)

We decided to press on today. We called the Oriental Marina in Oriental, NC and made reservations. They still had us in their system from our visit four years ago.

It was mostly sunny with a slight breeze when we left Dowry Creek. The marina owner who untied our lines commented that this should be a perfect day for boating.

The first hour or so was great. Then we noticed rain in the distance. It came at us faster than we expected but we got inside without getting too wet. Since we were inside anyway, Patti decided to fix breakfast. Microwave creamed chipped beef over extra biscuits from the day before. We took turns driving and eating.

By the time we both were finished with our chipped beef it had stopped raining and we were in a protected creek so back up the ladder to the flybridge we went. We were fine until it was time to enter the Bay River and then the Neuse River. The wind picked up and the water got choppy so Captain Ron sent the crew below to the relative comfort of the cabin.

It's a good thing he did because once we left the creek for the river the seas turned ugly. Several times water splashed over the flybridge windscreen and Captain Ron got wet.

This lasted about three hours until it was time to pull into the Oriental Harbor. We called the marina and they directed us to a slip.

We got tied up and hooked up, walked the K-9 and checked in and paid our bill. Patti suggested that we get ice cream at the shop near the marina so we did and relaxed on the porch.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON



HIGH COTTON at the Oriental Marina and Inn

Once the ice cream was finished we walked to the marine store about half a block away where we bought a new American flag to replace our tattered and torn flag.

That taken care of, we returned to the boat, changed into our swimsuits and headed for the pool. The Oriental Marina is also an "Inn" and they supply towels for the pool and towels, soap and shampoo for the showers so after floating around in the pool for a while we each took showers.

Then it was back to the boat, get dressed and head for the restaurant for dinner.

We walked the puppy again, Patti bought some tee shirts and we returned to the boat for some shuteye.

Captain's Log, day ninety two, (August 2, 2018)

We forgot to mention that yesterday, Captain Ron thought the boat seemed to be listing (leaning) to starboard. Not because Patti decided to sit on that side today but for some other reason. Patti had checked the water gauge and it showed "full". Later, she noticed that the water was acting like it was empty but the gauge was showing full.

After puzzling this situation for a bit, Captain Ron came to the conclusion that the valve for the starboard water tank must be closed. Since the gauge measures the level in the starboard tank, that explained why it was showing "full" yet there was no water. Having a full starboard tank and an empty port tank explained the list.

Once we got docked, Captain Ron climbed into the bilge and sure enough, the valve was closed as he expected. He opened it and the water levels equalized. Now, for today:

For some reason we woke up early this morning so with our dog walk and engine checks we were underway at about 8:00 AM. We forgot about the little coffee shop next to the marina where we could have had breakfast.

Exiting the Oriental Harbor, it was a beautiful morning with partly cloudy skies and light winds. The trip across the Neuse River to Adams Creek took about a half hour. As we were nearing the entrance to Adams Creek, we saw dark clouds to the west. We saw a rainbow and then the rain came. We did our "rain drill", Captain Ron carrying the Sea Dog down the ladder and taking the helm while Patti covers the seats and helm.

We ran the boat from the lower helm for an hour or so until the rain stopped, then we went back to the flybridge. Then the rains came again and we repeated the drill.

As we neared Morehead City, we went back to the flybridge so we could see the various markers and channels better. It was cool and windy.

Earlier in the day Patti had called to make reservations at the town docks. That's how it worked two years ago but apparently the procedure has changed and the town docks are handled through Dockwa, an online reservation and payment service that is becoming more

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

popular. It's a bit like booking a hotel through a third party.

Anyhow, by the time we got to the Morehead City town docks, the wind was howling and the current was running perpendicular to the docks and we had a hard time getting docked. Fortunately, a bystander saw our plight and grabbed our lines and tied us up.



HIGH COTTON at the Morehead City Town Docks

Captain Ron got online with Dockwa and paid for the slip but we didn't have the codes for the showers or the WIFI. We called and a guy from the town came by and gave them to us. Captain Ron is not impressed with his first experience with Dockwa. It just seems easier to deal with a live person.

Kiki was glad to be on land and wasted no time doing her business. After that, we put her on the boat and walked to a restaurant for pizza. It didn't rain on the way there and it didn't rain on the way back but it poured while we were inside eating.

We came back to the boat, got the pooch and walked to the pet shop. This isn't a Petco or Pet Smart; it's a small independent pet shop that somehow manages to stay in business in the tourist section of a small town. They have a fenced area inside where dogs can run off-leash.

Kiki was fitted for a new, larger life jacket and got some treats. She played with the resident dogs and customers as they came in.

After the pet shop, the next stop was the ice cream shop where mawmaw and pawpaw got ice cream and Kiki got her own cup of ice cream. Kiki writes: *I think every ice cream shop should give dogs their own ice cream cup. It makes me feel like a big girl when I don't have to beg for mawmaw's ice cream.*



Kiki gets her own bowl of ice cream

Once we finished our ice cream, we walked to the hardware store to look for replacement nuts for the windshield wiper switch and another switch. They had none but the K-9 got a treat and the ladies made a fuss over her.

We walked back to the boat for a rest, filled the water tanks and had leftovers for dinner and took showers. The town docks are in a public park and are apparently a favorite fishing hole. There are lots of locals fishing from the docks but they are not in our way. There are two really junky looking sailboats anchored across from the docks. We saw a police boat checking them out.

The plan is to head out tomorrow morning, weather permitting.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Captain's Log, day ninety three, (August 3, 2018)

We woke up this morning around 7:30 AM. It rained last night but wasn't raining this morning. We walked the puppy and did our engine checks. The current and the wind were against us again and getting out of the slip was difficult. In fact if there had been a boat next to us we might still be there. We finally made it out and continued south on Bogue Sound.

The weather forecast said it wouldn't rain until noon. Well, that was wrong. A little before 11:00 AM we saw dark clouds to the east. We gathered the K-9 and our stuff and headed below. We made it just in time and felt bad for the guys we had seen kite surfing. They got drenched.

It rained so hard we couldn't see where we were going and had to slow down. After a while it let up a bit and we saw four open boats heading towards us. They were soaked as well.

Eventually, as it always does, the rain stopped and we went back to the flybridge to drive. The temperature had dropped and we had to put on long sleeved shirts.



Entering the Camp Lejeune Marine Base

We had one drawbridge to pass through before we got to our anchorage for the day, the Onslow

Beach swing bridge. This bridge is on the Camp Lejeune Marine Base and adheres to a strict schedule, opening on the hour and the half hour, not the half hour plus five minutes. Because we couldn't get to the bridge by exactly 1:30 PM, we had to wait twenty five minutes for the 2:00 PM opening.

We eventually got through the bridge and got to Mile Hammock Bay by 3:00 PM. There were no other boats there so we picked a likely spot, dropped our anchor and put things away. A few helicopters flew overhead but there's not much else going on.

We opened the windows and hatch for ventilation. After about an hour, another strong storm hit us but it only lasted a few minutes. The boat swung in circles but the anchor held just fine.

The rain stopped and the sun came out. We had leftover seafood for dinner. We have the entire basin to ourselves. Tomorrow we head south again.

Captain's Log, day ninety four, (August 4, 2018)

It rained last night but the sun was shining when we woke up. It was quiet and we had a good night's sleep.

Being anchored, we didn't walk the dog but we did our engine checks and got underway a little after 8:30 AM. The weather was being its usual self and we alternated from the flybridge to inside and back.

There's a swing bridge with only a twelve foot clearance that we have to have opened a couple hours south of Mile Hammock Bay. It only opens on the hour so if you miss the opening you have to wait until the next hourly opening. It was raining

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

when we saw it in the distance and we weren't sure if we would make the scheduled opening. Captain Ron sped the boat up a bit and called the bridge tender and asked if he would delay the opening for us if we were a few minutes late. He agreed to a "few minutes". We pressed on and actually made it with ten minutes to spare. There is a new high rise bridge being built to replace the swing bridge but it won't be finished for another year. That will certainly be more convenient for everybody.

As we neared Wrightsville Beach, we realized that it was a sunny summer Saturday and all the "crazies" were out with their boats. A larger, fast boat came up behind us and slowed down to pass us with a minimum wake. Captain Ron slowed HIGH COTTON down to make his passing easier. This is called a "slow pass" by experienced boaters. It would have been fine but some numbskull in a pontoon boat shot between the two of us and rocked us both.



Boat traffic north of Wrightsville Beach, NC

As we approached the drawbridge in Wrightsville Beach (we don't have to have it opened), two sailboats and a powerboat that did have to have it opened had stopped to wait for it. Unfortunately, they stopped side by side, blocking the channel and forcing Captain Ron to weave between them. Then, a guy on a standup paddleboard decided it

would be a good idea to paddle across the river with a half dozen boats coming in each direction. He made it but not by much.

We had reservations at the Seapath Yacht Club so we took a port turn (left) towards the ocean and called them on the radio. They put us on the face dock which made docking easy and we were able to fill our diesel tanks without moving the boat.

Patti took Kiki for a walk while Captain Ron checked in. Kiki came back to the office and discovered that they had dog treats. From then on, every time she went for a walk, she headed straight to the office for treats.



Patti and the Pooch - Wrightsville Beach, NC

Seapath Yacht Club has a loaner car for transients. It's supposedly for one hour but since we were the only transients, the dockmaster told us to keep it as long as we wanted it.

We took turns taking much needed showers and got dressed for dinner. Instead of a long walk, we had the car which was both good and bad. Being a beach town, parking is at a premium and at a cost. We had decided on a Mexican restaurant and it only has a few parking spaces. Public parking was pay parking which apparently requires an "app" on a smart phone. We don't have the app and didn't feel like dealing with it. Fortunately, someone finished at the restaurant

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

and moved their car so we were able to park and go in. Dinner was good.

Since we had the car, we drove across the bridge to the West Marine store and the grocery store. We came back, put the stuff away and took the K-9 for her evening walk. We met a couple with two small dogs and talked to them for a while about boats and boating.

Then it was back to the boat and to bed.

Captain's Log, day ninety five, (August 5, 2018)

Captain Ron was in no rush to get out of bed this morning so when he did, Patti was already up and dressed. He got dressed; we put the harness and leash on the pooch and stepped off onto the dock. Patti took Kiki to do her business; Captain Ron took his coffee cup to the office for a free cup. At these prices, it's not really "free". It's an "amenity".

One of the things we bought at the grocery store yesterday was a bagel so we could finish up the salmon flavored cream cheese that has been in the refrigerator for a few weeks. Patti toasted it on the stove and spread the cream cheese (for Captain Ron) and butter and jelly (for Patti).

We got untied and underway, dodging a few more standup paddle boarders in the process. It was bright and mostly sunny and to our east, we could see people on the beaches with their umbrellas, tents and in some places, vehicles. And of course, just as yesterday, there were boats going every direction.

There was a trawler in front of us and we were gaining on it ever so slightly. As we caught up to it, Captain Ron attempted to call it on the radio. A woman was driving from the flybridge and as

Captain Ron called, she seemed to be looking for the radio to answer back. She didn't but she slowed down and turned out of the channel. About this time, a totally naked man came out a side door, apparently to find out what she was doing and why. We went on by and they pulled in behind us.



A unique home on the ICW

We continued south, passed Carolina Beach and turned into Snows Cut towards the Cape Fear River. Exiting Snows Cut, the channel is narrow and we saw a boat that apparently had missed it and was aground and trying to get unstuck. We looked back and there was a SeaTow boat assisting it.

Our cruise down the Cape Fear River was surprisingly smooth until we neared Southport where it began to get rough, partly because of boat traffic.

We thought of stopping at the Holden Beach Town Dock that we had stopped at on the way north but when we called they said that it would be too shallow for us because of unusually low tides. We decided to stop at St. James Marina instead. It's a few miles past Southport. It started raining and we had to go below for a few minutes. Then the rain stopped and we went back up top just in time to pull into the marina channel.

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

We got ourselves docked, tied up and powered up and walked to the office to check in. Of course the K-9 was glad to feel solid land (and grass) under her four feet.



HIGH COTTON at the St. James Plantation Marina

After paying and walking the dog, we came back to the boat where Captain Ron and the Sea Dog fell asleep watching television. Patti walked to the gift shops to see if they had anything she couldn't live without.

There is a restaurant at the marina and nothing else close so we went there for dinner. Then we took turns showering and came back to the boat. Kiki had one last stroll and it's time for bed. We should get to Myrtle Beach tomorrow.

Captain's Log, day ninety six, (August 6, 2018)

This morning at 2:00 AM, Captain Ron, Patti and the Sea Dog were sound asleep when we were awakened by a very loud noise. Being sleepy, it took us a while to realize that it sounded like a boat horn nearby. Then we realized that it was HIGH COTTON's boat horn.

Captain Ron got up to investigate and the horn stopped. He checked the helm to make sure nothing had fallen on the horn button and threw on a cover-up and went outside to make sure

nobody was on the flybridge. Nothing looked out of place and the horn had stopped so he went back to bed.

After a couple minutes, he remembered that the horn had its own dedicated circuit breaker and it might be a good idea to turn the circuit breaker off to avoid the horn sounding again. He got up and went to the electrical panel and noticed that the circuit breaker for the horn had tripped and was off. This explained why the horn had stopped blowing.

Two things are important here: First, Captain Ron wasn't satisfied with the boat's wimpy original horn so he had installed the loudest air horn he could find. It can be heard for a mile or two. Second, St. James Marina is in a lagoon surrounded on all sides by luxury homes. It's likely that Captain Ron, Patti and the pooch weren't the only ones to be awakened by HIGH COTTON's horn.

We went back to sleep and woke a little after 7:00 AM. We took the K-9 for a quick walk, then got ourselves unhooked and untied and slipped quietly out of the lagoon.

Once we were safely out of hearing range, Captain Ron turned on the circuit breaker. The horn sounded. Either one of the horn buttons has failed or the relay has failed. We have a compressed air horn on board so troubleshooting and repairing the air horn can wait until we get home.

We cruised south on the ICW past opulent homes and past trailer parks. Everyone enjoys the water.

As we neared Little River, the jet skis appeared, cutting in front of us and jumping our wake behind us. Most of these riders are renting the jet skis and have never ridden one before and know

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

nothing about boating safety or the rules of the road. All you need to rent a jet ski is a credit card.

We got to the Little River Swing Bridge about the same time as two other boats so it was opened and we didn't have to wait.

The "rock pile" was next. The "rock pile" is an unofficial name for a ten mile stretch of the ICW north of Myrtle Beach where there are exposed jagged rocks on each side capable of imposing great harm to boats that stray out of the channel. As long as you stay in the middle you are safe. We had no problem.

We had made reservations at the Barefoot Marina and were put on the face dock so docking was pretty much a matter of pulling over and stopping at the right spot.



HIGH COTTON at Barefoot Marina

Patti and the Sea Dog went for a walk while Captain Ron paid. We got the boat covered and went to the restaurant for a late lunch. After lunch we went to the pool for a dip. Unlike the pools we have had lately, this one was warm enough to be comfortable. Unfortunately, it's apparently open to more than just marina guests and there were a lot of children jumping and screaming. Still, we stayed for a good while. Interestingly, the deepest part of the pool is only four and a half feet. It's very large though.

After the pool we took turns showering and returned to the boat for what we hope is a good night's sleep. The restaurants on both sides of the river have live entertainment and there's a fireworks show at 10:00 PM so that may not happen. The puppy is not a fan of fireworks.

Captain's Log, day ninety seven, (August 7, 2018)

The fireworks show started a little after 10:00 PM. The Sea Dog barked for a bit but then rolled over and went to sleep. Patti watched from HIGH COTTON. Captain Ron did not.

We got up in the morning, walked the puppy and did our engine checks. Getting underway from the face dock was a piece of cake.

We were still in the land of the rental jet skis so we had to deal with them for the first couple hours. Even one of the instructors or guides decided to stop his jet ski directly in our path to discuss something with one of the riders. This was when we found out that the compressed air horn didn't work, meaning we didn't have an approved sound producing device on board.



Development along the ICW south of Myrtle Beach, SC

After a couple hours we entered the Waccamaw River, one of the most beautiful parts of the ICW. It winds through wooded areas with little

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

evidence of human habitation. We did see a few boats heading up and down the river. Some were headed to a local beach we have been to in the past. Patti noticed that one was being driven by a guy in a thong bikini.

The Waccamaw River opens out into Winyah Bay. We entered the Bay, following the ICW route and then headed back towards Georgetown. We had made reservations at the Harborwalk Marina so we called them and they were waiting for us when we got there.



HIGH COTTON at Georgetown, SC's Harborwalk Marina

As usual, the Sea Dog had to get off the boat and do her business so she and Patti went for a walk while Captain Ron connected the power and checked in and paid.

HIGH COTTON was without a horn and that's not legal. Captain Ron made some electrical checks and determined that he wouldn't be able to make repairs without the correct parts so he asked the marina dockmaster if there was a place where he could buy a new compressed air horn within walking distance. He suggested a marine dealer about four blocks away so we put the K-9 on the boat and started walking. We got to the dealer and they said they don't stock portable air horns.

We told them about our problem and they went in the back and came out with a used horn. Captain

Ron asked the price and they said "nothing". We thanked them for making us legal again and walked back to the boat.

We took turns showering and then walked to a nearby restaurant for dinner.

After dinner we started out to walk the puppy but ended up talking to a couple (and their dog) who live on a boat at the marina and who we had met the last time we stayed there. Kiki met their dog and got to get on their boat.

Eventually the sun set and we walked back to HIGH COTTON for a good night's sleep.

Captain's Log, day ninety eight, (August 8, 2018)

We're home, but more on that later.

We got up and got underway about 8:00 AM after the dog walk and engine checks. Our plan was to run about seven hours, anchor for the night and then finish the rest of the trip tomorrow and get to our home at St. Johns Yacht Harbor at slack current at about 2:00 PM.

We had the current with us on Winyah Bay and the winds were light so it was a quick and comfortable passage. It can be rough at times.

We followed the ICW into the Estherville, Minim Creek Canal and continued south past both the North Santee and South Santee Rivers. We saw several small alligators along the way.

We had been warned about shallow water south of McClellanville and sure enough, it was just about low tide when we got there. Our depth sounder was showing less than the level of water required to float HIGH COTTON but we just kept going. Captain Ron calibrated the depth sounder when he installed it but he will have to check it

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

again because we should have hit bottom and sat there until the tide came back in. We passed another trawler going the opposite direction. They made it that far but we don't know if they made it all the way through the shallow spot or not. It runs for a few miles.



Low water on the ICW

It was a nice boating day and we were making good time so we did some figuring and decided that if we kept going we could make it home by about 5:30 PM, pull into the fuel dock before the marina closed, fill our tanks, unload the boat and then move around to our slip at 7:30 PM when it would be slack current so we passed up our planned anchorage and kept going.

We soon found ourselves in a pod of dolphins so we stopped and drifted so Kiki could watch the "big fishies". We continued on and soon found ourselves in another pod of dolphins so again, we stopped to let the Sea Dog watch them. She seems fascinated by dolphins and manatees (we saw manatees last year in Florida). This time, when we started back up, a pair of dolphins decided to swim alongside the boat for a while. Kiki was pretty excited with this and watched and barked at them.

Eventually, the dolphins went back to doing whatever dolphins do and we continued south.

There's a no-wake zone on the ICW for a quarter of a mile or so just before it enters Charleston Harbor. Patti and the K-9 went below because we expected the harbor to be rough. As we were exiting the no wake zone, Captain Ron reached for the throttle to resume cruising speed, only to see a giant container ship in the shipping channel we were about to cross. He decided the best plan was to wait for the ship to pass and cross behind it so that's what we did.



The little boats give way to the big boats



We're nearly home

We got to St. Johns Yacht Harbor about 5:30 PM as planned and took on about forty five gallons of diesel fuel. We pulled HIGH COTTON back to where it would be out of the way and plugged in

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

the shore power cord so we would have air conditioning.

Patti began unloading the clothes and food and stripping the bed while Captain Ron went to get his truck. He pulled it around to the parking lot and began bringing things from the boat and packing them in the truck.

One of our slip neighbors saw us and volunteered to help us when it was time to move the boat so at 7:30 PM we got him and moved the boat from the fuel dock to our slip.

It was a tired bunch that backed into the driveway about 8:30 PM. We had to unload the truck because it looked like rain. Of course the air conditioner and water heater had been turned off to save energy so the house was hot and the hot water was cold.

The large cardboard box our neighbor puts our mail in was overflowing and various packages were piled next to it. It will take a while to sort out the junk mail from the important mail and make sure all bills are paid.

Anyhow, as we posted, we are back. More details to follow but that's it for today. Kiki writes *I love my boat cruises but when I get home I have to make sure everything is OK in my house and yard. Sometimes squirrels or kitty cats sneak into my yard and I have to scare them away.*



Back home at St. Johns Yacht Harbor, Charleston, SC

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

Epilogue

Duration	98 days
Distance	2604 NM
Time underway	372.1 hours
Fuel used (diesel)	663.83 gallons
Fuel consumption	1.78 GPH
Fuel mileage	3.92 NMPG
Fuel cost	\$ 2131.10
Nights anchored	12
Nights on free docks	4
Nights in marinas	81
Marina cost	\$ 3867.91

People often ask us if we would do a trip like this again. Cruising past the Statue of Liberty in our own boat and cruising part of the historic Erie Canal were “bucket list” items for us and we’re very glad we made the trip. On the other hand, the Delaware Bay and the open ocean trip from Manasquan Inlet to New York Harbor taxed the capabilities of our “little cruiser”. The New Jersey ICW was difficult because it’s so shallow and for the most part, it was boring as well. And of course we had to do these parts twice, once going and once coming back. Most likely, we won’t go north of the upper Chesapeake Bay again.

With those exceptions, we had a great time, saw lots of interesting sights and wildlife, and met some nice and interesting people along the way. Many of these people cruise for months at a time. Some live on their boats and have no land based residence at all.

Having a portable wireless hotspot and a laptop PC on board allowed us to pay our bills online and keep in touch with friends and family. 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 although there

were some problems when the owner, Garmin, decided to make some unannounced and undocumented changes shortly after the start of our cruise.

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
Dozier’s Waterway Guide Northern
Dozier’s Waterway Guide Great Lakes
Skipper Bob’s New York Canal System

Our neighbor kept our lawn mowed, brought in the mail and packages, and kept an eye on the house for us. We drove ourselves to the marina and left our vehicle parked in the auxiliary parking lot. A friend started it up and ran it for a few minutes every few weeks.

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.