

*From the narrows of Ft. Walton
to the dock at Wolf Bay Lodge*

*Through barges, yachts, and jet-skis
that we are forced to dodge*

*There's anchors, dinks and beach chairs
and other stuff we lose*

*All part of the adventure called
The Northern Gulf Coast Cruise!*



Northern Gulf Coast Cruise A Collection of Stories 1998 to 2020

Photo Credit: Mickey LaGarde

How It All Began

by Bob Endicott

Photos provided by Bob Endicott

When Trish and I came up with the original notion for what became the *Catalina 22 Northern Gulf Coast Cruise*, we never dreamed it would attract C22 sailors from as far away as Idaho, Colorado and even Canada. Nor did we dream that it would continue year after year, providing an annual reunion for many NGCC veterans, as well as an opportunity for those whose home waters are smaller inland lakes to gain coastal cruising experience and skills. Coastal novices could be secure in the knowledge that if things get dicey, there would be a wealth of physical and advisory assistance close at hand. The NGCC did indeed take on a life of its own and has continued to adjust and reinvent itself over the years to accommodate the desires of the participants and the loss of various destination points to storm or other calamity.

So, how did it all begin?

Let's go back almost twenty years . . .



Tequila Sunset, skippered by Bob & Trish Endicott

We bought our C22, *Tequila Sunset*, in the summer of 1995. She was a 1985 model (#12759) one of the last of the "old-styles", and had been in the same family since new. She came with most of the options that we wanted in a "pocket cruiser", e.g. sliding galley with two-burner Origo stove, pop-top enclosure, porta-potti, etc.

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The reactivation of Fleet 77 under the guidance of Beattie Purcell not long after, saw us begin to engage in some group activities locally. Early on, the cruising consisted mostly of raft-ups or perhaps a rendezvous at a waterfront restaurant. Before long, though, we began planning 2 and 3-night fleet gatherings at Spectre Island or some other local anchorage. As our experience and confidence increased, we began to dream of an adventure that would take us further afield. In 1997, we made a trip to Panama City, buddy-boating with friends in a Westsail 32. It was a great trip, but as a trip for a group of Catalina 22's, the two-day run each way didn't offer much in the way of places to socialize or take refuge should the weather turn unfavorable. So, if not east, how about west?

Before moving to Ft. Walton Beach, Trish and I had lived in Pensacola for 11 years and had sailed much of the local water with our previous little sloop, a Gulf Coast 18. We began thinking that west would be the direction to go. The next question was "How far?" We needed a destination. Some place worthy of a visit, where we could celebrate our accomplishment with a meal and libation. Some place we could reach and return from easily in a week, with allowance for a "weather day", if needed. In his *Cruising Guide To The Northern Gulf Coast*, cruising mentor Claiborne Young sang the praises of Wolf Bay Lodge, a bit east of Foley, AL. Good food and accessible by water. We had heard of the place when we lived in Pensacola, but had never driven over there. What better way to visit than by boat? We worked out the mileage and the trip seemed doable; about 160 miles round trip. We presented our idea to the Fleet. Mickey & Dee LaGarde, Ned Westerlund and Greg Haymore all signed on. We scheduled the trip for the full moon week in June '98 and dubbed it *The June Moon Cruise*. At the last minute, both Ned and Greg had matters arise that prevented them from coming, so it was just Trish

and I on *Tequila Sunset* and Mickey & Dee on *Deja' Vu*. We were blessed with *spectacular* weather: southeast wind all the way to Wolf Bay, southwest wind all the way back! We couldn't quit talking about it when we returned and vowed to do it again next year. Ned and Greg swore they wouldn't miss the next one, and they didn't (indeed, Greg is the *only* person to have made *every single* NGCC to date)!



Greg Haymore passes out the first ever *Northern Gulf Coast Cruise* t-shirts at the Quietwater Beach T-dock, Pensacola Beach.

The next year, 1999, we decided to move the trip to May (typically less heat and more favorable winds than in June) and open up the cruise to all of Region 3. It was billed as the *Catalina 22 Northern Gulf Coast Cruise*. In addition to the four boats from Fleet 77, we also hosted Vernon Senterfitt, from Gainesville, FL, sailing *Mari-Lee*, Ted & Dora McGee, from Cumming, GA, sailing *Rhapsody in seA* and Grady Christian with his buddy Buzz, from Panama City, FL.

In 2000, we opened the NGCC to the National Association and had 15 participants. In 2001, we had 21. I believe the number has pretty much remained in the 18-24 range since.

One of the rituals we began in 1999 and repeated for several years following was the "fleet picture" from the Navarre Bridge. The year Ned was Cruise Captain, he even arranged for an aerial photo from a friend's private plane! As the number of attendees approached two dozen, creating a photogenic formation became increasingly difficult and, if the wind was behind us, nearly impossible, so the practice was eventually abandoned.

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1999 was also the first year we had "Cruise shirts" that we all wore to dinner at Wolf Bay Lodge. Thanks to Greg and Nancy, the NGCC still enjoys annual shirts and many of us have a closet full!

We also tried to keep things interesting with awards and games. We had a *Cruising Large Award* for the cruiser with the most outrageously (pun intended, John and Anita) equipped C22. We also had a *McGyver Award*, which was given to the cruiser who demonstrated the greatest resourcefulness in overcoming some calamity during the cruise. From the start, the NGCC had a history of "cruisers helping cruisers", so this was sometimes a tough call. Later NGCC's featured scavenger hunts, the *Poker Crawl* and other such amusements.

In the early days of the NGCC, Fleet 77 didn't have the close association with the Ft. Walton Yacht Club that it has enjoyed for several years now. We would launch and retrieve at other local ramps and meet at a nearby Mexican restaurant after the Cruise to swap pictures and stories. As several of our Fleet members became FWYC members, We began thinking of FWYC as home, even holding our monthly meetings there. Their hospitality simplified many of the logistic aspects of hosting the Cruise.

Hurricanes, particularly Ivan in 2004, required us to consider new stops, as some marinas went away never to return and other new ones were built in different places. Wolf Bay Lodge burned to the ground in the early hours of December 7, 2008. Cruisers expressed interest in touring the Pensacola Lighthouse, the Naval Aviation Museum at NAS Pensacola and downtown Pensacola itself. The Butterfly House and Juana's Pagoda have been favorite stops at Navarre and in recent years the Pensacola Beach Yacht Club has been very generous with their facilities and hospitality. Over the years, the itinerary has been adjusted to meet the wishes of the cruisers. After all, it's *their* Cruise. We tried to give it just enough structure to give everyone a sense of being part of the group without dictating every little detail.

We think that the Northern Gulf Coast is one of the best places on the planet to sail a Catalina 22. The folks that come every May to enjoy these waters with the folks of Fleet 77 are what make the C22 NGCC one of the best cruises anywhere, year after year. The friends Trish and I have made in the Catalina 22 family, particularly through the NGCC, are still among our *best* friends. We are proud to have played a role in the origin of the Northern Gulf Coast Cruise and humbled by the status it has achieved over the years. Let's hope there are many more!

Fair winds to you all!

Bob & Trish Endicott





The 1999 NGCC fleet at Spectre Island.



The free T-dock at Navarre has long been a favorite place to "take a break" between Spectre Island and Pensacola Beach, both westbound and eastbound (though thanks to an inconsiderate power boater, who damaged several boats here with his wake during the 2014 NGCC, future cruisers may have second thoughts about stopping here).



Four boats moored at the dock while three anchored off at Wolf Bay Lodge. *Tequila Sunset* played "water-taxi" for the three anchored boats. NGCC 1999.



The 1999 cruisers enjoy a celebratory drink in the bar at Wolf Bay Lodge, while waiting for the dining room to open.



Group photo 1999 at Wolf Bay Lodge. Showing off our Cruise shirts.

June Moon Cruise with Fleet 77

By Michael LaGarde

MainBrace, September 1998

Wow, a whole week on our Catalina 22! We were so excited when our Fleet Captain, Bob Endicott, announced that he and his wife, Trisha, were going to lead a 160 mile cruise from Fort Walton Beach, Florida to Wolf Bay, Alabama, during the week of a full moon (June 7-14), and invited the fleet along. Originally, four boats signed up to sail, but at the last minute, a business trip and broken plumbing left only two boats—***Deju vu*** and ***Tequila Sunset***.

Novice sailors that we are, my wife, Dee, and I packed “everything” including 25 gallons of water, 3 tanks of gas, 6 bottles of sun block, and lots of potato salad (so we wouldn’t have to cook on the first days). Sailing from different home ports on Choctawhatchee Bay (Fort Walton Beach) with the wind out of the southwest, we rendezvoused at Specter Island located in the Santa Rosa Sound (Intracoastal Waterway) near Hurlburt Field Air Force Base. On the way, we saw several dolphins swimming in front of a fisher trawler so we knew the trip would be good. Bob and Trish arrived first and we soon joined them. We talked and planned and Dee and I ate potato salad. All of us went to bed with great anticipation for a great sail the next day.

In the summer of 1995, we met Bob and Trish in our marina on Choctawhatchee Bay soon after we got our Catalina 22, *Déjà vu*. Fate brought us together as our Catalina 22s were the smallest of about 40 boats in the marina; ironically we were both among five boats that survived Hurricane Opal in October 1995. We knew then that we had good boats! One year later Fleet 77 was formed. This was our first cruise and we were glad to have experienced leadership as Bob and Trish had previously voyaged to the West (Pensacola, FL) and to the East (Panama City, FL).

It couldn’t have been better! We awoke to a strong southwest wind—a rarity around here. So with jibs only, we headed west to Alabama. Accompanied by dolphins attracted to the humming of our keels, we sped along one-foot waves. We flew past our destination, Quietwater Beach at 1:00 p.m. and, not wanting to forsake our strong trailing wind, decided to continue. The left over potato salad was handy for lunch. We sailed past the civil war forts, Fort Pickens and Fort Barrancas, guarding the entrance to Pensacola Bay. As we crossed the Pensacola Pass, we caught an incoming tide and “surfed” to the other side. The first full day completed. Bob’s GPS reported 40 miles.

We camped at Johnson Beach in the Big Lagoon west of Pensacola Bay and across from the Pensacola Navy Air Station. It was a great location with aquamarine water, white sand, and blue sky. We went ashore and crossed over to the Gulf of Mexico to watch ships pass through the Pensacola Pass. However, the waters were filled with sea nettles. Unfortunately, both Dee and I were strong, but happily Bob and Trish (experienced sailors) had the meat tenderizer to neutralize the sting. Dinner included left over potato salad; by this time, we had enough.

Bob was great with his trip itinerary. The next morning we awoke to an air show by the U.S. Navy Blue Angels. They crisscrossed the lagoon for over an hour as we shaved, showered, and ate breakfast (leftover potato salad—never again). First, we motored across the sound to a marina for ice and then set sail to Alabama with a Southeast wind. What good fortune! Once again, dolphins accompanied us as we sped along passing Big Lagoon Park and Perdido Bay. At one point, we were approaching a narrow bridge and happened to look behind us. We saw four large commercial shrimp boats barreling in upon us. Quickly, we started our motor and sped to the other side just in time. We stopped at a marina to shower and to change into some fresh clothes for dinner. Bob called ahead to inquire about Wolf Bay Lodge. We were told that they opened at 5:00 p.m. and did not take reservations.

We continued our journey and, because the sound was narrow at this point, we motored the rest of the way. Turning north, we motored up Wolf Bay, docking at the Wolf Bay Lodge about 4:00 p.m. Hot and tired, we hit the bar and welcomed icy cold frozen Margaritas in an air conditioned room. The dining room looked like a big banquet hall seating about 200 people. At 5:00 p.m., we were the first customer to be seated for dinner. As we entered, we noticed a very long line of people. By 6:00 p.m., there was not an empty seat in the house. The dinner was outstanding.

That evening we found a quiet hole in Wolf Bay and anchored. Bob and Trish joined us for a rafting and we enjoyed our evening with Bob’s famous Tequila Sunset Cocktails. The bay was smooth as silk, but the air was hot and still. We survived and awoke to fishing boats of all sizes headed south. We sailed early with the southwest winds. Bob sure did plan this right—the wind was with us both directions. There were over 100 small runabouts with nets dragging behind us, it was Alabama’s first day of shrimp season. Somehow, we managed to weave in -and-out and avoid the nets. As soon as we hit

Florida waters, the little shrimp boats disappeared—such netting is banned in Florida.

In Big Lagoon we stopped at a marina for ice, a shower, and a break. The with a full westerly wind behind us, we sailed into the Pensacola Pass. Bob and Trish were ahead and weren't moving under full sail. Dee used binoculars to see if they were in trouble. Soon we realized we, too, weren't moving. The outgoing tide was trying to take us out to the Gulf of Mexico while our sails were working to take us across into Pensacola Bay. Down went the motors until we were in safety. Meanwhile, we were entertained by a giant sea turtle, two helicopters taking off and landing on a Navy ship that was cruising the bay, and a docked Spanish tall sailing ship.

We passed under the Pensacola Beach bridge, entered Quietwater Beach, and tied up to its docks. It was great to feel the land again. We strolled the pier and boardwalk enjoying 60s music. Dee and I decided to eat in a Mexican restaurant and were entertained with a live bluegrass band. Bob and Trish returned to their boat for a gourmet dinner on Bob's custom-made cockpit table. Passerby's could only drool. Later, we left the dock to anchor offshore. On quiet

waters with a cool sea breeze, a beautiful large full moon and the music of the 60s, we drifted off to sleep.

We were up early the next morning and sailed due east to Santa Rosa Sound with a gentle wind behind us. We sailed full double wings, using our sails to block the hot rising sun facing us. At one point, Bob broke out his spinnaker and made a colorful sight. But flaky winds reverted him back to the double wing. Three dolphins played with our boat for about 20 minutes—under one side then the other. One actually splashed water on Dee. We arrived at Spectre Island just after midday. Bob and Trish decided to camp for one more night., but the lure of home was too strong for us. We enjoyed the adventure of our first cruise on *Déjà vu*, but found the comforts of home irresistible the closer we got. We were happy to return home a few days earlier than planned, and vowed not to eat potato salad for the rest of the season.

Great Mate & Ol' Salt

by Ted McGee

MainBrace, July 1999 and September 1999

Coastal cruising was one of the things Dora and I had in mind when we purchased our Catalina 22, so when Fleet 77 announced a Region 3 cruise we got very excited. I asked Bob Endicott, Cruise Captain, for a recommended list of supplies. We learned Bob and Trish live and sail big on their C22. They provided us with a "cruisers guide" complete with photographic illustrations, menus, GPS waypoints and many other useful tips. We followed their advice and at the end of the cruise we were glad we did.

We began preparations several months prior to the cruise. Several Fleet 58 members helped us get ready. Soren Sorensen helped us upgrade our electrical system to make it more energy efficient. While Soren was checking our electrical system he discovered our solar panel was not working. He loaned us his for the trip. David and Suzy Lyon loaned us their Magma grill. The Sunday before the trip Soren and Vibeke Sorensen and Rich Fox were

on hand to help us pull *Rhapsody* out of Lake Lanier for the trip to Florida. We worked on final preparations all week. Provisions needed to be purchased, meals prepared, and everything stowed securely onboard. Supplies were checked and missing or damaged items were replaced. Everything was packed and repacked until we found a secure place for everything. Finally, everything was done and we were ready to go. All that remained was to pack our clothes and wait for 3:00 a.m. Saturday morning when we would depart.

With boat in tow Dora and I headed for Ft. Walton Beach, Florida. We were met by Mike and Dee LaGarde (Mike is Captain of Fleet 77). Mike and Dee had already made arrangements for us to launch our boat at Eglin Air Force Base. After launching they helped us get last minute provisions and store our trailer at their home. Dee drove Dora out to look at the sailing conditions in the bay and they were greeted by the first of many dolphins we would see along the way. When all was ready we boarded *Rhapsody*, Mike and Dee boarded *Deja Vu*, and we followed them across Choctawhatchee Bay, through the narrows of

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Santa Rosa Sound to Specter Island, the rendezvous point. By evening's end ten Catalina 22s had assembled at Specter Island. Seven of the ten boats planned to make the entire trip were:

Deja Vu ~ Mike & Dee LaGarde
(Mike is Captain of Fleet 77)

Tequila Sunset ~ Bob & Trish Endicott
(Bob is Cruise Captain)

Antidote ~ Ned Westerlund

Almost Done ~ Greg Haymore
(Greg designed & printed the shirts)

Mari-Lee ~ Vernon Senterfitt
(Fleet Capt, Fleet 92, Gainesville, FL)

Rhapsody in seA ~ Ted & Dora McGee
(Fleet 58, Lake Lanier, GA)

Jayce O'Grady ~ Grady Christian and Buzz
Smith, sailed from Panama City, FL to join cruise

Three of the boats could not make the trip but stopped by to wish us bon voyage:

Spritzer ~ Keenan and Kai Kline
(1st overnight and sailed with us as far as Navarre Bridge),

Tin Can ~ Kevin Cheshure and friends
(Kevin is Fleet 77 Sec/Treas) and

Fandango ~ Beattie & Brent Purcell.

Bob and Trish Endicott greeted us as soon as we arrived. Bob, Grady, and Buzz helped us anchor our boat to shore. Saturday evening was spent getting acquainted and admiring each other's boats. Vernon Senterfitt had a beautiful wooden dinghy he made and everyone wanted to try it out. Bob Endicott and Ned Westerlund also had dinghy's and for awhile it looked like a dinghy race might develop. Vernon showed off his autopilot and, not to be outdone, Greg Haymore cranked up his gas-driven electric generator. In a short time it was as if we had been long-time friends.

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Photo Credit: Chad Chisolm

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Beattie and Brent Purcell stopped by for about an hour to visit with everyone before we left. Those of us who know Beattie have a lot of respect for his sailing skill. Of the ten boats resting at anchor that night, nine of us had used our motors to get into the small anchoring hole. We all watched with envy and amazement as Beattie sailed in, luffed into the wind, dropped his sails and anchor in one continuous motion. When it was time for Beattie and Brent to leave they had the sails and anchor up and were underway without ever using their motor. Kevin Cheshure also stopped by to visit before returning home later that night.

Eight C22s were on hand Sunday morning to sail to our first destination, Navarre Bridge. Greg Haymore had arranged for photographers on the bridge to take a group photo as we motor-sailed under it. This was as far as Keenan and Kai Kline could go with us and we reluctantly said goodbye as they returned home.

That left seven boats to complete the trip to Wolf Bay, AL and back. We turned off our motors, hoisted or unfurled the jibs, and headed for Quietwater Beach Boardwalk. The wind was about 8-10 knots out of the southwest and we beat into

the wind all day. Dora and I are lake sailors and are used to tacking every few minutes. It was a treat for us to sail for several miles on the same tack. Along the way *Almost Done* lost an anchor off the foredeck and a cooler on *Antidote* did a somersault, but aside from those minor mishaps we all arrived in good order.

It was crowded at Quietwater Beach Boardwalk, but we all managed to find a place to tie up. This was my first experience with Mediterranean anchoring. With this technique the bow is anchored off the pier and the stern is backed into the pier and tied off. This technique is used on crowded piers where no finger docks are available. As soon as all the boats were secured we headed for a local Mexican restaurant. While waiting for our dinner we could see a squall developing. Those of us that went out to check on the boats got soaked.

After dinner and a walk around the boardwalk we turned in for the evening. Some elected to stay tied up to the boardwalk; others elected to anchor out a few hundred yards. Those of us that remained at the boardwalk met lots of friendly late-night dock natives who strolled down to admire the fleet of C22s.

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Photo Credit: Bob Endicott

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Our course Monday would take us across the southern part of Pensacola Bay. Dolphins swam under our boat as we left Quietwater Beach. The wind was still out of the southwest about 10 knots. Along the way we watched helicopters practicing rescue maneuvers. We passed by Ft. Pickens (a Civil War Fort), the Pensacola lighthouse, Pensacola Naval Air Station, and the Pensacola Pass (passageway to the Gulf). After stopping at Southwind and Rod and Reel marinas for supplies and showers we rafted up for the night off Big Lagoon State Park. Bob Endicott used Vernon's dinghy to set a stern anchor for the raft-up.

Tuesday was a lazy sail from Big Lagoon across Perdido Bay. We stopped at Bear Point Marina for more showers and supplies before sailing into Wolf Bay. Wolf Bay Lodge is located in Moccasin Bayou on the western side of Wolf Bay. The rest of the fleet hung back while Mike and Dee LaGarde sailed into what they thought was Moccasin Bayou in search of Wolf Bay Lodge. They quickly realized their mistake and sailed into the "real" Moccasin Bayou with the rest of us close behind.

Wolf Bay Lodge was our final destination. We were able to get four of the boats tied up to the docks at Wolf Bay Lodge. The other three boats rafted up and crew ferried in. We changed into our cruise t-shirts, which was the official uniform of the day. Several people came by to admire the boats and we enlisted one to take a group picture. The t-shirts were designed by Greg Haymore and feature a cruise map with photographs of the major stops. The highlight of the evening was the presentation of certificates attesting to our sailing skill and knowledge. We were designated "**Great Mate & Ol' Salt**". Everyone who completed the trip to Wolf Bay was awarded a similar certificate. Bob Endicott (Cruise Captain) and Mike LaGarde (Fleet 77 Captain) signed the certificate.

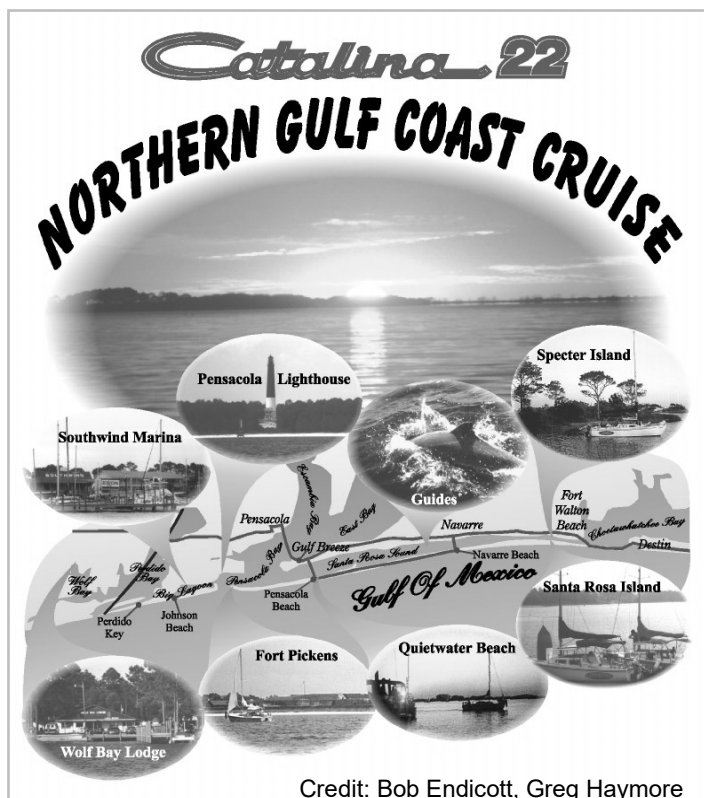
We left Wolf Bay Wednesday morning with a thunderstorm threatening. Dora and I put on our foul weather gear and prepared for the worst. Rain was falling and we could hear thunder in the distance. Fortunately the storm moved to the north of us. We stopped at Spanish Point to enjoy the white-sand beaches. This was what Dee had been waiting for and we followed her along a short walk across the sand dunes to wade and body surf in the Gulf of Mexico. When we got back to the Intercoastal waterway where our boats were anchored the wind was building. Four of the boats were rafted and anchored to the beach with three anchors. The other three boats were anchored individually. Ned Westerlund handled the beach anchors and one at

time we were safely on our way. We said goodbye to Grady Christian and Buzz Smith. Grady and Buzz had come the longest distance, sailing from Panama City, FL. They had a long trip home and elected to continue on their way.

The wind continued to build to 18-20 knots out of the southwest. The weather report forecast the wind to shift to the north later that night. Five of the remaining boats set anchor on the north shore while Mike and Dee searched for a safer harbor. We didn't wait long. They discovered a safe hole and we spent the night at Sherman Cove Marina (The NAS Pensacola recreational powerboat facility). Thursday morning the marina operators had hot coffee ready and helped us with supplies.

We left Sherman Cove Marina at 6:45 am with a 10-knot northeast wind. Mike and Dee cleverly discovered shoals near marker 144, which the rest of us were able to avoid. We followed Mike and Dee's lead under Sikes Bridge and past Quietwater Beach Boardwalk. Our planned lunch stop was around the Navarre Bridge. Ned Westerlund and Dora and I were the first ones to get to the Navarre Bridge. Ned found a dock at the north end of the bridge. I radioed our position to the other four boats. Unfortunately my sense of direction was off a bit and my directions sent Mike and Dee and Greg to the opposite side of the bridge. Bob and Trish immediately recognized my error and within a few

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minutes we were all tied up at the real north side of the Navarre Bridge for lunch.

Thursday evening we entered the narrows of Santa Rosa Sound. A friendly race broke out and Dora and I used our racing experience to get clear air and out in front. Winding our way through the narrow channel required frequent tacks and jibes. We congratulated ourselves on our skill but as we looked back we saw another boat had broken free. It was Ned Westerlund and he was hot on our trail and closing. We managed to hold our lead and Ned sailed into the anchorage at Specter Island close behind us.



Photo Credit: Bob Endicott

We had sailed 47 miles from Sherman Cove Marina that day and it was good to finally drop the sails and set the anchor. We had sailed approximately 167 miles in total and we spent the evening reliving

the cruise and telling stories. No one wanted to go to bed. We knew this was the last night and in a few short hours the adventure would come to an end.

Friday came all too soon. Dora and I followed Mike and Dee back to Eglin Air Force Base where they helped pull the boat and get it ready for the trip home. We met with the group that night for dinner at Los Panchos. It was our last chance to share stories and pictures from the cruise and we all made the most of it. After dinner we took a walk on the boardwalk. Dolphins were swimming just beyond the surf. We had seen dolphins everyday and it was fitting they would be on hand to say goodbye. We spent the night at Mike and Dee's home, returning to Atlanta on Saturday.

Fleet 77 worked hard to make this cruise safe and enjoyable for everyone. They are making plans for another cruise next year and Dora and I are looking forward to sailing with them again.



Great Mates and Ol' Salts

Hear Ye! Hear Ye! Hear Ye! Let It Be Known To One And All That

Ted & Dora McGee

have performed, persevered, passed the rigors of the sea and commanded the great yacht *Rhapsody in seA* with Fleet 77 on a great sailing of the Northern Gulf Coast.

As **Commander**, shown exceptional abilities to elbow bend and consume drink, Bob's Tequila Sunrises or otherwise, before their sea legs stiffened. As **Navigator**, shown amazing navigational skills in avoiding running aground, avoiding barges and avoiding collision with all bridges. As **Skipper**, has sailed on the high seas without falling off the edge of the world or becoming lost in the Santa Rosa Island Narrows. As **Captain**, has stood the night watch without snoring while sleeping. As **Master**, has shown great perception and native intelligence in distinguishing North, South and East from West on the compass, port from starboard and forward from aft. As **Explorer**, had the courage to venture onto exotic Specter Island, surf the Pensacola Pass, splash and play with the dolphins and barter for dinner with the wild natives of Alabama.

So Be It Known on the high seas and the low seas, that Fleet 77 accords them the honorary titles of **Great Mate and Ol' Salt** and the privileges thereof.

SWORN AND DATED between Tequila Sunrises somewhere on the NW Florida Gulf Coast:

Bob Endicott, Cruise Captain

Mike LaGarde, Fleet 77 Captain



Photo Credit: Ned Westerlund

The Northern Gulf Coast Cruise 2000 Goes International

by Mike LaGarde, Fleet 77

MainBrace, July 2000

Fleet 77 Cruise Captain, Bob Endicott, could not have envisioned that the two-boat cruise he led across the northern gulf coast in 1998 would mature into a 15-boat cruise in two short years. Furthermore, he could never have dreamed that it would attract Catalina 22 owners from as far away as Hailey, Idaho (2,400 miles). The Northern Gulf Coast Cruise 2000 not only did that, but also became an international cruise by attracting its first Canadian participant from Ottawa in Ontario, Canada. At Fleet 77's April meeting Bob updated our fleet with last minute details on the cruise and commented that with so many visitors coming from afar he had better make it a good cruise. He disappointed no one. It was a very good cruise indeed.

Cruising on the northern gulf coast has many attractions and wonderful attributes to attract sailors. The Florida Panhandle to Mobile Bay is surrounded by some of the clearest waters to be found anywhere shimmering with the color of emerald green reflected against the white sandy beaches. Most of its coastal waters and beaches remain undeveloped and miles from the vestiges of civilization thanks to a happy marriage of the Gulf Islands National Seashore and Eglin Air Force Base. Joining Bob and his wife, Trish, on that initial gulf coast cruise, Dee and I had a most wonderful vacation. Together we discussed sharing our experience with others in our fleet and National Association. In 1999, the cruise was opened to Region 3 sailors only and this year to all sailors in our National Association. From the heart-stopping beauty of our beautiful gulf coast beaches to the dark pines and choruses of frogs and crickets of Wolf Bay, Alabama, Bob led what has to be the best northern gulf coast cruise ever.

Joining Fleet 77 for the Northern Gulf Coast Cruise 2000 were:

Bob and Trish Endicott, **Tequila Sunset**,
Ft. Walton Beach, FL

Ned Westerlund and brother Randy
(visiting from California), **Antidote**,
Shalimar, FL

Greg Haymore,
Almost Done, Shalimar, FL

Mike and Dee LaGarde, **Déjà vu**
Shalimar, FL

Vernon Senterfitt, **Marilee**
Gainesville, FL

Bill and Marzanna Krupp, **Bonus**
Spring Hill, FL

Scott Holecheck and Brian Grant, **Eudora**
Jacksonville, FL

Carl Dickerson and Don Page, (**unnamed boat**),
Pensacola, FL

Benny and Gail Cash, **BugaBoo**
Gulf Shores, AL

Ted and Dora McGee, **Rhapsody in seA**,
Cumming, GA

Tedd Kemberling and Frank Barbour (**new unnamed boat**), Fayetteville, GA

Kent Overbeck and Glenn Myrick, **Leapfrog**
Signal Mountain, TN

David Landis and Norma Harper, **the Green Boat**,
Columbus, Ohio

Deon and Phyllis Wells, (**unnamed boat**)
Hailey, ID

Ric Jonas, **Morning Star**
Ottawa, Ontario.

Five short stories are worthy of note from the travels of our visitors from afar. Deon and Phyllis Wells now value their 19 year old trailer for at least \$500, the price they paid for a custom made axle in Natchitoches, LA. Ric Jonas is happy with the boat he purchased sight unseen on the internet. He brought a trailer from Canada and picked up **Morning Star** in Melbourne, FL before joining us for the cruise. Benny and Gail Cash moor their boat about 10 minutes from Wolf Bay Lodge, AL, the cruise destination. Imagine the humor in telling their neighbors that they were trailering **Buga-Boo** to Ft Walton Beach to join a cruise to Wolf Bay Lodge. Scott Holecheck and Brian Grant have been best buddies for years. The cruise on **Eudora** was sort of a bachelor's last fling before Brian gets married in July. Tedd Kimberling recently joined our fleet with a new boat and is new to sailing. Rather than sail his own boat, Frank Barbour, Fleet 77's expert sailor and trainer, crewed for Tedd teaching him the finer points of sailing.

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Fleet 77 hosts were assigned to each our out of town guests to assist them in getting their boats launched, accommodations, and last minute requirements that pop up before a week-long cruise. Four launch sites were used distributing boat launchings around Choctawhatchee Bay. Our assembly point was Spectre Island, located between Santa Rosa Island and the north shore that is Hurlburt Air Force Base. Fourteen boats rested at anchor that night in a protected hole formed by Spectre Island and Santa Rosa Island. The fifteenth boat, Carl Dickerson's, would later join us at Pensacola. Spectre Island is a favorite haunt for Fleet 77 as it is for many other local boaters. Consequently, firewood is often scarce. Ned Westerlund surprised everyone when he and brother Randy unloaded his ballast of pre-cut and dried firewood from **Antidote**.

Within minutes we had a roaring beach bonfire and gathered around to tell stories and meet one another. Our Cruise Captain, Bob, used this



Photo Credit: Mike LaGarde

opportunity to distribute welcome packets and the official Cruise 2000 shirts (produced by Greg Haymore) to everyone. Benny and Gail Cash showed off their reclining beach chairs with leg rests and drink holders, and did they look comfortable.

Up early the next morning, we hoisted sail for a rendezvous at Navarre Bridge where our trusty photographer, Chad Chisolm, was scheduled to take a cruising fleet photo. Last year's photo of eight boats was a real trick to orchestrate especially as we closed ranks to sail thru the channel under the bridge. Now with 14 boats we really had to squeeze to do it. Greg Haymore, standing on the stern of **Almost Done** like a maestro, directed traffic and led

us safely under the bridge. From Navarre it was beautiful sailing all the way to Quietwater Beach on the north shore of Pensacola Beach. Dee and I tried out our spinnaker but dropped to the rear as we became tangled in the sail after a few winch-wetting heels. Scott and Brian on **Eudora** had better results with theirs but soon abandoned the spinnaker, as there was not a consistent trailing wind. Our fast cruisers, as they demonstrated throughout the cruise, **the Green Boat, Rhapsody in seA**, and **Leapfrog**, were the first to arrive and radio back docking conditions for the public dock. Hours later our last boats would arrive.

Quietwater Beach and adjacent Pensacola Beach offered a chance to stretch sore muscles on the boardwalk, buy ice for coolers, swim in the Gulf of Mexico, and choose among several fine restaurants for those not wanting to eat on their boats. A large group of us found our way to a seafood restaurant where Ned Westerlund reserved a large table. After a good seafood dinner several of us wandered over to Pensacola Beach to listen to the Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra perform a beachside Mother's Day concert.

The wind picked up and several of our boats drug anchor (Mediterranean anchor backing to dock), but were rescued by fleet members on nearby boats. Deon, Greg and myself were grateful to those that secured our boats before any serious damage occurred. This was but a prelude to the night in store for us. Scott would appropriately rename Quietwater Beach as the "**Washing Machine**" when the night was over because we were clearly in an agitation cycle.

As night approached the fleet positioned itself several hundred yards offshore at anchor free to swing as the wind changed. The wind did change but not in direction. it intensified. A weather front came in from the North disturbing what are normally tranquil evenings. The **Washing Machine** treated us to a night of rock and roll as waves mounted as much as three feet and the wind howled. Sleep can best be described as a long series of catnaps between tying things down, constantly checking on noises and boat position, and checking on your neighbor's welfare. We had to close our hatch to keep water out of the cabin. By morning we were all frazzled and glad the night was over. Most of us crossed the Sound in the morning to a marina where we could get off the water for a few hours, get a hot shower and coffee, and fill our ice chests. The dock manager treated us well charging us no more than we would normally pay for ice. He clearly took pity on

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us after hearing our stories about the *Washing Machine*.

Around mid morning the waves calmed and the wind was good for a Pensacola Bay crossing so off we went. The sailing was fantastic. Dolphins, sea turtles and rays were spotted all across the bay. Conditions were ideal with flat water and good air. We reached the Pensacola Pass (to Gulf of Mexico) at a neutral tide point so it was easy crossing. Ted and Dora couldn't resist the opportunity so they took ***Rhapsody in seA*** on a quick jaunt out into the Gulf of Mexico. ***Leap Frog, Eudora, the Green Boat***, and ***Mari-lee*** took advantage of calm seas and moored off Fort Pickens to visit this Civil War fort. Soon we were all gathered for an anchorage at Spanish Point off Perdido Key on Big Lagoon. This positioned us south of the Pensacola Naval Air Station to await an air show the following morning. While here we were joined by two other C-22s enjoying the afternoon sailing and surprised to see a whole fleet of C-22s sailing into Big Lagoon, two more prospective Fleet 77 members.

We walked across the few hundred yards of Perdido Key and spent the afternoon swimming in the Gulf of Mexico. Curiously, we observed that Vernon was not swimming with us. Last year this was one of the highlights of the trip for him. On returning we learned that he had broken a pintle on ***Mari-lee's*** rudder. We settled down to barbeque dinners while our resourceful cruise captain, Bob, determined a solution. Deon had unintentionally brought an extra rudder with him from Idaho. Bob's son, Joe, works in a nearby Gulf Breeze. He telephoned Joe to rendezvous at the Rod and Reel Marina on the north shore and returned to Ft Walton Beach to pick up the rudder. On returning to Spanish Point a very tired fleet was fast asleep at 9:00 p.m. and the water was smooth as glass. After the *Washing Machine* nothing was too good for us.

Tuesday morning we slept in as we awaited the air show. Punctually at 8:30 a.m. the Navy's Blue Angels, the world's premier flight demonstration team, began their practice over Big Lagoon accompanied by the playing of the national anthem on ***Déjà vu***. Wow what fantastic pilots these are. Cloudy weather blocked some of our view, but what we saw was enough to make you glad these pilots are on our side. They also make you proud to be an American. With the show over, we set sail in our speeeedy little boats. We were inspired!!

Trailing winds gave us a chance for a leisurely, albeit fast, run westward for most of the day. Off and

on ***Eudora*** alternated between spinnaker and a huge genoa off a bigger boat. Notwithstanding all their sails ***Rhapsody in seA*** blew past them as they pursued ***Leapfrog***. Close behind was ***the Green Boat*** (fastest of the fast) that had a late start from Big Lagoon. Crossing Perdido Bay we soon arrived at Bear Point Marina, our rally point before pressing on to Wolf Bay. Here we showered and filled coolers with ice. David and Norma sat down to a nice waterside lunch at the Back Porch Restaurant. And, we were surprised by a cameo cruise visit by John Tierney, Fleet Captain, Fleet 25, Lake Carlyle, IL. He was vacationing nearby when he saw a fleet of Catalina 22s coming his way.

We departed for Wolf Bay and Wolf Bay Lodge after lunch. ***Almost Done*** was having motor problems and Greg wasn't the happiest of campers when he also had to clear fishing line from his keel. But his problems seemed small as ***Antidote's*** keel cable ate through a rusted drum obliging a lowered keel the balance of the trip. ***Antidote's*** water pump also went out as we approached Wolf Bay Lodge, so Ned also lost use of his motor. At one point after trying about 60 times to start his motor, Greg introduced his motor to his hammer with a blow through its cover. That fixed it. At least Greg felt better to have vented his frustration. We arrived at Wolf Bay Lodge and were greeted by Carl who had made an early start from Bear Point Marina. Boats were set at anchor and Bob ferried everyone ashore where the Margaritas and beer were flowing for cocktail hour. Bob made a special point of presenting a Cruise 2000 shirt to the owner of Wolf Bay Lodge.

Dinner was super. Two long banquet tables were set for us, and Dora had birthday party favors set out to celebrate Ted's 50th birthday. Benny and Gail's daughters and Gail's mother joined us for dinner (remember they live nearby) and we partied hard in our official Cruise 2000 shirts. Following dinner we went outside for a group photo and to sing happy birthday to Ted McGee. A quick ferry to the boats and we tucked in for a peaceful night listening to frogs and crickets on the wooded shoreline.

Wednesday's sail for the return trip would be our longest of the 160-mile voyage. It was long by distance and long by fighting the outgoing tide at Pensacola Pass. In the narrow ICW channel entering Pensacola Pass I confirmed that our cruise captain, Bob, is a superb sailor. Basically sailing abreast between Bob's ***Tequila Sunset*** and Bill's ***Bonus*** we found ourselves like books between bookends of a fast approaching big, big fishing boat (refusing to give way) to our front and a fast approaching big, big cruising catamaran closing to our rear. Only Bill had the foresight to put his motor down. Bob and I tried

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to sail it. I made a short port tack immediately followed by a starboard tack with Bill giving me needed clearance. On my starboard tack I met Bob starting a port tack. Caught between my boat and the fishing boat he made an awesome 360-degree turn with almost no clearance to execute the maneuver. Wish had that maneuver on film.



Into the Pensacola Pass we found it took about a half dozen tacks to clear the current before we could make any progress eastward. At one point I became so frustrated that I simply put my kicker down to motor. Soon after **Déjà vu** caught fire in the battery compart-

ment. I doused the fire a few hundred yards in front of a Coast Guard helicopter and cutter lifesaving training exercise in the middle of Pensacola Bay. Now embarrassed and really frustrated I motored the rest of the days' trip.

The Fleet anchored at Little Sabine Bayou just west of Quietwater Beach. **Rhapsody in seA**, and our boat, **Déjà vu**, accompanied **Antidote** (keel could not be raised) to Quietwater Beach for its deeper anchorage. Deon and Phyllis Wells joined us making a squadron of four boats. David and Norma joined our group by walking from Little Sabine for a Mexican dinner and a live Blue Grass Band. Bob also came by to check on our welfare and to coordinate a departure time.

After a good night sleep we awakened to a freshening breeze. Dee reefed the main on **Déjà vu** and set our working jib while others of braver heart set their larger genoas. Off we sailed in pounding seas enroute to lunch at the Navarre Bridge. For several hours our boats pounded away with waves washing over decks. For those sailors of brave heart this was the best sailing of the entire trip!! Strong wind gusts caused winches to leave their own wakes in the water from hard heels and boat bottoms were well cleaned by friction and pounding. The trip took several hours on a single starboard tack until we reached Navarre.

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In Navarre we took a much-needed rest and lunched at a Burger King or on the boat. Many also visited the Panhandle Butterfly House. Now how many Cruise Captains include a butterfly house on their itinerary??

Bob had a little something for everybody. Frankly, after a very demanding sail to Navarre, there was something peaceful about being surrounded by flying butterflies.

As we departed Navarre for Spectre Island, our overnight anchorage, we saw Air Force Special Operations troops motoring along in pontoon boats, another surprise sight obviously planned by Bob. On the island Bob set up a table to inspect items submitted as a result of a Scavenger Hunt. In a closely contested competition Phyllis Wells won over Dora McGee. Better luck next year Dora. Deon and Phyllis also won the longest trip award (travel bag from West Marine) for their 2400-mile trip from Hailey, ID. The Wells also won the drawing for a beautiful original watercolor by Beattie Purcell of Fleet 77. Bob and Trish Endicott won the drawing for a privately labeled bottle of Fleet 77 champagne. The .MacGyver. award went to Scott Holecheck and Brian Grant for holding together **Eudora** with rolls of duct tape (use your imagination here. they did). The "Cruisin Large" award went to Bill and Marzanna Krupp who spent part of their cruise determining what they didn't need next time their boat was loaded. A watch, a book, numerous bags emblazoned with the Cruise 2000 logo (Greg Haymore has loads of talent to make these), and gift certificates from West Marine were also awarded so that everyone received a prize. Finally, Bob issued Fleet 77's famous **Great Mate & Ol. Salt** certificates to all participants attesting that they had successfully completed a great sailing of the Northern Gulf Coast and were entitled to the honorary titles of **Great Mate & Ol' Salt**.

To Bob from those who sailed the Northern Gulf Coast, our hearty thanks for a job well done, as a good time was had by all, and for returning us safely home.

2002 Northern Gulf Coast Cruise

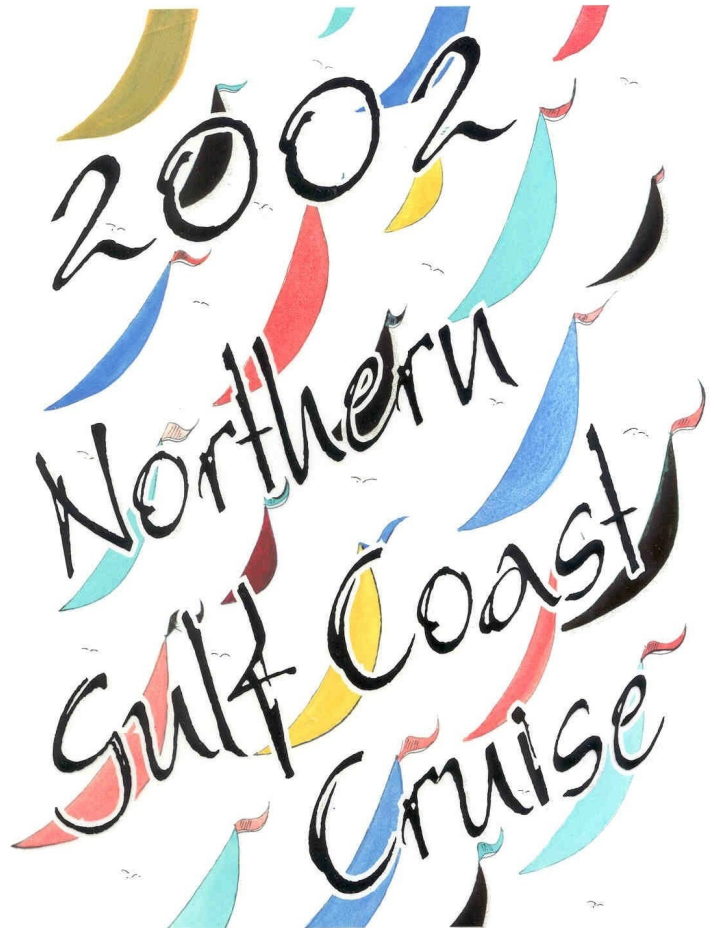
By Trish Endicott

MainBrace, September 2002

It's about three weeks until we leave on our annual cruise down the ICW to Wolf Bay, AL. On Saturday, Bob takes **Tequila Sunset** out of the water and brings her home for some much-needed TLC. That afternoon, we take everything out of the lazarettes and stash it in the garage. How in the world did all that stuff come out of that boat?! Believe it or not, that is enough work for one day.

After a leisurely Sunday morning, Bob is off to give **Sunset** a bath. He spends the rest of the day with Soft Scrub and a brush. By the time he gets finished, she's looking pretty good. While Bob was at work the following week, I would go out during the day and clean the inside. I took all the cushions out, emptied all the cubbyholes and shelves, washed the fiberglass, oiled the teak and took inventory. Nearly every night for three weeks, Bob was either working on **Sunset** or lending a helping hand to other fleet members. Were we going to be ready?

Photo Credit: Beattie Purcell (Continued on page 18)



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I spent the last week making list after list after list. I had a list for Winn-Dixie, one for K-Mart, one for West Marine and one for Boat U.S. I marked things off the list, added more on. I had the dining room table covered with lists! As I bought supplies or thought of something we might need, those items were placed in the family room. The pile kept growing.

It's Friday morning. This is the last full day before we leave. Where did the time go? Bob finally prints out a copy of his checklist. Now it's time to put everything on the boat, except for the food, and get her back in the water. Vernon Senterfitt from Gainesville, FL and his brother Don from Jupiter, FL arrive around 4 pm, so Bob takes them to the yacht club for launching. They are to be our houseguests for the evening, so I start dinner. It was nearly dark by the time they returned, but they had met several of the out-of-town cruisers that would be joining us. Sometime in the early morning hours of Saturday, Rich Fox had arrived at our house to retrieve his boat **SePlaire**. He had left it in our driveway while spending a week in Grand Cayman with his wife Denise.

Saturday morning is kind of a blur. It was spent launching boats, ferrying people and packing coolers. By mid day, there were six vehicles parked in our side yard. It looked like a used car lot. Benny Cash, from Gulf Shores, AL and his friend Karen were the last to arrive, but as soon as **Bugaboo** was launched, Bob and I headed for Spectre Island along with RJ Tazelaar and his friend April Brannon. Of course we had a south wind and we were headed south. Bob and I leave the yacht club using main and motor. RJ wants to sail, so he is tacking back and forth and looking good.

Just as we are about to reach the channel, we see Jim and Sherry Perry in **Dove**. Now there are three boats going to brave the Saturday afternoon traffic going under the Brooks bridge. I try to get Bob to leave the motor running until we get through, but he is determined to sail. I get most nervous when we go under bridges. I remember a couple of years ago when we did a 360 because a big motor boat just wouldn't give an inch. After the bridge, it was smooth sailing the rest of the way to Spectre Island.

By late afternoon, twenty-one boats had gathered at the island for our first night. What a beautiful sight to see that many Catalina 22s anchored in

the sunset. We arrived so late in the day that there wasn't much time for visiting, but we tried to introduce ourselves to as many people as possible. One of the first people Bob talked with was Robert Donehoo of Decatur, GA. He was very impressed with the rudder Robert had built from plywood. It did look nice. It was also a real treat to see long-time Fleet 77 member Frank Barbour and meet his grandson Alan Moore, who had driven from Texas to crew for him.

Mike LaGarde (Fleet 77's cruise captain extraordinaire) called a captain's meeting by the beach fire. While Bob attended the meeting I had grill duty. Since Jim and Sherry were anchored close by, they trusted me to cook their chicken along with our steaks. After dinner I got the V-berth cleared off and got our bed ready. I left the dinner dishes for the next day, but got the coffeepot ready for the next morning. We took our beach chairs and wine to the beach fire and relaxed for a while before turning in.

While drinking our coffee on Sunday morning, we look over the Billy Bowlegs Treasure Hunt list that we received at the captain's meeting. This would be the first year that we were eligible to participate because in past years we were in charge of preparing the list. It wasn't going to be easy, but we were determined to do our best. The grand prize was an original painting by Beattie Purcell, and we wanted to win!

We pulled anchor around 8 am and headed for the Navarre Bridge. Mike had sailed ahead so that he could take pictures as we went under the bridge. Our son Joe was to be there also and I told Bob I hoped he brought my Mother's Day card along because that was an item on the treasure hunt list. Not to worry. Bob had actually bought a card before leaving home. He was so proud of himself. As we approached the Navarre Bridge, the winds were about 15 knots and directly behind us. It was

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Photo Credit: Mickey LaGarde

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going to be difficult to get into our usual "V" formation to go under the bridge. Greg Haymore and Nancy Benaquis take their position as lead boat and everyone tries to fall into their designated spot. They decide the first try was not going to happen, so we did a turn around and made a second approach. Still not perfect, but Mike was able to get a couple of good pictures. Bob and I, along with several others stopped at the T dock at Navarre Beach. We were hoping to go to the butterfly house and the tourist info center for treasure hunt information, but the wind kept pushing us into the dock so much, we decided to wait until the return trip.

We arrived at Quietwater Beach early in the afternoon. As we walked the docks and chatted with other cruisers, we learned that Kent and Jane Overbeck were the envy of everyone. They were in possession of a propane-fired hot shower machine. What cruiser wouldn't like one of those? As we said hello to Floyd and Carol Ann McKenzie, we just had to smile. For a figurehead they had attached a pink flamingo to the bow pulpit. I smile even now as I picture it in my mind.

Later in the evening, some of the cruisers enjoyed dinner at one of the many restaurants, some were serenaded by the Pensacola Symphony and some did major treasure hunting. We had good luck at Alvin's Island, where we bought \$20 worth of quarters in search of eight different state quarters. We got them! One employee spent half an hour trying to find a teddy bear that they would sell for a quarter (we had plenty of those). We got some autographs along the way and watched as others strolled the boardwalk in search of treasures. We decided that Ted and Tami Kemberling and Stan and Annie Connally were probably going to be our toughest competitors.

While Bob went to Circle K for ice, I made dinner. I tried a recipe from a cookbook that Paul Gallant had loaned me. The cheesy potatoes were good, but I'll have to admit that they were not worth the clean up. That night, several of the boats remained at the dock, while others moved away hoping to put a little distance between them and the noise. We have decided the name should be "Not-So-Quietwater" because the restaurants have live music until the wee hours of the morning. Even on Sunday.

Monday morning, we cross the south edge of Pensacola Bay heading to Ft. McRee. On the way we watch the Navy perform search and rescue exercises, encounter several barges around the

naval air station, get a glimpse of Fort Pickens and the Pensacola Lighthouse just before crossing the Pensacola Pass. Once we arrived in the cove by Ft. McRee, we anchored and took advantage of the nice weather. There was time for swimming, snorkeling or venturing into Fort McRee. Ned Westerlund and Vernon had fun sailing their beautiful wooden dinghies that Vernon built, and we played catch with Maxie, Ron and Susan Miller's sea-faring dog. As the afternoon turns to evening, a storm moves in and we play musical boats trying to get secured for the night. Our cruiser from Nashville (RJ Tazelaar) went one step further and headed for the nearby marina. The storm brought heavy rain along with thunder and lightning.

The next morning (Tuesday), we got up to much cooler temperatures and waited patiently for the Blue Angels to start their practice session. While waiting, I had time to make a birthday cake for Ted McGee who has joined us (along with his wife Dora) for the third year. I had purchased a stove-top oven at a thrift store, and wanted to give it a try. As usual, the Blue Angels performed an excellent show and I believe our Colorado cruisers

Stan and Annie Connally, along with their daughter Jenni, are now hooked. They may bring more family next year.

By mid-morning, everyone left the anchorage and headed for Wolf Bay Lodge. Some stopped at Rod and Reel Marina for showers, fuel and ice, while others continued down the Intracoastal Waterway. When Bob and I arrived at the marina, we were informed that RJ had fallen while boarding his boat the night before and had actually spent the night in the emergency room. He had broken two ribs and would have to make arrangements to get his boat out of the water and drive home! He and April decided to retrieve their vehicle and meet us the following day upon our

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Photo Credit: Ron & Susan Miller

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return from Wolf Bay. After getting showers and provisions, Bob had one more chore at the marina. A treasure hunt item had to be found. This was one time I was glad he had a GPS because the clue was longitude and latitude numbers. We got it.

Chuck DeBoe and Beattie were the first to arrive at Wolf Bay Lodge. Since there wasn't room for twenty boats at the dock, the majority of us anchored out and waited for the water taxi (Greg and Nancy in the Zodiac they had brought along). We gathered in the lounge for margaritas and waited for the dining room to open. As always, the food was terrific and the servers handled our crowd of nearly forty noisy sailors with ease. They even let us pass around the birthday cake!

Wednesday morning Bob and I were up fairly early because we were to meet RJ and April at the Rod



Photo Credit: Dee & Mickey LaGarde

a scull and crossbones with a black magic marker on a white towel. I decorated a Styrofoam cup for a flowerpot, but we decided to wait until we returned to Navarre Beach to get a flower. We had done all we could do for the night, so we turned in.

By the time we got underway Thursday, the weather had turned rough. The trip to Navarre was wet and wild. Of course I stayed in the cabin, while Bob motored along as close to the shoreline as was possible. Every once in a while we would get in shallow water, so I stayed ready to raise the keel. The wind was still strong by the time we reached Navarre, so rather than try to get into the dock, we anchored just off the beach. I stayed on board, while Bob went to the Butterfly house for info and a flower. Upon his return, he knew at least three fish that had occupied the aquarium and the larval plant eaten by the Spicebush Swallowtail Butterfly! But he had no flower! I sent him back to shore to pull up anything! He found a lantana that even had a bloom. We had our potted flower. Now we had every item on the treasure hunt list!

We headed for Spectre Island and our last night of the cruise. After everyone arrived, Mike and Dee got the awards ceremony underway. Every cruiser received a "Great Mates and Ol' Salts" certificate. Greg Haymore received the "Cruisin' Large" award, Bob received the "MacGyver" award and Deiter and Evelyn Kuburg received an award for "Most Improved" sailors. There were lots of door prizes, too. If you hadn't guessed by now, Bob and I barely won the treasure hunt. Out of a possible 36 points, Stan and Annie had 33, Ted and Tami had 34 and we managed to get 36. Many thanks to Beattie for the lovely painting.

That evening, we had another beach fire and roasted hotdogs and marshmallows. It was nearly 11 pm by the time Bob and I got settled in for the night. All was quiet except for a lone kayaker who was determined to play his music for everyone to hear.

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Photo Credit: Ron & Susan Miller

and Reel Marina around 11 am. They would need help unloading, retrieving and securing **Gecko** onto the trailer. We arrived in time to have a nice lunch from the snack bar and get provisions. Several others stopped to lend a hand, so everything went smoothly and we said our goodbyes. We hated to see them go, but hopefully they can come back again next year.

The sail back to Quietwater that afternoon was beautiful! Most of the cruisers opted to go back to the docks at the boardwalk, but some got slips at the marina in Little Sabine. Bob and I, along with Kim and Tony Orbeck of Melbourne, FL, decided to beach anchor. After tidying up, we headed for the boardwalk in desperate search of a Sacagawea dollar. At the Circle K, Bob gave the cashier three dollars for a one dollar coin! Remember, we paid only 25 cents for a teddy bear! He was so happy to get the coin, he gave her a two dollar tip. Back at the boat, we had dinner and went over our treasure hunt list. We still needed a pirate flag and a potted flower. Since a hand crafted flag was OK, Bob drew

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We finally went to sleep around 1 am, but some said they could still hear the music playing at 5 am!

Friday morning, everyone headed back to the yacht club or to their home slip. Bob was too tired to work at sailing, so we used main and motor most of the way. By the time we reached the yacht club, I had everything organized and ready to unload. Since we

didn't have to take **Sunset** out of the water, Bob helped retrieve boats while I played chauffeur. When all the work was done, Vernon, Don, Paul, Rich, Benny and Karen headed for our house and the pool. After a couple of hours of relaxation and conversation we joined the others in the yacht club lounge for cocktails. There, the LaGardes presented an awesome slide show of the cruise on the big screen TV. We enjoyed a delicious dinner in the dining room and said our farewells. Thank you, Mike and Dee, for all your hard work. Your many hours of preparation really paid off. The cruise was a huge success and everyone had a wonderful time. Well, maybe everyone except RJ.



Warm Memories of Good Times on the 2004 Northern Gulf Coast Cruise

By Jane Overbeck, Leapfrog #14647

MainBrace, September 2004

For repeaters — those of us who come back time and again — the joy of the Northern Gulf Coast Cruise is seeing old friends from past trips, meeting new ones, and sailing in steady coastal winds, something many of us lake sailors can't often do. Mickey and Dee LaGarde were back for their second tour of duty as Northern Gulf Coast Cruise (NGCC) leaders and were awesome. Thanks also to the rest of Fleet 77 who take a week of vacation to give us out-of-towners a wonderful experience.

Stuff happens on a week-long cruise with 23 boats. Halyards break, motors quit, rudders break or fall off. It's the way folks help each other to deal with those challenges that add to the trip. And then there are the unexpected treats such as peach cobbler for everyone, baked over a campfire, and flowered flip-flops for the ladies that are warm memories for us. That's why we keep coming back.

A Stitch in Time. On the day before launch, Mickey LaGarde was helping tie up a boat at the Ft. Walton Yacht Club when he cut his foot badly. Ten stitches later, he had doctor's orders to stay off his foot and keep it dry, not easy to do on a sailboat in the Intercoastal Waterway. Thanks to Robert Donehoo's help launching boats and directing anchoring traffic at Big Lagoon, plastic bags on his foot, and Dee's help on board *Amaline*, Mickey was able to follow the doctor's orders.

Leis for the Feet. The ladies on the trip were surprised with a gift of flowered flip-flops made by Annie Connally, sailing with Stan on *Cay Cat* from Longmont, Colorado. Annie's flowered flip-flops were worn for what-passes-as dress-up occasions at the Pensacola dock, Wolf Bay Lodge, and, of course, the dinner at the yacht club. The flip-flops brought a smile and an extra spirit of fun to the cruise.

The Santa Rosa Triangle: Where working motors disappear. Sailed by Waylan Gillihan and Clark Strickland (Fleet 82), Fort Worth, Tex., *Lady in Red* has a checkered past on the NGCC. Last year, she became too friendly with a channel marker. This year, her motor quit early in the trip somewhere around the Santa Rosa Sound. (Hear the Twilight Zone theme music?) Folks on the trip arranged for Waylan and Clark to drop the motor off at Rod and Reel Marina for repair. *Lady in Red* continued under sail-power only, a challenge in several tight channels. The third morning out, Waylan radioed the cruising fleet that she was happy to report that nothing had happened to them that day. On a return leg of the trip, Waylan and Clark were glad to pick up the repaired motor and motor sail the rest of the way.

Bugaboo, traditionally the sweep boat of the cruise — the one that can help when another boat lags behind — was the one with a problem near the end of this cruise. On the last full day of the cruise, Benny Cash and Karen Cope, Gulf Shores, Alabama, on *Bugaboo* had their motor quit at Little Sabine.

On the same day, the motor quit on *Swingin It*, sailed by Ned Westerlund (Fleet 77), Shalimar, Florida, and Gunther Erler, Germany. Guess where? Yep, the Santa Rosa Triangle, uh, Sound! Once he was out of the sound, Ned was able to get his motor working just long enough to dock at the yacht club on Friday.

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And we're sure that Stan and Annie Connally, on **Cay Cat**, discovered their reverse wasn't working as they were maneuvering the sound. Yet, even without a reverse, they were able to maneuver in and out of marinas, using the wind, line and occasionally someone on a dock to get them where they needed to be.

But can he pull a rabbit out of his hat? Perhaps the most amazing recovery from a problem happened on the second afternoon of the cruise. David Williams radioed that his rudder had broken on **Extreme** and that the trip was over for them. As a downcast David and Lynn Van Hooser (Fleet 132), Abilene, Texas, motored to the Pensacola Beach dock that afternoon, everyone saw their rudder broken just above the waterline. Robert Donehoo (Fleet 58), Duluth, Georgia, walked to his boat, **Shady Deal**, where he amazingly pulled out a spare rudder! David and Lynn sailed the rest of the way and drove home with the rudder as a souvenir of the trip.

The almost perfect crew. It was going on three years that Robert Donehoo single-handed the cruise on **Shady Deal**. The ladies of Fleet 77 thought he needed companionship and arranged for Emily to sail with him this year. She was blown up and presented to him early in the trip. She is almost the perfect crew. What's good about her is she is quiet, no backtalk. She never asks, "Why do you want me to (pull that line in/loosen that line)?" Of course, the bad thing about her is she never (pulls that line in/loosens that line).

Real men reef. Pirate's Cove is a stop on the Poker Crawl where we docked with Paul Gallant, Milton, Florida, on **Hooligan** (Fleet 77) and Benny Cash and Karen Cope, **Bugaboo**. We ordered one of the restaurant's famous cheeseburgers, the inspiration for Jimmy Buffett's Cheeseburgers in Paradise, and of course, talked about wind and sailing conditions for the day. Kent said that under the high wind conditions predicted for later he would reef the main. He stepped away, and Benny said, "Real men don't reef." Paul nodded. Later both reefed. (Both are on record as not enjoying it, though.)

The way to a man's sailboat is through his stomach. Sailing with Mark Dauphinais from the Huntsville, Ala., area on **SoJourney**, David Roy used the cast (Continued from page 9) iron pots and pans he brought to make from-scratch meals and campfire-baked desserts. But he worried aloud about not being able to return next year because Mark's wife might go instead. As soon as

he said those words, Paul Gallant (Fleet 77) offered him a place on **Hooligan** — as long as he'd cook. Then another singlehanded sailor offered him \$50 to come with him. A bidding war was begun.

The smallest Johnson. Tadpole II, our new hard-bottomed inflatable, had its trial run on the cruise. After some internal debate, we decided to bring our 2 hp Johnson motor to run it, instead of a larger motor. Bob Endicott took one look at it and told Kent he had the smallest Johnson he'd ever seen.

Leaving Bear Point Marina (free coffee and showers!!!) in very heavy chop, we noticed that we were losing the dinghy motor — the small Johnson. We slowed **Leap Frog** down, and Jane carefully climbed from our bobbing boat to the wildly bobbing dinghy. She pulled the motor on the deck of the dinghy and carefully inched back on board **Leap Frog** — not a move recommended to anyone.

Rudder saved in time. Not two minutes later, we passed Paul Gallant returning to Bear Point. He has taken a shallow short cut in the choppy waves when the wake of a big powerboat caused **Hooligan** to land hard on the rudder, jarring it loose. He grabbed the rudder, but returned to the marina's calm waters to put it back on. Paul later said that what counts is not what problems you have, it's how you deal with them. (Or words to that effect, but probably more eloquent.) A lot happened to motors, rudders and halyards on the cruise — much more than on a typical cruise, but everyone worked together to deal with them well.

We'll be back!!

The Ballad of The Northern Gulf Coast Cruise

To the tune of The Wabash Cannonball (apologies to Roy Acuff)

by Bob Endicott

(with inspiration from the cruisers)
29 verses as of May 2013

Chorus: From the narrows of Fort Walton to the dock at Wolf Bay Lodge
Through barges, yachts and jet-skis that we are forced to dodge
There's anchors, dinks and beach chairs and other stuff we lose
All part of the adventure called The Northern Gulf Coast Cruise!

Greg is sailing *Almost Done* with Nancy as his mate.
As we get into formation, he'll try to keep us straight.
He's absolute fearless, always loves a thrill.
He can flip his chicken and not even touch the grill!

Ned is our MacGyver. He's totally prepared.
For any kind of crisis, he's ready! He ain't scared!
If you've ever sailed with him, you just can't help but ask:
"With all the crap he's got on board, how does he go so fast?"

Here's to the crew of *Ameline*, Mickey and Dee LaGarde.
In all of our Fleet functions, they both work very hard.
They've always been great cruisers. They've been here from the start,
But since they started racing, they got a Purple Heart.

Bob sailed *Tequila Sunset*, but Trish is who's in charge.
He's got his bag o' homemade wine and thinks he's cruisin' large!
Keepin' him straight's a full-time job and Trish cannot retire.
She never knows when she might have to pull him from the fire!

Vernon comes from Gainesville. He sails the *Mari-Lee*.
He sometimes brings some crew along and sometimes it's just he.
He's made this trip since '99 and knows just what to do,
Takin' lotsa pictures and shootin' movies too.

Then there's Ted and Dora on *Rhapsody in seA*.
The first year they cruised with us, it was all about the speed.
We've been a bad influence. Our laid-back traits they've learned
And after several trips down here we've nearly got them "rurned".

Then we have our good friend, Paul, a better man there ain't.
He calls himself the *Hooligan*, but he's more like a saint.
He's always doing kind things to make life good for you,
Like serving gourmet coffee on the Chattahoochee Coup!

And from the Rocky Mountains came the Connally's and *Cay Cat*.
They' weren't afraid of long-hauls, ya had to give 'em that!
They finally moved to Florida and brought their big boat too.
They've figured out a way to have their cake and eat it too!

Robert's on *Line Dancer*, from up on Lake Lanier.
His crew just kept improvin', each succeeding year.
He started cruising solo, then with Emily and his sis,
But now he's got the company of a bonny, bonny miss!

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Kermit comes from Tennessee, but knows these waters well.
He's got a sense of humor, so we love to give him hell.
Now Kermit isn't one to boast or stretch the truth the least,
But he says he's got the fastest wing in the whole dad-gummed south-east!

And of course there's Benny, with Karen at his side.
Bugaboo's calamities could make a grown man cry!
He always seems to get by, though the struggle makes him tire.
He wonders why it can't be something simple . . . Like a fire!

Waylon comes from Texas with his lovely First Mate, Clark.
They're both great navigators, 'cause they sure hit the mark.'
They made it back in one piece in spite of their close shave,
'Cause Clark now knows just what to do when Waylon yells "BIG WAVE!"

Floyd is sailing *Honey Do*, his patriotic boat.
He proudly flies the stars and stripes like no one else afloat.
One year when back at Spectre, he thought the Cruise was done,
But then he learned on down the bay, his adventure'd just begun!

Beattie's our old master, the twenty-two guru.
He's always been a racer, but now he's cruising, too.
A Catalina icon, sailing's his first joy,
But he loves to sing as well... Just ask for Danny Boy!

Then there's Ken and Tammy; *Lo-ki* brought them here.
When Tammy first tried cruising, there was a little fear.
Just about the time she thought she couldn't take no more,
She figured out she liked it and now she's plumb hardcore!

Bill is sailing *Respite*. He's another quiet guy.
If he's had any "train wrecks", he's had 'em on the sly!
We keep hopin' he'll do somethin' worthy of this song...
Hangin' out with Hooligan, It shouldn't be too long!

On the good ship *Swizzle Stick*, we have the Merlier's.
For all the miles they've cruised her, we give them highest praise.
They've sailed to the Bahamas, the Chesapeake and Maine.
We prob'ly shoulda let 'em just write their own refrain!

Cap'n Sparks from Lou-zee-ann is sailing on *Petite*.
He's got a couple hobbies and they're both pretty sweet.
He has to make the choice each day, which he'd rather do...
Go sailin' in his airplane or fly the 22.

David comes from Texas. His first cruise was a snap.
'least that's the sound his rudder made, before he'd turned a lap.
Robert had a spare blade, but too long by a hair,
So they broke out a chainsaw and made an *Extreme* repair!

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Then there's Dan & Peggy, down from Illinois.
They've no tides to consider, when anchors they deploy.
They took advice from racers and stayed too close to shore
They woke up sittin' high and dry. They won't do that no more.

Louis sails *St. Benedict* and he likes cruisin' large.
He's always quick to help folks with never any charge.
Whether it's the MainBrace or some forum post he wrote,
You know dang well for certain, Man, he loves that little boat!.

Then we have *Outrageous*, cruisers many a day.
They've learned a lot of clever stuff and tricks along the way.
Of all their contributions, the finest that they made
Was showing us the best way to chill out in the shade.

Eddie's here with *Yee-haa* and a dink to go ashore.
He'd tied off the painter, but the dink was there no more.
Jet-Skis to the rescue, embarrassing I'd think.
Ya know it ain't a painter, 'less you tie it to the dink.

Nan is sailing *Wayward*, Jean Paul is with her too.
They've both made the trip before, so they know what to do.
They'd love to pick and grin with us, 'cause they play music too,
But they can't fit the cello... on the twenty-two!

Deiter's on *Wind Chaser* with Evelyn as his crew.
He keeps that Sport immaculate. It's pristine through and through.
His only grief was barnacles, but that's now well in hand.
He learned that he could track 'em by their trails in the sand!

Pete and his mate Barbara are sailing *Windabout*.
They've had their share of crises, from fires to waterspouts.
Sometimes Barb would wonder "When does the fun begin?"
She must have got her answer, 'cause they came back again!

Jon is sailing *This Side Up*. Sometimes he brings his bro.
How Charlie could put up with him, I guess we'll never know.
When Charlie'd try to jump ashore or step off of the boat,
Jon would hit reverse to see if bro could really float!

Josh and Katie join us from Chickamauga Lake.
Whatever's been thrown at 'em, they've shown that they can take.
Josh gave up his burger and in the channel dove,
To push the "Brokeback Cajuns" off the dirt at Pirate's Cove!

Then there's Scott and Marilyn, down from Privateer.
Scott cruised other 22's, a new type every year.
He finally got a Mk II, so Marilyn would stop yellin'.
Now she cruises with him and helps him find his melon!

2005 Northern Gulf Coast Cruise

By Suz Weston

MainBrace, July 2005

PROLOGUE

First of all, I can't swim. Secondly, I love the speed and exhilaration of a power boat. When my husband, Sam, began talking about his dream of learning to sail, I was aghast. I wanted nothing whatsoever to do with it. Fat chance! Practically the day we moved to Ft. Walton Beach six months ago, Sam raced around until he found a boat to buy. This boat, a 1980 Catalina 22, was a good solid boat but needed a lot of TLC. Since it took me several months to find a job, I had plenty of spare time on my hands, right? What better, more productive way to spend it than working on the sailboat? So, I spent every day, all day, of the next eight weeks working like a maniac. Here we are, knowing nothing whatsoever about sailing, sailboats, or sailboat maintenance, but, with a lot of help from friends, we just dove in. What was our first project? Pulling out and replacing all the windows! After that, I spent hours laying upside down with my hair in puddles of bleach water scrubbing down every square inch of the interior. Then we progressed to pulling all the wood off, fixing the broken pieces, and oiling or varnishing every last bit of it. Next we re-wired the entire boat, even pulling the mast down and replacing wiring and lights. In between maintenance we occasionally took it out for a sail, trying to figure out how to get the sails on right-side-up and the boat back to the marina after sailing out downwind. We probably logged a total of ten hours of sailing by May. Well, it only took us four months, but the night of May 6th we were finally as ready as we could be for the great cruise.

CHAPTER ONE –SPECTRE ISLAND

Our first challenge happened when we were in the narrow part of the channel heading toward Brooks Bridge. Just as we entered the channel, our friends came zooming up to show us their brand new thirty-two foot Formula powerboat. It was gorgeous, and we really wanted to chat with them, but just then the gigantic barge that had been approaching caught up to us. Mass chaos! We were caught in so much churning water that we started doing 360s. Sam had the motor going, but it ended up getting caught and digging big holes in the rudder. We finally worked our way out of that and sailed successfully to Specter.

Once there, since one of the many things we weren't good at was beach anchoring, it took four extra people to get us successfully tied up. We weren't the only ones, though. Almost Done handed Tequila Sunset the line to pull in his dingy; but the line wasn't tied to it! Phin finally made it to the island, after returning to the marina to fix a broken shearing pin.

Honey Do took on water all day. He finally figured out that his bilge wasn't on "auto" and that his lower gudgeon was leaking. He fixed it by tightening four loose screws. Nice to have such an easy leak fix!

In the evening, Leap Frog built a huge bon fire on the beach – so huge we were worried the C130s were going to drop Special Ops teams to check us out.

Sam and I were so exhausted we decided to turn in early. I got to experience my first time at moving the entire contents of the boat to make up the beds. There must be a better way, but I guess I'll figure that out next year. We motored way out and anchored in the backwaters, falling instantly sound asleep. At 2:00 a.m. our partners, Leap Frog, rudely awakened us. Our anchor had slipped and we had drifted into them! So much for our anchoring techniques of any kind!

CHAPTER TWO – QUIET WATER BEACH

The next day we all left early so we could line up in a triangle formation to cross under the Navarre Bridge. Just before we formed up, Shady Deal thought that Lady in Red ran aground. Shady Deal "cowboyed" over, dropped his sail, raised his keel, and swung around in one swift motion to save them. As he came alongside, Lady in Red's captain was in the water! Spotting the cowboy roaring up, he muttered, "Can't a Texan take a pee without everybody stopping to see?" Now, what's wrong with this picture: A swing keel rushing into shallow water to save another swing keel that's grounded? I was silently skeptical about the triangle formation, thinking there was absolutely no way twenty-four boats could all end up at just the right time and just the right place. I was sure it was going to be chaos. Much to my astonishment, though, we all came together in an absolutely beautiful formation. The pictures taken from the bridge are awesome!

We arrived at Quiet Water after a good day of sailing, but we still needed help anchoring. It only took two helpers this time, though. After that, we

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explored the delights of Bamboo Willie's, Hemmingway's, and The Market. Those special margaritas at BW's were wonderful!

CHAPTER THREE – BIG LAGOON

We had another nice sail to Big Lagoon. Once we arrived, this time with only one person helping with the anchoring, we got to experience our first ocean-water bath. What a treat—standing in the surf, slipping and sliding while the sand shifts under your feet, scrubbing down with salt water and suds less soap, falling over while trying to rinse the shampoo from your hair. Amazingly enough, however, we did get clean.

While at Ft. McRae, **Dream Chaser** made a horrifying discovery – those pesky barnacles love his new Sport boat! **Shady Deal** loaned **Dream Chaser** a brush to clean the bottom, and also helped by developing a cleaning schedule: 9 p.m., 12 a.m., 3 a.m. and 6 a.m.

We took a fabulous walk halfway around the island and enjoyed it tremendously. We really enjoyed the white sand dunes, the sound of the Gulf waves, and the old ruins of Ft. McRae. In the evening the Cruise Band and Chorus (anyone brave or “happy” enough to participate) played guitars and sang late into the night. Later, we went to bed with the hatch open so we could listen to the surf. Fortunately our mosquito netting kept us safe from all biting creatures.

CHAPTER FOUR – WOLF BAY

The morning began nice and slow for most of us because we waited for the military aerobatic teams that were scheduled to practice right above us. We saw three teams in all, and they were fantastic. I got Goosebumps every time they flew over – they were so terrific. One group of boats did leave early. They sailed out into the Gulf to watch the air show from there. **Hooligan** made it through the pass just fine, but **Extreme** lived up to his name and crashed into big waves, nearly swamping his first mate. We stopped at Holiday Harbor Marina where we raced over and took a REAL shower. Being grungy sure makes you appreciate the simple things in life! Just as **Bimini Bound** was docking at Pirate's Cove, his motor got stuck in reverse. He ran into the bank, broke his tiller, and knocked off his rudder. **Leap Frog** called on the radio for anyone who had an extra tiller or rudder. **Honey Do** had a tiller, but no one had a rudder. **Bimini Bound** started trying to find his rudder in the dark, muddy water. He felt around with his boat hook from his boat, then took out a dingle and kept on trying to find it. When that didn't

work, he got out snorkel gear and went diving. Over and over again he dove, until he finally found it forty-five minutes later. When **Tango** arrived at Holiday Harbor Marina, his main halyard shackle had gotten caught at the top of his mast. **Almost Done** tied a “boson's chair” around himself and shimmied up the mast to untangle it. **Shady Deal** had a great day sailing next to **Tango**. Both sailed side by side for miles. **Shady Deal** was thinking he was doing soooo well until **Tequila Sunset** called over the radio telling all boats to pick it up so they wouldn't miss happy hour at the Lodge. **Tango** dropped the kicker, tightened his sails, and left **Shady Deal** like a dropped anchor. Now we know why **Tango** is so fast – Happy Hour! We all had a fine dinner at Wolf Bay Lodge and then got our group picture taken in our Northern Gulf Coast Cruise shirts. What a fine bunch of rascals we looked! The mosquitoes were ferocious, so we didn't even try the mosquito net. We buttoned everything up tight and settled in for the night.

CHAPTER FIVE – QUIET WATER BAY

In the morning the world was nothing but fog. We tried to wait it out, but finally just motored off very cautiously, keeping the boat in front in sight as much as possible. The wind was non-existent for the first couple of hours, so we motored to the channel. After that the wind picked up so we had a good, long sail west along the channel and across Pensacola Bay. **Wayward Wind's** bimini got dislodged on their trip down to Ft. Walton. One end of the tubular frame got sharpened way down to a point. The captain finally did a “Gilligan's Island” repair with a stick and some duct tape so they had shade, but it was too late for the first mate. As we were passing through Big Lagoon, all of a sudden a team of Blue Angels flew over. Because it was so totally unexpected it was even more thrilling than normal. They flew fabulous aeronautics over us for about an hour. It was stunning.

As we were approaching QWB, we decided that today would be our “do it completely by ourselves” anchoring test. We went over the anchoring process step-by-step, and then got all the lines, bungees, ladder, water socks, etc. ready. We were psyched! Guess what? Our anchoring went beautifully (except that both of us thought that the other one had tied off the back anchor). We awarded ourselves the “We've Finally Learned to Beach Anchor” award!

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CHAPTER SIX – SPECTRE ISLAND

We walked down the beach and had a leisurely breakfast at The Market, picking up lots of liquid refreshments and ice for the evening's bonfire bash. Then we sailed off into a really fresh breeze, one that got even fresher as the day wore on. Sam had to work hard to hang on to the tiller. Because the wind was so strong we had three heart pounding crises. First, we almost ran into a buoy. Sam did some really fast thinking and narrowly avoided it. Second, we looked down and realized we were way outside the channel and were almost aground on a sand bar. Again, Sam did some fancy footwork and narrowly avoided it. Lastly, when we made a fast turn the wind caught the jib and wrapped it around the halyard. I went up front and tried to unwrap it (a huge mistake) and almost took a nose-dive overboard. Sam released the jib sheets, though, so I was able to tie off the sail and get back safely. Whew! Were we exhausted when we got to the island!

That evening **Ameline** had a big awards ceremony and prize raffle, while **Tequila Sunset** ran the Poker Crawl conclusion. Many great prizes were won **Great Northern Cruise** by all. **Hooligan** was lucky and won **Tango's** beautiful painting; the one we were all salivating over!

CHAPTER SEVEN – FT. WALTON YAUGHT CLUB

We had a great, relaxing dinner back at the club, where we got to wrap up our stories, exchange addresses, and say goodbye to some of the people we'd grown so much closer to in just one short week.

EPILOGUE

So, how did people like the cruise? Well, Sam's on his way this very moment to Key West to buy a newer Catalina 22, with more cabin space, so we'll be ready for the cruise next year. The first mate of **Leap Frog** loved the air show, the dolphins, the weather, and the fact that there was very little adversity on the trip. The first mate on **Wayward Wind** is going to arm-wrestle her stepmother to see which one of them gets to cruise next year. Charles from "Sail" magazine asked **Shady Deal** what brought him back each year. **Shady Deal** said he could stay home and sail all he wanted, but he keeps coming back because of The People.

The 9th Annual Northern Gulf Coast Cruise 2006

By Dan Bowers

MainBrace, July 2006

Our Great Northern Gulf Coast Cruise 2006 actually began during the cold winter months of 2005. I had somehow stumbled upon the Catalina 22 National Sailing Association's Fleet 77, Fort Walton Beach, Fla. web page and discovered the Cruise plans and itinerary. This cruise started at the Fort Walton Beach Yacht Club in Florida and went to the Wolf Bay Lodge near Gulf Shores, Alabama over the course of a week. We would be traveling about 150 miles. It looked like such a good time. I shared my discovery with my wife, Peggy. She thought it looked like a great adventure but had some reservations about our abilities.

We are new to the sailing scene having only owned our '87 C22 for a couple of years. We have boated all our lives owning canoes, various power boats and even a houseboat and have enjoyed them all. Sailing appeared to have its own special challenges. When out enjoying other forms of boating, we would look longingly at a sailboat and usually watch it till it was out of sight. The seed was planted. We are still discovering the joys of sailing and have learned mostly on our own. Our salt water sailing experiences were limited to Hobie's during our visits to Caribbean island resorts.



Anyway, back to the story. We made plans to join the group for the Cruise of 2005 but it was not to be. I'm sure you all know how plans get changed. So, the Cruise was put on hold till the next winter when the web page was again listing the Northern Gulf Coast Cruise for 2006. We copied and printed all the cruise stories written by the participants of past cruises and read them in front of our wood stove while the snow was piling deep outside our central Illinois home.

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The dreams began. Soon, we were making our lists of things to do to the boat, equipment to buy and bring and of course the food plans. We read all the suggestions and even had some ideas of our own. We made a cockpit table, screen for the hatch, longer rode for the anchors and Peggy made a new mattress pad for the numerous nights on the boat. Thanks Dee!

We contacted Mickey LaGarde via email and registered. He promptly wrote us back welcoming us to the group. Our correspondence served to strengthen our enthusiasm for this outstanding adventure. The cruise was scheduled May 13-19, 2006. We left our home at noon on a Thursday even though our 'Cruise' didn't depart the Fort Walton Beach Yacht Club till the following Saturday morning. We had 800 miles to travel and wanted to be at the yacht club by Friday evening. We spent a welcomed and restful Thursday night on the boat at a Super Wal-Mart in northern Alabama.

By mid-afternoon Friday, we were at the yacht club setting up our boat. We started meeting the wonderful participants immediately. Louis Plaisance helped us with mast. Mickey LaGarde found us a slip for the evening. Others introduced themselves and made us feel welcomed. Anita Kjallberg informed us we had left our truck window down. That wouldn't have been something good to return to after a couple of showers and who knows what else that might have toured the inside of our tow vehicle after a week.

After another very restful night, we departed for Spectre Island the next morning. The cruise there was wonderful despite a grounding shortly after reaching the Intercoastal Waterway. A few cranks on the keel cable winch put the boat back in a floating state. Those past hurricanes can change things, even the channels. We enjoyed seeing Brooks Bridge from the different vantage point. Spectre Island was all we dreamed it would be and more. What a wonderful setting for our first anchorage. We enjoyed a campfire and a cruise meeting hosted by Mickey and Dee LaGarde. We learned the rules of the Poker Crawl, a sail boaters version of a poker run. We would be obtaining our cards for this game at the various stops along our journey.

The next morning was Mothers day, May 14. Due to the weather report, Mickey suggested an earlier departure. He had planned a group formation photograph to be recorded as we

approached the Navarre Bridge. He was right in wishing to start earlier. As we approached the bridge, conditions were worsening. We didn't try sailing for the picture and traveled under power. As we went under the bridge, Peggy and I faced sea conditions we were not comfortable with. The waves were breaking over the bow of our boat but we tried sailing and soon discovered we could make little headway. Nearly as soon as we would set a course, a new tack was required since our depth meter would signal near grounding conditions. At each tack we would gain only a few yards after much work. We had 17 miles to go to reach our destination. We soon felt forced to motor even though there was a very good chance we would run out of fuel before reaching Quietwater Beach. This was our planned anchorage for the evening. The seas seemed to worsen with each passing minute. Waves broke over the bow and the wind delivered buckets of spray to our faces. We snuggled down into our life jackets and checked the crib boards for the long afternoon ahead. Peggy announced she was not having fun at all and that this was no way to spend a Mother's day. I had to agree. This afternoon proved to be the low point of the trip for us.

After a couple of hours of rough riding and tasting salt water, we finally could see the Pensacola Beach bridge. After a couple *more* hours, we were able to beach anchor at Quietwater Beach. We wanted to kiss the ground. To our surprise and amazement, we had made the journey and trial by water and had not run out of fuel. Filling up at Little Sabine Marina revealed we had a gallon to go.

We enjoyed visiting The Market at Quietwater Beach. It was a very interesting place offering for sale about anything a cruiser could want. We retired early that evening but were awakened by voices in the night. Nan Kemberling and John Paul Egbert had arrived from the rough crossing and were attempting to find a good place to anchor. Peggy and I had worried about them during the afternoon but were told they were among the 4 boats that had

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turned around and went back to Spectre Island. It was great to see them and know they were safe. A very grand thunderstorm and light show entertained us through out the night. We felt quite safe and cozy in our little boat after surviving our days passage.

The next morning revealed a wonderful day. The weather was fantastic. The winds were perfect for a nice cruising sail to Big Lagoon, which was just to the west of Pensacola pass. On our way, Mickey called on the radio to inform us he could see an aircraft carrier over at the Navy docks at Pensacola Bay. Soon, that aircraft carrier started moving! It was being towed out to sea and we were informed it was to become the world's largest artificial reef. It was the USS Oriskany. It had seen action in the Korean and Viet Nam wars. It was 888 feet long and was towed 24 miles out to sea and sank in 212 feet of water. Its passing through the Pensacola Pass effectively cut our cruising fleet in half if only temporarily. We soon sailed on to our anchorage, Big Lagoon and enjoyed a tour of the light house near the Naval air base with the help of Bob and Trish Endicott.

The next morning, we were entertained by the Navy Blue Angels practice show and what a show it was. Soon, we were off on another great sail, all the way to Wolf Bay Lodge with a stopover and lunch at Holiday Marina and Pirates Cove bar. Our dinner at the Wolf Bay Lodge that evening was outstanding. No wonder people drive from all over to dine there. We anchored out that night in the bay. The bay was calm and the night birds lulled us into a deep sleep.

The next morning again brought calm conditions that soon changed to a very pleasant sailing day. We traveled on with a stop at Bear Point Marina. Dodging barges kept us alert. Our destination this day was to again spend the night at Quietwater Beach and join the Pensacola Beach Yacht Club for dinner. They so graciously hosted our group with a very fine buffet meal of good southern food. They made us feel very welcomed.

Peggy and I then explored the Pensacola Beach area. We found many places we would like to come back and visit at a later time. Our night beach anchored at Quietwater Beach was a little different this time. Upon returning to our boat from our wanderings, I must admit I thought our boat was just a little closer to the shore than on previous nights. My excuse for not moving the boat out further from the beach simply involved laziness. I was fed, rested, relaxed, content and only wanted to crawl in the v-berth and drift off to some pleasant dream land. Peggy asked me if we should move the boat out farther. I replied we would be just fine. We retired.

About midnight, I woke up abruptly knowing something was wrong. The bed was not at all, level. This was not a good thing. It was canting in the direction that made it difficult to not roll to her side. Crowding one's mate when they don't want to be crowded is a very bad thing for restful sleep. I soon discovered the culprit. The tide. It was going out and had not even reached its low point yet. I got up and tried to move the boat. It was stuck and listing nearly 15

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degrees. Imagine putting a concrete building block under each leg of one side of your bed and you will get the idea. There was only one thing to do and that was to wait for the tide to come back in. I tried to remount the bed but to no avail. I would have needed the skills and anatomy of a bat to sleep in that bed. I went for a nice early morning beach walk.

Thursday morning dawn was outstanding. I entertained myself taking pictures of the sunrise. I was back to our boat by the time Peggy got up. The look she gave me told me how resting her night was. We walked to The Market where several of the cruisers were enjoying a nice visit and breakfast. Today's journey would take us back to Spectre Island after a very fine sail. We all enjoyed another nice campfire. Door prizes and awards were given, songs were sang and stories told. A fitting end to our last night together. Friday mornings' dawn promised a fine day to end our cruise adventure. We enjoyed another wonderful sail back to our starting point, Fort Walton Beach Yacht Club. As we were turning north from the



Intercoastal Waterway, Peggy asked if we were about to the end. I replied that we were. She then said, "Let's not stop let's just keep on going". That very effectively summed up the great time we had.

Thank you Mickey and Dee LaGarde, Bob and Trish Endicott, Paul Gallant, Floyd and Brian McKenzie, Beattie and Gary Purcell, Greg Haymore, Nancy Benaquis and any others that I failed to mention for your generous contributions in making this wonderful event happen.



The Inspiration Behind the Lyrics

By Bob Endicott

A few folks asked me about the song we sing around the fire every year. If you are a Fleet 77 member or a NGCC veteran, you probably already know much of the "Cruise lore". Those of you who made the trip for the first time this year may wonder what some of the verses were referring to. So for those who are interested, here's a little background on the lyrics of the 29 verses through 2013. Some of the verses have been revised over the years to reflect boat changes or better stories

The Ballad of The Northern Gulf Coast Cruise ~ by Bob Endicott

To the tune of *The Wabash Cannonball* (with apologies to Roy Acuff)

Chorus:

From the narrows of Ft. Walton to the dock at Wolf Bay Lodge
Through barges, yachts and jet-skis that we are forced to dodge
There's anchors, dinks and beach chairs and other stuff we lose
All part of the adventure called The Northern Gulf Coast Cruise!

The first two lines are pretty self-explanatory once you've made the Cruise. Wolf Bay Lodge was, of course, the destination and turn-around point for many years until it burned down in the early hours of Dec. 7, 2008. Line three was inspired specifically by three separate incidents: Greg's loss of anchor and rode from the bow of Almost Done several years ago while beating his way from Navarre to Quietwater Beach (he said later that he heard a noise, but by the time he had identified it, it was too late). Vernon lost the beautiful dinghy he made and brought along on the 2002 Cruise. Whether due to pirates or an insecure painter, the dinghy was just as lost. Finally, in 2002, a beach chair slipped from the deck of Cay Cat near Ft. McRee completing the "trifecta" of sacrifices to Neptune from that vessel.

Greg is sailing *Almost Done* with Nancy as his mate.
As we get into formation, he'll try to keep us straight.
He's absolutely fearless, always loves a thrill.
He can flip his chicken and not even touch the grill!

Greg has led the formation for the bridge (and in 2003 aerial) Cruise Fleet photos since 1999. He says we put him in front 'cause it's easier to follow him than to dodge him (who are we to argue?). In 2001, as Greg and Nancy were coming back into Big Lagoon from the west, they were hit with a MAJOR puff at about the point where the ICW doglegs north. They had the cruising (asymmetrical) spinnaker up and dipped the port spreader in the water before they could get the sheets released. All that wouldn't have been a big deal (other than everything being topsy-turvy inside the cabin) except that they had chicken breasts cooking on the stern-rail mounted Magma grill at the time. He told us later that it was time to turn them anyway!

Ned is our MacGyver. He's totally prepared.
For any kind of crisis, he's ready! He ain't scared!
If you've ever sailed with him, you just can't help but ask:
"With all the crap he's got on board, how does he go so fast?"

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Ned keeps enough tools and spares aboard his C22 to meet pretty much ANY challenge. Yet still he somehow manages to get the speed.

Here's to the crew of *Amaline*, Mickey and Dee LaGarde.
In all of our Fleet functions, they both work very hard.
They've always been great cruisers. They've been here from the start,
But since they started racing, they got a Purple Heart.

Mickey and Dee have been active in Fleet 77 since we reactivated its charter in 1997. They, in Déjà Vu (along with Tequila Sunset), made the first Fleet 77 C22 Cruise to Wolf Bay in '98 (known as the June Moon Cruise) and didn't miss one for years. Recently, though, they've expanded their interests to include racing. In the Pearson Regatta at Ft. Walton Yacht Club last spring, they collided with a Catalina 30 near the starting line resulting in Mickey's starboard winch and the C30's bow light lying in Mickey's cockpit sole. Game sailors that they are, they carried on, using the halyard winch on the cabin top for the starboard sheet. At the next Fleet meeting, we presented Amaline with a Purple Heart Plaque for the injuries she suffered in the Pearson Regatta.

Bob sails *Tequila Sunset*, but Trish is who's in charge.
He's got his bag o' homemade wine and thinks he's cruisin' large!
Keepin' him straight's a full-time job and Trish cannot retire.
She never knows when she might have to pull him from the fire!

If you've done the Cruise, I don't guess the first three lines need further explanation. The last line refers to a Fleet overnight to Spectre Island one year. I let that ol' homemade wine get ahead of me and while trying to arise from my beach chair (those things are SO close to the ground), I lost my balance momentarily and it appeared as though I might tumble headlong into the fire (guitar and all). Either I recovered, or someone grabbed me (the details are a little hazy), but in any event, I didn't fall in THAT time. Trish remains vigilant, though.

Vernon comes from Gainesville. He sails the *Mari-Lee*.
He sometimes brings some crew along and sometimes it's just he.
He's made this trip since '99 and knows just what to do,
Takin' lotsa pictures and shootin' movies too.

Vernon has made nearly every Cruise since '99. He has chronicled several of them with digital slide show and/or video presentations, complete with music. Vernon is a great sailor and long a mainstay of the Cruise.

Then there's Ted and Dora on *Rhapsody in seA*.
The first year they cruised with us, it was all about the speed.
We've been a bad influence. Our laid-back traits they've learned
And after several trips down here we've nearly got them "rurned".

Ted and Dora have been doing the Cruise off and on since we told anyone outside Fleet 77 we were doing it. They're active racers and even have a "low-number" boat expressly for racing. They still focused on speed when aboard Rhapsody ("performance cruising", I believe it's called). Then came the bimini.... Then the beach chairs (even under way, occasionally).... Then, finally, a HARD DINGHY! Next they'll be hanging little flamingo or parrot lights over the cockpit when anchored!

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Then we have our good friend Paul, a better man there ain't.
He calls himself the *Hooligan*, but he's more like a saint.
He's always doing kind things to make life good for you,
Like serving gourmet coffee on the Chattahoochee Coup!

Paul Gallant (as anyone who's sailed with him can attest) is the one you hope is around when stuff starts going south on you. We have never sailed with a less selfish individual, nor one who was so inclined to look out for his fellow sailors. The 2002 Chattahoochee Coup (AWESOME TRIP!) was Paul's idea entirely and was a great adventure. The last line refers to our second morning on the Apalachicola River, when we awoke to find Hooligan on the beach with a stove and kettle serving up gourmet coffee to all comers in the Florida wilderness.

And from the Rocky Mountains came the Connally's and Cay Cat.
They weren't afraid of long-hauls, ya had to give 'em that!
They finally moved to Florida and brought their big boat too.
They've figured out a way to have their cake and eat it too!

Stan and Annie came a long way (from north of Denver) to sail with us and as of 2004, had made the trip three times! They've since completed The Great Loop (almost twice) on their Catalina 27, relocated to Jacksonville and continue to participate in NGCC's and Fleet 77 fall Cruises with Cay Cat.

Robert's on *Line Dancer*, from up on Lake Lanier.
His crew just kept improvin', each succeeding year.
He started cruising solo, then with Emily and his sis,
But now he's got the company of a bonny, bonny miss!

Robert is another veteran. He's so universally loved and constantly entertaining that I've rewritten his verse three times! He originally did the Cruise single-handed on Shady Deal. On the 2004 Cruise, Trish decided Robert needed some company aboard Shady Deal, so at the Ft. McRee beach fire, she presented him with an inflatable crew member (actually, the package said "inflatable wife"). Gunter (Ned's brother-in-law and crew) named her Emily. The next year, Robert showed up for the fall Cruise with a real-live female. It eventually was revealed that she was his sister. Now, with the addition of Bonnie, Robert has bonafide crew!

Kermit comes from Tennessee, but knows these waters well.
He's got a sense of humor, so we love to give him hell.
Now Kermit isn't one to boast or stretch the truth the least,
But he says he's got the fastest wing in the whole dad-gummed southeast!

Kent Overbeck is one of those folks that just loves C22's. He's got his race boat Frogzilla and his cruise boat Leap Frog. He says he likes to take it easy when he cruises, but just pass him on the water (when he's not paying attention) and watch what happens!

And of course there's Benny, with Karen at his side.
Bugaboo's calamities could make a grown man cry!
He always seems to get by, though the struggle makes him tire.
He wonders why it can't be something simple... Like a fire!

For most of the time we've known him, Benny was a fireman. He's always a hoot to sail with... completely fearless and not given to sweating the small stuff. He's had his share of close calls, though. Off the top of my head... A near-sinking when the keel lockdown bolt assembly broke out of the keel trunk, a blown-out mainsail (not stretched, BLOWN OUT), a separation of the starboard cabin bulkhead from the liner accompanied by the opening of the hull-to-deck joint adjacent to it, as well as various outboard motor maladies. It's never something MINOR, but somehow he manages to overcome and he's always there to help others in trouble.

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Waylan comes from Texas with his lovely First Mate, Clark.
They're both great navigators, 'cause they sure hit the mark.
They made it back in one piece in spite of their close shave,
'Cause Clark now knows just what to do when Waylan yells "BIG WAVE!"

Waylan and Clark joined us the first time in '03, but earned a verse their first time out. On the way back to Spectre Island, about 5 miles from the end of the Cruise, they changed helm and failed to see (hidden behind the genoa) a navigation mark (on a piling). In a fair breeze, that sucker grabbed 'em at the spreaders, snapped the mast and wouldn't let go of them. With Greg's help, they got loose, lashed everything down and limped on in. The "Big Wave" line refers to Clark relating how Waylan would say "Wave!" (to warn her of the other boat's wake) every time a boat went by (and she would). Then a big boat went by and Waylan yelled "Big wave!" So she put everything into it. I don't know if they waved back :^)

Floyd is sailing *Honey Do*, his patriotic boat.
He proudly flies the stars and stripes like no one else afloat.
One year when back at Spectre, he thought the Cruise was done,
But then he learned on down the bay, his adventure'd just begun!

Floyd's Red, White and Blue trimmed boat is unmistakable, even at a distance. The last two lines refer to his last leg home to the other end of Choctawhatchee Bay one year. The trip from hell. Ask him for the details.

Beattie's our old master, the twenty-two guru.
He's always been a racer, but now he's cruising, too.
A Catalina icon, sailing's his first joy,
But he loves to sing as well... Just ask for Danny Boy!

Beattie Purcell was with Frank Butler at the start of Catalina Yachts. He is a treasure beyond measure in Fleet 77. Being thoroughly Irish, when the singing starts you can always count on him for a stirring rendition of the tune "Londonderry Air".... More commonly referred to as "Danny Boy".

Then there's Ken and Tammy; *Loki* brought them here.
When Tammy first tried Cruising, there was a little fear.
Just about the time she thought she couldn't take no more,
She figured out she liked it and now she's plumb hardcore!

The first year Ken and Tammy joined us from Tennessee, I don't think Tammy had previously spent a night aboard. As is sometimes the case, the trip was pretty frisky from Spectre to Quietwater Beach and by the time they arrived, she'd about had it. As usually happens, though, the combination of nicer conditions and new friendships finally won her over. Now she's unflappable.

Bill is sailing *Respite*. He's another quiet guy.
If he's had any "train wrecks", he's had 'em on the sly!
We keep hopin' he'll do somethin' worthy of this song...
Hangin' out with Hooligan, It shouldn't be too long!

This rascal is one of those people that either never screws up or they're hard to catch screwing up. Basically, a dull guy ;^) Well get the goods on him eventually, though.

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On the good ship *Swizzle Stick*, we have the Merlier's.
For all the miles they've cruised her, we give them highest praise.
They've sailed to the Bahamas, the Chesapeake and Maine.
We prob'ly shoulda let 'em just write their own refrain!

Philip and Sharon have made some trips in Swizzle Stick that make the NGCC look like a park pond paddleboat ride. They are among the most knowledgeable and experienced C22 cruisers anywhere.

Cap'n Sparks from Lou-zee-ann is sailing on *Petite*.
He's got a couple hobbies and they're both pretty sweet.
He has to make the choice each day, which he'd rather do...
Go sailin' in his airplane or fly the 22.

Robert Sparks' other passion is flying, a hobby he enjoys with what may be the aeronautical equivalent of a C22... a gorgeous red Luscombe. Small and FUN.

David comes from Texas. His first cruise was a snap.
'least that's the sound his rudder made, before he'd turned a lap.
Robert had a spare blade, but too long by a hair,
So they broke out a chainsaw and made an *Extreme* repair!

On his first NGCC, David snapped his rudder while pounding west to Quietwater Beach. Shady Deal and others came to the rescue with a blade fashioned from a cut-down C25 rudder.

Then there's Dan & Peggy, down from Illinois.
They've no tides to consider, when anchors they deploy.
They took advice from racers and stayed too close to shore
They woke up sittin' high and dry. They won't do that no more.

Dan and Peggy learned two important lessons on their first NGCC: 1) Consider the potential for a dropping tide when anchoring and 2) Don't ask racers for advice on the subject.

Louis sails *St. Benedict* and he likes cruisin' large.
He's always quick to help folks with never any charge.
Whether it's the MainBrace or some forum post he wrote,
You know dang well for certain, Man, he loves that little boat!.

Louis has been a regular on various online C22 forums for sometime. He is widely associated with the quote in his signature block "Man, I love that little boat!"

Then we have *Outrageous*, cruisers many a day.
They've learned a lot of clever stuff and tricks along the way.
Of all their contributions, the finest that they made
Was showing us the best way to chill out in the shade.

These two showed us that even those of us who'd been doing this awhile could still learn a few things. Their first NGCC, they wowed us by demonstrating the advantages of solar screen to make the cockpit more pleasant in the afternoon sun.

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Eddie's here with Yee-haa and a dink to go ashore.
He'd tied off the painter, but the dink was there no more.
Jet-Skis to the rescue, embarrassing I'd think.
Ya know it ain't a painter, 'less you tie it to the dink.

As I heard the story (I won't reveal my source), Eddie dinked back out to his boat and climbed aboard after tossing the painter into the cockpit. Only then did he discover that the dinghy also had contained an additional line, just like the painter, that wasn't tied to ANYTHING! Unfortunately, THAT was the one he had secured to the rail with a very salty bowline knot. The line was secure, but the dinghy was on the way back to Ft. Walton. The good news is, passing boaters retrieved it for him.... The bad news is, they were on JET-SKIs (how embarrassing).

Nan is sailing *Wayward*, Jean Paul is with her too.
They've both made the trip before, so they know what to do.
They'd love to pick and grin with us, 'cause they play music too,
But they can't fit the cello... on the twenty-two!

Nan is "allegedly" a professional cellist (We can't prove it... If they brought the cello, one of them would have to stay behind)

Deiter's on *Wind Chaser* with Evelyn as his crew.
He keeps that Sport immaculate. It's pristine through and through.
His only grief was barnacles, but that's now well in hand.
He learned that he could track 'em by their trails in the sand!

Deiter and Evelyn had done the Cruise before on their old-style 22, but they got their verse when they arrived with their new C22 Sport. He didn't have bottom paint on it, so he was naturally concerned about the possibility of accumulating barnacles on his pristine hull during the week-long, salt-water cruise. Naturally his "barnacaphobia" attracted a ton of misinformation and bad advice on the subject from his "friends".

Pete and his mate Barbara are sailing *Windabout*.
They've had their share of crises, from fires to waterspouts.
Sometimes Barb would wonder "When does the fun begin?"
She must have got her answer, 'cause they came back again!

Many C22 sailors are drawn to the NGCC by the stories of day-long broad reaches, beach bonfires and general camaraderie that are almost always part of the NGCC. Of course, these stories often don't include the equally ever-present challenges of weather, equipment failure and anchoring. Pete and Barb had some memorable near catastrophes early on, or at least some conditions that caused them to wonder if coming on the Cruise had been a smart idea. Like other multi-cruise veterans, though, they decided the "pain" was worth the gain!

Jon is sailing *This Side Up*. Sometimes he brings his bro.
How Charlie could put up with him, I guess we'll never know.
When Charlie'd try to jump ashore or step off of the boat,
Jon would hit reverse to see if bro could really float!

Since Trish and I last sailed the NGCC in 2005, I've had to rely on intel from other cruisers for some of the more recent "verse-worthy" antics. As I understand it, Jon and his brother Charlie experienced some communication issues during the anchoring process.

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Josh and Katie join us from Chickamauga Lake.
Whatever's been thrown at 'em, they've shown that they can take.
Josh gave up his burger and in the channel dove,
To push the "Brokeback Cajuns" off the dirt at Pirate's Cove!

This verse alludes to an incident at Pirate's Cove, where, as I understand it, St. Benedict had run aground and Josh lent a much needed assist. "Brokeback Cajuns" is a little dig at Louis and the same-sex crew he brought that year.

Then there's Scott and Marilyn, down from Privateer.
Scott cruised other 22's, a new type every year.
He finally got a Mk II, so Marilyn would stop yellin'.
Now she cruises with him and helps him find his melon!

Plenty of Scott's "friends" were ready to share some dirt on him. Verse? Heck, I could have given him his own song! But of course it doesn't work that way. As I understand it, Scott's first couple of cruises were on a new-style (Maximum Obesity) and a low-number racing 22 (Anorexia), both loaded so heavy that on one trip, he was unable to locate a watermelon he knew was aboard (somewhere). He finally found it while unloading the boat at home after the cruise. Finally, he bought a Mark II (Galapagos) that was comfortable enough that Marilyn agreed to join him.

2008 Northern Gulf Coast Cruise

By Pete Snyder

MainBrace, July 2008 and September 2008



Barbara and Peter Snyder.

The Catalina 22 National Association's Northern Gulf Coast Cruise was something that Barbara and I didn't know we could do until we actually arrived in Ft. Walton Beach, Florida — and even then we weren't too sure. Barbara had been so apprehensive about taking our little boat out on such big water. And, so many things had to be done to our boat and trailer to make them ready for the trip. Several things were done at the very last and left home without being tested. Most of all, the skipper and first mate had not been tested, at least not at sea.

A year earlier I had done a lot of maintenance items and upgrades which made *Windabout* a better boat to sail, like leading all the sail control lines aft to the cockpit, refinishing the keel, upgrading the chain plate eyebolts, and about 30 other —smallll projects. But, we still didn't have a bimini, bug screens, a pop top cover, and other amenities for living on board. Plus, our trailer had an undersized axle that sagged under load and no brakes!

Last fall I put together a cheap bimini from an old aluminum frame a friend gave us. Then last winter I ordered trailer parts to change out the axle and bearings and add brakes. That was a new experience for me. I didn't know if it would run ok or not — until we were on our way to Florida. I also had to change the outboard's impeller, another new experience. The final push to get the boat ready taught me that there is practically no way to measure plumb, level or square on a boat.

The drive down on **Friday** was incredibly uneventful, thankfully, passing the first test. We drove down in

caravan with Kent and Jane Overbeck pulling *Leap Frog*, and Eddie Graham pulling *Yee Haa*, all from our home Fleet 95 at Privateer Yacht Club in Chattanooga, TN. We used our VHF radios to communicate on the road as well as on the water.

We spent that night at a campground on Blackwater Creek and rolled into Ft. Walton Beach Yacht Club, our host Fleet 77's home base, mid-morning on **Saturday, May 10th**.

Most of the other 25 boats going on the cruise had already launched. I think our boat was the last, even with great help from Robert Donahoo *Shady Deal* and Paul Gallant *Hooligan*. These folks and others were such great help.

Like so much of this first time experience, starting our outboard was a leap of faith. I didn't know if I'd put it back together right or not. But, it started and ran fine after warming up — second test passed! The procedure seemed to be to start the day's cruise with the motor running, get out a ways and put up the jib, see how that goes and decide whether or not to raise the main, reefed or not. The motor could be shut off or left running, depending upon conditions.

Our first day under sail was short and took us through the western edge of Choctawhatchee Bay, then westward on the Intracoastal Waterway to the first anchorage, a place called Spooky Island, originally named Spectre Island after a military group. It was a nice anchorage with a crescent shaped beaching area. All the flags flying from the beach anchored boats snapped with a fresh, festive air over the multi-colored boats. They made a great picture with the white sands and blue-green water. The beach anchored boats had their sterns anchored on the beach and bow anchor line stretched out in front. This arrangement allowed

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each boat to move away from shore by pulling in some of the bow anchor line and playing out some stern line. Tides in this area only run about 18 inches once a day. I learned that the farther one goes from the equator, the more variation in tidal elevation.

We anchored out from shore that first night. Barbara and I were really tired. So, when Kent came up in his zodiac dinghy to ferry us into shore, we asked forgiveness from the group if we could just stay on our boat to rest and meet folks at the next opportunity. After the bonfire, Kent brought a nice packet of information with our cruise tee shirts and told us that he offered our apologies to the group and all was cool. I had been up to 2:30 am the morning before we left home, trying to put the outboard back together, and then got up at 5:30 to hit the road early. Several other nights I had been up until almost that late, working on the boat. I had really over extended myself. We really slept well that night at the Spooky Island anchorage.

Sunday morning, Mother's Day, we listened to the weather channel on our VHF radio, and it was a bit disconcerting. Quite a blow was forecast with rain. But, the cruise organizers decided it would be better to not travel that day and called a layover day. This was the first time the organizers had called a layover day in the eleven year history of the NGC Cruise. It was actually a welcome day of rest for Barbara and me. We just took it easy and began to learn our way around our little 22 x 8 foot island. It's amazing how many times you have to move things to find one thing on a boat this size. A few well wishers in our group called out —Happy Mother's Day!! on the VHF radio for the mothers on the cruise. One even visited us after the storm, bearing a little Mother's Day surprise for Barbara.

Eddie Graham had given us his old anchor riding sail. What a blessing that was! Without it, we were blown to and from by the wind, hunting for equilibrium like a wild coon dog with more instinct than good sense. After I put it up, we settled down to a more tranquil motion. The wind blew and the rain fell, but we were fine.

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Monday morning brought calm air and mirror clear water. As long as the wind blows, the boats stay lined up and don't touch. But with the wind calm, we wandered and gently bumped our closest neighbor, **Ameline**. I went up on the bow and pulled in some anchor rode so we would stay clear.



At daybreak, we quickly brewed some coffee and tea, cooked oatmeal and got underway. I thought Kent had taken off early, and went looking for him under motor. We passed about three boats and asked **Ameline** where he might be. Mickey said he thought they were behind us. Not sure about it, we went a little further ahead and finally shut off the motor and put up our sails. The wind was just starting to fill in, and it turned out to be a glorious day for sailing. As I recall, the winds became steady at 10-15 out of the northeast. It was a little cool that morning, too, which was nice. A few folks stopped nearby the Navarre bridge for supplies. We were told it would take about 8 hours of sailing to make the 28 miles, so we kept going. But, we drew near the Pensacola Beach bridge by noon! When we first spotted it, the bridge seemed to be hovering over the water with something like a mirage separating it from the horizon.

We were really bookin' it and having fun. Texas fireman David Williams, single-handing on **Extreme**, was out front with us, flying a 135 hank-on jib with a full main. He finally pulled up next to us and congratulated us on our speed with the 110 jib. We got to talk with him more at the bonfires and found him to be a lot of fun. We both turned back and sailed into the midst of the scattered fleet, and turned forward again with them. After all, I didn't know exactly where we were going, and needed to

follow someone into port. Barbara had fun at the tiller, too.

Kent had arranged for a few of us to stay dockside at the Pensacola Beach Yacht Club in Little Sabine Bay. That was a real help since we didn't have a dinghy. About eight boats stayed on Quietwater Beach, and a few with dinghies out at anchor. The group leaders and a few others docked at the concrete Tee Dock connected to the boardwalk. The Yacht Club opened their rest rooms and showers to us, which was really welcome.

Barbara and I found supper at a local Surf Burger place, and enjoyed a Kahuna burger. It was **BIG!** We walked around a bit and started to walk across the Pensacola bridge, but Barbara decided to go back to the boat and rest while I walked over to the Ace Hardware near the other end of the bridge. It was about a three mile walk, over and back. We needed some denatured alcohol for our stove. I enjoyed having the fuel more than the walk.

Tuesday morning brought an opportunity to have a different breakfast at a nearby boaters' eatery. The coffee and grand portions of food were wonderful. The conversation with Waylan and Clark **Lady in Red** and others from the fleet at nearby tables was fun, too. Then we got under way for the sail to the Big Lagoon by Fort McRae on Perdido Key. It was another great day to sail, and we passed by a cut in the barrier islands that opened up to the Gulf of Mexico. This could have been an opportunity to go out into the Gulf and experience the long swells of big water, but we decided to pass it by. The blue-green waters around the island sure were *purty*.

Actually, we had covered the distance to Pensacola Beach so quickly the day before that we could have gone on to Wolf Bay, but that leg of the trip had been canceled because of our layover day. We understand that we missed a great meal at the Wolf Bay Lodge, and some fine sailing waters on the way. But, that's something new to look forward to, if we make it back for another cruise. A couple of boats did go on as far as Pirates' Cove, where there's a great place to get lunch. They came back with pirate hats for a few of the fleet members.

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We were not aware of that adventure, since we had to follow others into the Big Lagoon anchorage where there was a very narrow channel and a lot of shallow shoals. Here we were surprised to see our first dolphins on the trip. Military veterans Mickey LaGarde and Paul Gallant had arranged for those interested to take a free tour of the Naval Air Museum. Just as soon as **Windabout** was anchored, Paul picked me up in **Hooligan** for transit to a dock where others were awaiting a shuttle ride with Bob Endicott to the museum. What a spectacular museum!

Upon returning to **Windabout**, we tried to beach anchor in the Big Lagoon. Eddie Graham, who never makes mistakes, came aboard and worked the bow to set our anchor. We tried four times to set that anchor, but it would not hold. Finally, we just anchored out, and Kent taxied us in for the beach bonfire. We learned that our good-looking vinyl covered Danforth is not so great an anchor. I guess we flunked that test! Eddie recommended a Fortress type. Kent had loaned us a galvanized Danforth, which I changed to the bow, and it was a good thing I did. More on that later.

The bonfire that evening was a fun time for us, where we got to meet and talk with folks we had seen mostly from a distance. The scenery was picture perfect, and people were quite a mix. I have to mention George Yerger, from Heber Springs, Arkansas. He told us his little town was between **Toad Suck** and **Possum Grape**, just up the road from **Romance**. HA! I get a kick out of that every time I think about it. Paul Gallant really reminded us of one of Barbara's neat cousins. I just wish we had more time to sit and talk with more folks. They were all an interesting bunch.

The annual performance of the **Ballad of the Northern Gulf Coast Cruise** was led by Bob Endicott and Greg Hay-more on guitars. This is a tradition that gains additional verses each year, based on something funny that a certain cruiser has done along the way. Generally, one does not have a verse written about him until the third time he makes the cruise. They figure by then one can handle being made fun of and will come back again. Eddie Graham had a verse added for him this year, and it was noted that this was especially difficult because Eddie just never makes a mistake. Endicott heard of the mishap within five minutes of it happening, thanks to a cell phone call to land where Bob was preparing the performance. He was not cruising with us this year. If you know Eddie, ask him about it and have a good chuckle.

We taxied back to **Windabout** after the bonfire, thanks to Kent, and had another good night's sleep. Boat sleeping just kind of rocks you to sleep. By now we were learning to get up early and go. It seemed like we were always behind the times and needing to get out ahead of weather that would be building through the course of the day.

This day, **Wednesday**, was not strong in that regard, but the next would be. The wind had clocked around to the South, and the fetch coming in from the Gulf pushed up some pretty good waves. We plowed through that with just the motor, then I raised the jib. Barbara was a little apprehensive about raising the main, but we finally did with a reef and pulled up the motor. We made good time, as usual, once we got our sails set.

I don't know how he did it, but the word was that Mickey LaGarde **Ameline** arranged an air show for us. The Blue Angels swooped over and around us, all around Pensacola Bay. What a show they put on! Thanks, Mickey!!

Tied up at the dock again near the Pensacola Beach Yacht Club, Barbara and I found lunch at the Surf Burger and enjoyed the company of Robert Donahoo and Bonnie Cox **Shady Deal**. We gathered later at the clamshell on the board-walk for a group picture with everyone wearing our cruise tee shirts. Then the PBYC members had arranged a pot luck supper in our honor. What a great spread it was! Thank you PBYC for your wonderful hospitality! This was another op-opportunity to meet and talk with folks over supper. Barbara met Donna Plaisance here and really appreciated her friendliness. I can also see why Louis Plaisance signs his e-mails with "Man....I love that little boat." **Saint Benedict** is a beauty. We enjoyed hearing how they came up with that name.

Thursday had an ominous forecast, and it sounded like we would have to motor into the eye of the wind for most or all of the 28 miles back to Spooky Island. Thunderstorms were forecast to build through the course of the day. We decided to leave as early as possible. Barbara got to where she could quickly throw together some great oatmeal with raisins and apples underway, before we raised the sails. Kent and Jane suggested we wear our foul weather gear, because we would likely have rain. Fortunately, the wind was quartering instead of hitting us on the nose, and we were able to sail close hauled with the 110 jib and a reefed main.

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I got to thinking that we were one of the last in the parade because I could see no boats behind us. We put on our best speed for the conditions and passed a few boats. I tried to keep the angle of heel around 15 degrees by playing the mainsheet. Barbara helped by sitting on the coaming by the rail. I did hear a few —Yee Haa'sll from her perch, and she wasn't calling Eddie. We were having fun. Later she made the comment: "Ocean here we come!" I think it was said in jest, but Shakespeare said, "The truth is oft' spoke in jest."

We finally pulled into the crescent cove at Spooky Island, and I couldn't believe we were the tenth boat to arrive. Thunder could be heard in the distance. We found out later that a tornado watch had been issued for just north of us. We set our anchor and put up the pop top and cover. I set the riding sail and got in-side the cabin. About that time the bot-tom dropped out and rain flew and the wind blew and blew. Eddie told us later that he had never been at anchor in wind that strong before and had dragged an anchor in less. It reminded me of that great gospel hymn, "Will Your Anchor Hold?" Our borrowed galvanized Danforth anchor held. *Thank you, Kent!* We passed another test!

The storm caught several folks out on the Intracoastal Waterway. Most just pulled off the main channel and set their anchors until the storm blew through. At least one, **Lady in Red**, kept on motoring right through it. But, finally, the storm subsided and the skies cleared. The rest of the fleet came in, none the worse for wear. Eddie rowed over for a visit, and we invited him to have some rice and black beans with us. Then it was time for the last bonfire, and the last gathering of the full fleet.

The Poker Crawl was resolved this night. At Pensacola Beach there were three commercial establishments that helped sponsor the Cruise. Each of them had sealed envelopes with NGCC identification on the outside and a random playing card on the inside, which fleet members had to pick up. We were given two more cards at this last bonfire since we were not able to pick up our cards at Wolf Bay. The big winner got to take home an original watercolor by Beattie Purcell. There were also some door prize type gifts donated by sponsors and distributed according to numbered and drawn tickets we were given.

Another good night's sleep aboard **Windabout**, and we were ready to sail at the earliest. I think we were the fourth boat to leave the anchorage. The **Friday** forecast was for certain thunder-showers, and I felt the wind was going to be fairly unpredictable. It was a short hop back to the Ft. Walton Beach Yacht Club, so I decided to not set a sail, just keep the main under wraps and motor back. We did just that and got back to the club without getting wet, but thunder and lightning were booming out of dark clouds over the mainland the whole way.

We got ashore quickly with help from Robert Donahoo and proceeded to drop the mast. I hurried as best I could to beat the impending storm, but got drenched as I was putting the boom inside the cabin for transport. It was very nice to take a refreshing shower in the club afterwards, even though the floor was gently swaying. We got ready for the road so early that we decided to skip the planned overnight back at the Blackwater Creek campground and drive to Chattanooga right away. **Leap Frog** assumed the lead and **Windabout** and **Yee Haa** trailed. We had to fight sleepiness, but made it alright with a number of rest stops.

It was a long awaited and looked for-ward to trip. It took a lot to get ready for it. But the other cruisers were most helpful — Kent and Jane Overbeck and Eddie Graham from our home fleet, especially. I guess the skipper and first mate passed our tests. If we do it again, we will take less stuff, worry less, walk the beaches more and swim in the clear water, spend more time with other sailors and have more fun. If you think you would like to try it, too, you should. Just start planning and working toward it now. I was wondering if Barbara would want to go again. Maybe the fact that she took over 340 pictures is an indication of her interest.

2009 NGCC Cruise

By Pat Noonan

MainBrace, July 2009

It was very challenging. I drove to FWBYC on Friday, leaving at 2pm and arriving at 4:30. Two of the members came over and put up my mast within minutes.

I was rigged and in the water before the meeting at 5 pm. There were lots of people, new names and faces that over the next few days became very familiar. We had a cook out and the bags and T's were given out. Then with the chores of loading the boat with my gear (something went in the water, but have yet to figure out what) I felt a bit overwhelmed. One of the members whose boat was not ready to go ended up crewing for me the first two days. Maxine proved an asset and was a pleasant companion. Turned out we were the same age and had a lot in common.

Saturday morning I found I could not lower the keel as the cable was wrapped over the edge of the winch drum housing. I put the boat back on the trailer and Eddie Graham of "Yee Haa" came to rescue removing the winch and backed off the brake nuts to

allow the cable removal. Back in the water we sorted out the gear and were off about 10 am. Maxine had sailed/raced the area and advised going out to the second mark before turning southward. A large shoal lies to the east of the YC extending out for a considerable distance. Even with the easting we ran over a sand shoal just before crossing into the ICW channel. Once under the bridge we were off for a pleasant sail to Specter Island. Some of the other boats began to catch up with us and we were off....our first anchorage lay just ahead. The morning was grey with scudding low clouds, wind NE at 15-20, and predictions for increasing wind and seas in the bay "rough". The members of the cruise met informally at the Market for biscuits and coffee. A quick poll of those present was taken and we decided to go on.

Paul advised to keep in the lea of the point and then cut across the bay and try to get under the lea of the north shore. I got the boat ready and decided to leave the main reefed and rolled up. The jib would be enough with the wind as it was. I got the sail set in the protection of the water towers and heeled as the wind hit full bore across the sound. The sand bars and shoals kept me in the channel so no protection there. Once in the bay the waves were running at 3 feet but building. I concentrated on keeping the boat's bow down and the stern to the wind, watching for the larger sets, working the tiller to keep from heading up in the gusts.

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A navy boat and helicopter were working on the north shore, and as I tried to get closer to Navy Point, was warned off by a loud hailer, "Captain, please go back to the channel" came loud and clear, as divers dropped into the water from the chopper. I had no choice but to head back south into the stronger wind and seas.

Though the wind increased in the inlet the boat took the seas well and we came under the protection of the north shore at the lighthouse. The tide was at high point so the current was not a problem. Blue dog passed the sand island and we turned in to the 'cove', though it no longer is since the last hurricane has made it a cut with not much to offer as protection from a NE wind.

I got the jib down and the anchor ready and motored to where the three other boats were swinging near the sand hill. There seemed to be no lea, the wind coming straight down the sound and whistling in the shrouds. I cut across the 'cove' and decided to anchor stern to in the little protection offered by the sand dunes east of Fort McCree. I worried about the anchor, but felt it set well. I put a stern anchor on the beach and relaxed as the other boats came in one by one. After a short while there were ten or twelve boats lined up along the beach. We 'girls' gathered on the beach near "Lady in Red" for an impromptu bridal shower. There was to be a wedding on the beach that evening. Tammy and Ken of "Last Penny" had decided to tie the knot. After the shower all the cruisers gathered in the dunes for a bonfire while we waited for the minister and musicians, other guests and absent cruisers to arrive. The wind continued, the sky remained grey and the waves crashed on the beach beyond the cove.

As the sun began to travel down the sky, we lined up in the sand, the music heralded the coming of the bride and groom and as the vows were said the sun shone through the clouds.

I slept fitfully that night, wishing that I had pulled farther off the beach but loath to give up on a well set anchor. I felt that since it had held all day against the wind, it would hold a bit longer. The wind picked up in the night, though the predictions had been for its moderating. With the morning I was happy to see that all the boats were in their places and none had drifted or dragged.

The process of getting us off the anchors without coming down on the boat to leeward took some quick handiwork with motor and anchor. I had a problem as the wind caught the bow and pushed

me around toward "Outrageous". I steered the bow past them and toward the beach then used the motor to back off into deeper water. I set the jib, stowed the anchor and was away down the sound, feeling that it was easier than trying to fight the wind and go back to Little Sabine. Though the predictions were for increasing wind, even to gusts at 40knots, we had decided to go on to Pirates Cove/Bear Point and end the cruise there. The launch at Pirates' Cove would provide the opportunity to haul out if the weather continued to be against us.

I had hoped for some shelter from the wind as I ran down the ICW in Big Lagoon but the wind came straight down the 'slot' and had some punch in the gusts. I played the jib, hauling in when the wind slacked and letting off when it roared. I was happy just to keep the boat on its feet, but she handled well and I gained more respect for the C22. The turn at the west end of Big Lagoon proved the most challenging....er... scary. As I turned south the wind broadsided me, the turned back west the williwaws hit coming down out of the pines on shore. I kept hoping for calm but had to put the motor back to work going to the Innaritiy bridge. The wind was screwing around from several directions and didn't want to chance hitting the big concrete pilings. A fisherman on the bank watched me pass with some amazement, would have like to have seen his face as the rest of the fleet came by. Finally through the bridge the wind was blocked enough that I was able to relax and have a cup of coffee from the thermos. Bob and Lisa Burnham had caught up and were passing my warnings on the wind to those behind us. A tug pushing a triple barge passed without problem even in the narrow channel. The most important thing to remember with the barges is give them all the room as they cannot stop, turn or change direction in close quarters and shallow water. I never transit the ICW at night anymore as the commercial traffic is heavy at night and they use immense spotlights to scan the way ahead. The light in my eyes once almost caused a disaster...but that is another story.

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The turn north then west at the 'crossroads' brought us back into the wind, which had not moderated. Whitecaps blew off the waves that were hitting us on the forward quarter and bouncing the bow off the wind. Steering became an intense job again, and as I tried to control the sail to spill some wind, Bob and Lesa passed and headed on into Pirate's Cove. I took the boat under sail and motor into the Cove before dropping sail, anchored among the derelict boats and took a deep relieved breath at last. After a quick clean up I paddled ashore in the 'dinky' kayak and welcomed the fleet as they sailed or motored in. After some discussion on radio many of the later boats decided to go into Bear Point where the dinner was to be held, and the boats at PC left to head over. I had wanted an anchorage at PC so stayed put with the promise from Paul that he would fetch me before the party.



We had drinks and snacks in the restaurant, then a most welcome 'hot' meal and some prizes were passed out from the abbreviated 'poker run'. Paul took me back across the channel and decided to anchor at PC as well. We were both delighted and surprised at the baby waves and balmy breeze on the way across.

Next morning the fleet came across and beached while they waited their turn at a ride back to FWBYC to get vehicles and trailers. Bob, Vernon and Bill rode with my sister (who volunteered to come and get us) and I and we traded sailing and rebuild stories on the way. Vernon was very knowledgeable about the mast raising rig and I decided that I would like to try his tripod once back home. We hitched up and convoyed back to the Cove, sorted out our boats and loaded up. I was happy not to have to try and sail back eastward against the 30knts of wind that were reported but sad that the trip was over and all my new friends were leaving. From the news broadcasts I learned that Bill and his wife had torrential rains as they drove back to Orlando.

The low pressure cell that had created all the strong wind came ashore that Friday with winds at 50 knots and was almost a named storm. I left Blue Dog at PC anchored with two hooks down and checked on it over the Memorial Day Weekend. The following weekend I came down to haul her out and found her aground against the bank. Seems one of the fishermen had wanted my nice new 150' anchor line and took that one while cutting the other anchor line. Suppose he thought it would look as if the storms had done it...but the line was not frayed, it was a

Perfect Sailing on the 2010 Northern Gulf Coast Cruise

By Jane Overbeck

MainBrace, July 2010

It was perfect! Bright blue skies and white sands. Dolphins and pelicans. Fair winds. A performance by the U.S. Navy's Blue Angels. Excellent sailing weather. An excellent boat to sail in – Catalina 22s. And best of all, new friendships made and old friendships renewed. That sums up this year's C22 Northern Gulf Coast Cruise (NGCC).

You'd think "repeat cruisers" would be tired of such perfection, but the weather and the winds in two preceding years hadn't been quite as perfect. This year's cruise was back to normal.

The Most Hospitable Hosts, Fleet 77

Hosted by Fleet 77, the official cruise started Saturday afternoon, May 8, at the Ft. Walton Yacht Club. For early arrivers on Friday, Fleet 77 members

arranged slips and welcomed everyone with grilled hot dogs and hamburgers and cold beverages at the club gazebo.

The 17 C22s on the Northern Gulf Coast Cruise ultimately sailed as far west as Bear Point Marina, Orange Beach, Alabama, before returning to the yacht club, Friday morning, May 14 and pulling their boats. Dinner at the yacht club that evening gave everyone a chance to say goodbye before returning home the next day.

Carole Ann McKenzie, the 2010 cruise leader, planned and organized the trip and was set to lead the cruise in person until she became suddenly ill. As she recovered, her husband, Floyd **Honey Do**, #5573, took her place on the water, supported by many in Fleet 77, particularly Paul Gallant **Hooligan**, #14883 and Greg Haymore **Almost Done**, #12498. Floyd has been on most of the annual cruises, either with Carole Ann, son Brian or singlehanded, so he was well prepared to step in.

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It appears that someone has been drinking more than Cool Aid. Could you all scrunch up and make room for one more? Photo by Jane Overbeck.

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Stirring Up Interest in Cruising

Joining the cruise at Pensacola Beach, the second overnight on the trip, were Pat Noonan, **Blue Dog** #9513, and Bob Sparks and John Helmsteadter, **Petit**, from the Fairhope Yacht Club. Pat had been inspired by last year's Northern Gulf Coast Cruise and encouraged C22 sailors in the Mobile Bay area to cruise from there east. Boats on the Great Summer Cruise were to join the NGCC by sailing over, but the BP oil spill forced the Fairhope sailors to trailer their boats over and back. They were a welcome addition, despite the difficult situation.

For the lake sailors on the cruise, the steady coastal winds are a huge attraction of the trip. Many sections, such as the Santa Rosa Sound, are so large it's like sailing in the Gulf, instead of the *I n t e r c o s t a l* Waterway. Even on the last day of the cruise when the southeasterly winds predicted turned out to be easterly winds right in our faces, most managed to put a sail out at some point.

Lively New Cruisers



Oops, there went the anchor. Photo by Jane Overbeck.

Coastal winds may first attract sailors to the cruise, but what keeps everyone coming back are the people. Cruisers new to the NGCC this year were a lively group. They included Jesse (14-year-old son, captain) and James (father, crew) Middleton, **Venture** #8424, Niceville, FL.; Josh and Katie Landers, **Per Diem** #13162, Hixson (near Chattanooga), TN.; and Gordon Kayser and Dean Hill, **Flash** #13864, Ft. Worth, TX.

The **Venture** crew spent much of the trip working on their fast-running motor (with no complaints!) or pulling gentle practical jokes on the rest of us. When **Per Diem** wasn't rescuing **Leap Frog's** dinghy – thank you again, guys – her crew was exchanging jokes with Jesse in **Venture**, subtly racing nearby boats and yet chillin' out, too.

All the while, **Flash** Gordon, as he was nicknamed, told us the wonders of sailing in TX, and Dean smiled through the cruise.

Familiar Faces

Along with the Fleet 77 hosts and the new Gulf Coast cruisers, some 11 boats and/or their crews came back for a second — or more — Northern Gulf Coast Cruise. Returning were: David Williams, **Extreme** (#12965), Abilene, TX; Dan and Peggy Bowers, **Address Unknown** (#13783), Sullivan, Ill.; Ken and Tammy Palmer, **Lo Ki** (#15369), Franklin, Tenn.; Robert Donahoo and Bonnie Cox, **Line Dancer** (#13240), Duluth, GA.; Eddie Graham, **Yee Haa!** (#14230), Hixson, TN.; Jon and Len Schwake, **This Side Up** (#13162), Ft. Worth, TX.; Pete and Barbara Snider, **Windabout** (#8329), Ringgold, GA.; John and Anita Kjallberg, **Outrageous**, Gainesville, FL.; Nancy Varvil and Terrill Beckerman, **Cha Ching** (#10448), Fayetteville, AR.; Stan and Annie Connally, **Cay Cat** (#14781), Jacksonville, FL.; and Kent and Jane Overbeck, **Leap Frog** (#14647), Signal Mountain (near Chattanooga), TN.

Many thanks to Carole Ann and Floyd McKenzie, the members of Fleet 77 and the Ft. Walton Yacht Club for putting on yet-another perfect Northern Gulf Coast Cruise.

Jane Overbeck,
Leap Frog #14647



Hail, Hail the gangs all here. Photo by Jane Overbeck.

2012 Northern Gulf Coast Cruise: Great Sailing, Great Fun, Great Friends

By Kent Overbeck

MainBrace, July 2012

The truth about the Catalina 22 Fleet 77's Northern Gulf Coast Cruise is that people go on the cruise because of great sailing in that area. When it's over, they want to come back because of the people they meet and the fun they have.

A few of our favorite memories of the 2012 cruise were:

Dolphins, laughing gulls, Blue Angels



Dorothy, we aren't in Tennessee anymore. Dolphins, laughing gulls, and Blue Angels are a sure sign. Dolphins were feeding everywhere around the point at the Ft. Walton Yacht Club the Friday most people arrived. Their grace when they surface, blow and curve back under water is beautiful to see. Laughing gulls are something we look forward to hearing every year. The gulls are medium-sized with black heads and an outrageous laugh.

Another special thing about the cruise is the Navy's Blue Angels that practice over our Big Lagoon anchorage Tuesday after Mother's Day. It's thrilling and scary to see how close to each other they fly in formation.

The water spout that went away

After anchoring about 100 yards from Spectre Island near a sand dune on the first night of the cruise, we (Kent and Jane Overbeck, Leap Frog) were on our second cup of coffee the next morning, chilling out on that gray morning. Ned Westerlund on Vagabond was anchored nearby. "Leap Frog, this is Honey Do," we heard Cruise "Chief Yeoman" Floyd McKenzie, radio. He called us to let us know that a waterspout was headed directly for us.

So what do you do when a waterspout is coming at you? What we did was hope it went away and trusted the sand dune to protect us. Luckily, it went back into the cloud long before it reached the dune.

Great sailing over the week

Leaving Spectre Island, winds continued to build during the day to about 15 mph. as we approached the Pensacola Beach bridge. Everyone sailed to the winds they were comfortable with, some lowering one or both sails and motoring, others with full sails to the bridge. The winds weakened as the week progressed, but were still fun to sail. As lake sailors, we love the fairly steady winds and fairly steady points of sail on the coast.

It was good to see more women at the tiller this year, such as Katie Landers, *Per Diem*; Annie Connally, *Cay Cat*; Anita Kjallberg, *Outrageous*; Marilyn Irwin, *Galapagos*; Barbara Snyder, *Windabout*; Rachel Tucker, *Leila*; Jane Overbeck, *Leap Frog*; and others. Naturally, long-time sailors Pat Noonan, *Snoopy*, and Dora McGee, *Rhapsody in seA*, were on the tiller, too.

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Nosing into the Gulf

First-time Catalina 22 Northern Gulf Coast cruisers, Dr. Tim and Rachel Tucker, **Leila**, nosed into the Gulf early in the trip, braving swells of about four feet. When asked how they were doing, Rachel radioed back with laughter in her voice, “Tim is doing fine. I’m in a panic.” They both did well sailing the Gulf waters, as did Galapagos and Firefly, other first timers who sailed in the Gulf those early days.

The Charivari for the Donehoos

We hope that newlyweds Robert and Bonnie Donehoo had as much fun at their wedding celebration, as we did planning it. Other cruisers will write more about it. Simply stated, we wanted to do something special to celebrate their wedding because their first date was on the 2007 Northern Gulf Coast Cruise. They are the only couple we know to have met on the cruise and then wed as a result.

Louis Plaisance was masterful in guiding us through the Charivari (pronounced sharrre-varre, roll the Rs), a Cajun wedding celebration, with the help of his crew, Mike Bruce. Ted McGee, **Rhapsody in seA** was outstanding as MC for the event and got into the spirit of the party as Red Ted, the Commodore Pirate, later in the evening. And it was amazing how Floyd McKenzie, **Honey Do**, came into possession of several — let’s call them incriminating — letters about Robert and Bonnie’s unmarried lives.



St. Benedict bellied up to the bar

As the cruise approached the turnaround point — Orange Beach, Alabama, some cruisers detoured to Pirate’s Cove, a bar — rumors say — that inspired the song, Cheeseburger in Paradise. Others like us went straight to our overnight destination, Bear Point Marina. What we heard was that Louis and Mike, **St. Benedict**, headed to Pirate’s Cove. . . only there was a problem onboard, a cooler leak that Louis was cleaning up down below. Mike, at the tiller, asked how he should enter Pirate’s Cove. “Go straight,” we’ve heard that Louis said. Being the mindful crew, Mike did just what he was told...onto the sandbar ... hard. And of course, the audience on the Pirate’s Cove porch grew to watch the show. Josh Landers, **Per Diem**, dove into the water to help. He tried to pull St. Benedict on its side with the halyard to slip it off the sandbar, but needed more weight to move it. So Jonathan Few, **Firefly**, swam over, too, and, along with Josh, was able to get **St. Benedict** off. There was much applause for the rescuers and the **St. Benedict** crew.

A grounding wouldn’t ordinarily be funny if Louis and Mike weren’t such colorful “out there” personalities. You’ve got to give them credit for facing the abuse of the crowd inside Pirate’s Cove after the boat was safe, instead of sailing on to the marina.

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Great sailing, great fun, great friends

Those six words sum up the cruise. We enjoy sailing together. We laugh together. We help each other. And although we may meet on the cruise for the first time, we become long-time friends.

Newcomers were: Dr. Tim and Rachel Tucker, **Leila** #7842, Morganton, NC; Tom and Shannon Rollins, with daughters Sydney and Hannah, **Boomerang** #13361, Denton, TX; Jonathan and Allison Few, **Firefly** #unknown; Ooltewah, TN; and — although Scott Irwin has been on the cruise before — it was the first time his wife, Marilyn, and new boat made the trip, **Galapagos** #15492, Hixson, TN.

Returning to the 2012 cruise were: Cruise director Carole Ann and Chief Yeoman and Humor Writer Floyd McKenzie, **Honey Do** #5573, Freeport, FL; Paul Gallant, **Hooligan** #14883, Milton, FL; Ned Westerlund, temporarily in **Vagabond**, ordinarily in **Puff** #14085, Shalimar, FL; Ted and Dora McGee, **Rhapsody in sea** #15370, Atlanta, GA; John and Anita Kjallberg, **Outrageous** #11568, Gainesville, FL; Louis Plaisance and Mike Bruce, **St. Benedict** #7976, Gonzales, LA; Pat Noonan, **Snoopy** #10004; Ken and Tammy Palmer, **LoKi** #15369, Franklin, TN; Pete and Barbara Snyder, **Windabout** #8329, Ringgold, GA; Jon and Len Schwake, **This Side Up** #15065, Ft. Worth, TX (and Oklahoma City, OK); Dieter and Evelyn Kuberg, **Wind Chaser** #15556, Hixson, TN.; Bob and Kathy Bissell, in a yet-to-be-named Catalina 22 #1446, Harrison, TN; Robert and Bonnie Donehoo, **Line Dancer** #13240, Atlanta, GA, and Montgomery, AL; Stan and Annie Connally, **Cay Cat** #14781, Jacksonville, FL; Greg Haymore and Nancy Benaquis, **Almost Done** #12498, Ft. Walton Beach, FL; Josh and Katie Landers, **Per Diem** #13162, Hixson, TN; and us, Kent and Jane Overbeck, **Leap Frog** #14647, Signal Mountain, TN.

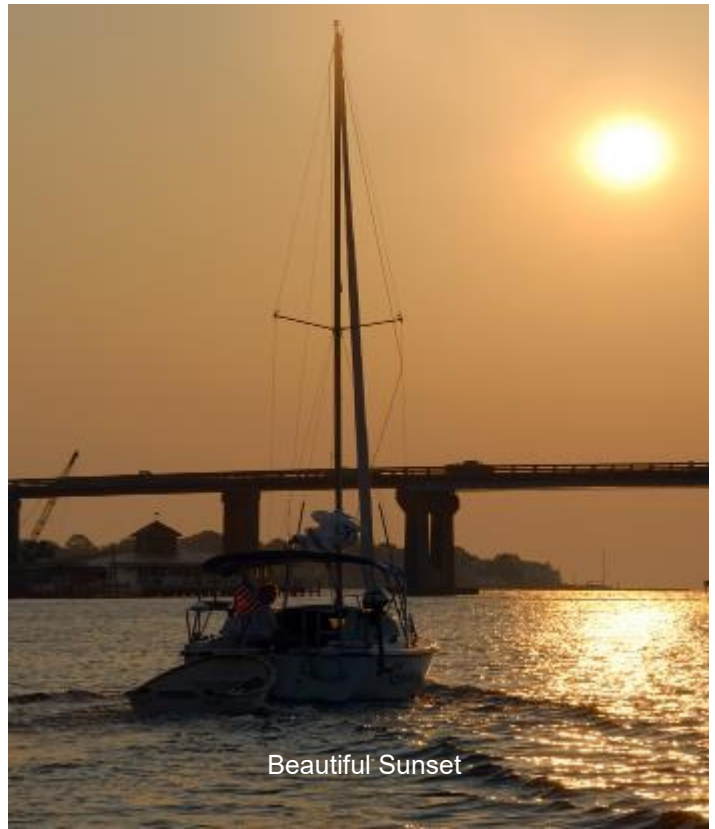


First-time NGCC cruisers, Jonathan and Allison Few, **Firefly**, left

Spectre Island Sunday morning on a reach.



Josh Landers works on his tan while Katie is at the tiller.



Beautiful Sunset



Hail, Hail, the gang's all here for the 2012 NGCC

Sydney's Big Adventure!

**By Sydney Rollins, AKA Cyclops
who wrote this story and included her sister
Hannah, AKA Dash.**

MainBrace, July 2012

Recently, my family and I took a cruise through the Intra- coastal Waterway. It was a yearly event called the North- ern Gulf Coast Cruise, from Fort Walton Beach, Florida to Orange Beach, Alabama and back. Before the trip, it was essential to make sure everything was in order. After set- tling things with me and my sister's schools, we made sure we were prepared for anything. We packed clothes for any kind of weather and brought plenty of books and games to keep us busy. Then we stocked up on food and supplies for the boat.

The cruise started at the Fort Walton Yacht Club, then, day by day, the little flock of sailboats worked its way down to Alabama. Our stops included Spectre Island, Pensacola beach, Big Lagoon and Pirate's Cove. My favorite stop was Spectre Island with its clear, calm water and white sandy beaches. During the trip my sister and I learned a lot about sailing. For example, the lines that pull up the sails are called halyards and the lines that control the sails are called sheets. We also learned about buoys and day markers. They mark the Intracoastal Waterway, and direct you away from dangerous shoal water. It is easy to follow. If there is a red triangle and a green square, you sail in between them.

At the end of the trip we ended up back in Fort Walton Beach. It was sad to say goodbye to everyone because all of the people were so nice. It was a fun trip and an adventure for all of us. My favorite part though, was sleeping in!



Sydney Rollins with sister Hannah on her right.

2013 Northern Gulf Coast Cruise

By Barbara Snyder

MainBrace, July 2013

On May 10th, 2013, Ben and Liz (No Name), Jonathan and Alison (Firefly), Josh and Katie (Per Diem), Guy and Tina (Forget Knot), Scott and Marilyn (Galapagos), Eddie (YeeHaa), and Pete and Barbara (Windabout), yes, SEVEN C22's of Fleet 95 from Chattanooga, TN, left town to meet 17 other C22s for the 16th annual 2013 Northern Gulf Coast Cruise.

I have to stop and give huge thanks to Kent and Jane (Leap Frog), for encouraging folks to go on these cruises. They have personally taken many of us under their wing and shared tons of knowledge. Take a bow Kent and Jane!

Once arriving at Ft. Walton Yacht Club, the assembling of boats back together again, began. And there was a nice spread of food waiting for us at the far gazebo when our work was done. Thank you Fleet 77! It was wonderful to reconnect with folks we hadn't seen for a year and to meet new ones. Greg and Nancy **Almost Done**, had very cool T-shirts and bags waiting for us. David **Extreme** brought his beautiful bride, Becky, and Len and John **This Side Up**, had their lovely daughter, Diana along. Scott and Christie **Chek Yo Self**, brought a cool looking kite board. Later in the evening, with Bob **Pogopelli** and Eddie **HeeHaa!**, music wafted across the waters, rest was needed and came easy.

Early Saturday morning, we were all wanting to throw our ropes onto the dock, but with a rainy forecast, most waited an hour and a half for the storm to pass. Only the fearless left early, but we all arrived safely at Spectre Island. This was my first time to really explore it, so with new camera in hand, I was amazed by the beauty and took many a picture. Later, hot dogs and marshmallows made for a perfect island supper.

DID NOT SEE IT FLOAT

Sunday morning we sailed for Pensacola. Right off the bat, I wanted a granola. Pete couldn't find his life jacket, He thought I put it somewhere, But, no, I wouldn't dare. So, I went below, And wrote,

"Did Not See It Float!"

We have run into our first big mystery;
Cap'n has lost his life jacket.
This is all so normal for our history;
Looked in every packet,
Looked in every cranny and nook,
Knew it wasn't a crook.
It's someplace on this boat!
Looked high and low;
Several times.
Did not see it float.

And, an hour later or so,
It was sailing gloves the cap'n needed.
He said, "In my black sailing bag."
Since I was the getter to go,
I simply proceeded.
And as I peered inside,
My eyes got so wide,
Did not see it float.

Right inside and on top,
Cap'n's life jacket was found,
Without any more looking around.
Will this hide and seek ever stop?
At home, or on a boat,
I did not see it float.

We arrived at Palafox Pier after about an eight hour motor-sail. The cap'n was happy with life jacket and sailing gloves. I was ready to get off **Windabout**. Later, we met up with Marilyn and Scott **Galapagos**, and took off walking. We were on a mission to find the Art Fair in the old part of Pensacola. It was worth the walk! Later, we found The Fish House and had a wonderful dinner on the deck facing Pensacola Bay. Monday morning, breakfast in mind, and Pete went off with Paul **Hooligan** and Gordon and Larry **Flash**. Ken and Tammy **Lo Ki**, Peggy and Dan **Address Unknown**, Eddie, Vernon and Howard **Mari-Lee**, and I set out. Some for walking and some for breakfast. After walking miles, some returned for breakfast just a couple blocks from where our boats were docked. I met up with Marilyn and Becky and we walked some more, looking for interesting shops. We did find a cool Mug Shop full of antiques. It was a museum in itself.

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Many sailors seemed to be in a rush - something about the tide. So, our shopping got curtailed. But, David and Becky Williams, Eddie, Pete and I wanted to explore more of Pensacola. We let the tide go, and took off walking. We went into an art gallery and saw the town in all kinds of paintings. Then I took them to The Mug Shop and it was even better the second time around. The owner, I'm going to call him "No-Sale," took Pete and Eddie for a spin down memory lane with his antiques. I tried buying two but not for sale. It was a hoot. I took pictures instead.

Mr. No-Sale told us where to buy lunch - Joe Patti's. Didn't sound far. We walked and walked and walked, only to find the restaurant closed on Mondays. The fish market was open and amazing! We walked across the street and ate at Sam's Seafood. It was time to untie the ropes, hop on board and sail to Big Lagoon. Once there, we enjoyed visiting on **Extreme**. Guy and Tina **Forget Knot**, came by to howdy and take pictures. Later, supper and then a great bonfire. There was a cardboard airplane flying contest, a dance, and Bob, Eddie, Ben, Greg and Diana gifted us with their music.

Tuesday morning Paul took David and Becky, Gordon & Larry, Pat Noonan **Snoopy**, and Pete and Barbara out in the Gulf of Mexico. It was our first time and it was so peaceful. That is, until a small boat came flying right toward us. I thought it odd and quickly took a picture only to find out it was the police. They seemed to want to chat, asking if we were with the C22s NGCC. They waved and sped out of sight. Paul did a great job finding the passageway out of the Gulf and led us right to the front door of Pirates Cove. In the end, six boats decided to spend the night there. Paul shuttled us back and forth to Bear Point for dinner and pictures.



This year's entertainment involved checking in with Floyd and Carole Ann **Honey Do**, from time to time to see if the new puppies were born. Guess the mommy was going to wait till she got off the boat and safe at home. Ted and Dora **Rhapsody in Sea**, were great to take many pictures and videos of different ones sailing. Robert and Bonnie **Line Dancer**, were told to "Get a room!" John and Anita **Outrageous**, were good to help us beach anchor one evening.

Wednesday morning David and Becky waved goodbye as they were going to sail on the Gulf again. When parting, David asked what we were going to do. I mentioned meeting Marilyn at Little Sabine for shopping. Next thing we saw David putting **Extreme** into reverse and coming back to us, asking if Becky could ride along. She heard the "shopping" word! We were happy to have her. For six hours we chatted, ate, napped, read and chatted more. And, we went shopping! Later, an Italian meal was put on by Pensacola Beach Yacht Club. After that, six of us had some boardwalk time.

Thursday morning, some had breakfast at the famous greasy spoon and then we all sailed away for Spectre Island. Knowing this was our last stop of the 2013 NGCC, our boat was quieter than other sailing days. We had finally begun to put things in the same places, thus being able to find them more easily, and our sailing was more relaxed - we had gotten in the groove. But, we seemed to be thinking, "It's over." Once back at Spectre Island, the air really went out of our sails when we learned that two dead bodies had been washed up near Big Lagoon where Jonathan and Allison **Firefly**, spent the night and got questioned by police. It's once again Spooky Island, and I began shaking inside thinking of the sadness -

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family and friends waiting for answers. There was a prayer - it was time to go home.

Early Friday morning we motored out of Spectre Island. Right before my eyes, four pelicans flew in formation, low to the water, and seemed to be beckoning to us, "Come back." I quickly took their picture and the memory of the beauty will remain with me. "From the highest of heights, to the depths of the sea, creation's revealing Your majesty."

And so, farewells to all my NGCC friends, and I say to you all, "Come back next year!"

Thank you Floyd, Carole Ann and Paul for all you did to make the 16th annual NGCC a beautiful event.

2014 Northern Gulf Coast Cruise

By Barbara Snyder

MainBrace, September 2014

On May 9, 2014, five Catalina 22's *DixSea Breeze*, *Forget Knot*, *Leap Frog*, *Yee Haw*, and *Windabout* left the quiet waters of Chattanooga, TN - Privateer Yacht Club to the rougher waters of Fort Walton Yacht Club, for the 17th annual Catalina 22 Northern Gulf Coast Cruise.

I had thoughts going through my mind that this cruise would be rough because Galapagos had already been knocked out of the cruise due to a recent wind storm knocking a tree down on their home cabin. Big bummer already!

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Once at FWYC, the mast raisings of C22's began. The reward was a tasty barbecue at the gazebo put on by the FWYC C22 fleet. My, somebody knows how to make potato salad and baked beans! Beautiful t-shirts and bags were passed out by Greg and Nancy, *Almost Done*, designed by Becky, *Extreme Alien*. *Windabout* Pete surprised *Hooligan* Paul with a portrait of him. *Hooligan* was all smiles as he showed it off table by table to everybody in the gazebo. A print was also offered as one of the cruise prizes at the end of the cruise. With eighteen C22's signed up for the cruise, four as new, it was good to meet the brave new sailors and their mates and visit the old familiar faces that have become our cruising family.

Spectre Island was the first destination on Saturday, May 10. The deep waters turning shallow in a few places only snagged one C22. Another C22 went too far off the course like we did one year, but eventually, all arrived safe after four hours of sailing and motoring. All was well with the world of 18 C22's as we were thinking the roughest sailing was behind us and we were rocked to sleep that night. I guess it was good we didn't know what wind and waves were waiting ahead.

Day two, May 11th, we arrived at Pensacola Beach Yacht Club. Cap'n Pete hiked with me a mile one way to Geronimo's for shopping before heading back. That evening a group of us went to Flounders for a grease-filled meal.

Day 3, May 12th, we went on to Paradise, Big Lagoon. It was beautiful as always. I hung around *Windabout* with Clark, *Lady in Red*. We enjoyed getting cooled off in the water as Cap'n Pete went back out in David's *Extreme Alien* to catch some exciting wind. The wind didn't want to show off so David didn't get to sail in the extreme way he does. But, they still had a good time being together.

All the lady sailors got invited to join Anita on *Outrageous* for a hen party. The moon showed up early that evening. If laughter is good for the soul, oh my, the cackling took the bimini off!

Just when you think you have mastered the challenge of the NGCC, things happen: boats get stuck in the mud, they get damaged tied to a dock by passing boat wakes, folks fall out of their boats, the ladies end up sitting on the floor in the cabin and hanging on to feel safe, phones take a dive in the shallows, high winds give a knock down, you sail for an hour and the lighthouse is always in the same

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Photo Credit: Ted McGee

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place, and bushwhackers won't stay down. But, even so, the NGCC is so loved, even health problems don't hold some folks back. One C22 had three adults as a friend was invited to help because of health issues.

In the early morning of day four, May 13th, I got up early to see the sunrise and take pictures. We were beach anchored, but our boat was too far from shore for me to get off, and not wanting to wake Cap'n Pete or swim for shore, I did the next best thing - took pictures from the fore deck and cabin top of *Windabout*. This is where I witnessed and took pictures of another photographer walking right into the gorgeous sunrise. I'm sure he got some beautiful shots, for he had a front row seat by sea-shore's edge, but I'll bet he will like my sunrise pictures better.

Day four, May 13th, split the cruise in half. Some went to Pirate's Cove and beyond, and some went to Palifox Pier. Day five, May 14th, was a lay over day for us. Here's a list of all the things we did at Palifox: dinner at the Fish House one night and the

next at McGuire's Irish Pub (with a three mile round trip walk), visited the Pensacola Museum of Art, walked through historical district, perused several galleries and some of us bought artwork, and we window shopped a lot of cool shops, ate a great lunch at a Four Season's Restaurant and frequented a couple of coffee shops.

Day six, May 14th - if I could have skipped a morning it would have been this one. I was seriously wondering out loud if I could catch a bus or taxi from Palifox to PBYC. The wind had been blowing strongly from the south for several days. Yesterday, it swung around through the west to the north. Pensacola bay was like a washing machine with the agitator on full strength. Would Cap'n Pete need my help on the sail back to PBYC? If the sail was going to be so bad that he would need my help, I didn't want to go. And, if the sail wasn't going to be bad and he didn't need help, I still didn't want to go. Well, I went. And, I have to say, it was indeed the worst four hour sail I've ever endured. And, I hope my last bad sail. Upon first leaving Palifox, it wasn't too bad because we were in the lee of the land. But soon thereafter, *Windabout* got tossed up and down

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Photo Credit: Pete Snyder

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and rolled from side to side so much I thought I was going to toss the breakfast I didn't even eat. Cap'n Pete had me look for buoys, so I stood in the cabin, hanging on tight, with my eyes just above the cabin roof. My only thought was, "Would this sail ever end? It is going to be the death of me!" Just then I received a text from a girlfriend back in Chattanooga. It contained only four words: "ARE YOU HAVING FUN?" Good thing I was hanging on so I couldn't answer. If I could, it would have been, "Fun? I am about to die and if I make it, I'm never going on another NGCC again!" I was extra proud of Cap'n Pete for getting us to PBYC - all in one piece—except for my nerves.

Question: How much adventure does a person need to make the NGCC complete? Answer: For me it was complete. I had had enough adventure. The next two days didn't matter. I got my money's worth and my t-shirt. I wanted to go home!

Before pulling out of the FWYC parking lot, someone came over to me to say good-bye and ask if I would be back next year. I said bye, but didn't know if I would be back. The next thing said was, "If you don't, you will be tracked down, found, and you will be killed!" It was good to laugh. I needed that.

A strong breeze was behind us as we pulled away from Ft. Walton Yacht Club. I'm sure a strong urge will cause me to want to return once again to another NGCC.

You might seem surprised that I'm already considering going on another cruise. But, it's really no different from what we all do every day. We are all on a sail. None of us know what wind or waves we'll face. The best we can do is set our course and try to make it. Some of the sail will be peaceful and calm, and some will be stormy. Either way, we must sail on, hopefully choosing the best weather window, and hanging on by faith when it turns out different.

Thank you Floyd, Carol Ann and Paul for planning another great cruise and for keeping your eyes on us.



Photo Credit: Pete Snyder



2017 Northern Gulf Coast Cruise ... with IKE

By Joshua Landers

So this was our fifth Catalina 22 NGCC cruise. We were seduced into our first cruise in 2010 by none other than the cruise-master himself Kent Overbeck. We fell in love immediately with it and cruised the sunny waters again 2012, 2013, and 2015, taking years off for various and asunder reasons.

This fall Ike starts kindergarten and we learned that it is a state law that the children must attend school or else one begins receiving letters from the state about truancy. Also, since Ike had his first sail at 15 days old, spent countless hours on a sailboat or near the water, sailed the winter Frostbite race series and all of the Wednesday night races so far this year, we (Katie and I) felt it was time to take him on this epic journey. We had been talking about this trip and our California road trip later this summer so much that he had them completely mixed up and was telling his teachers we were going to Florida for one day then to California for one day or we were going to Florida, CA.

For those unaccustomed the NGCC, it is a Catalina 22 sponsored event that takes place every year near Mother's Day weekend. The fleet launches from Fort Walton Yacht Club in Fort Walton Beach, FL and sails to Orange Beach, Alabama-ish, then returns to FWYC. Every other night is either a beach anchorage or at a marina so that you can get a shower or ice which are two cruising luxuries.

FRIDAY—Our cruise began with an 8 hour truck ride from Chattanooga, TN to Fort Walton Beach. We caravanned with Guy and Tina Campbell (and a hitch-hiking Marc Simons). I am sure we were sight blasting down the highway with such an odd (normal to us) looking boat behind the truck. We safely arrived and set up the boats in ~25 mph breeze. Katie was concerned with setting up the mast in that kind of wind. I told her to be ready and when we felt a lull, we would go for it. As soon as she got in the lee of the boat to the winch handle, she felt a "lull" and we went for it. I thought it was funny.

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The wind laid down later that evening and we splashed the boat after eating at a complimentary cruise welcome tailgate. Ike had by now discovered hermit crabs and began his week-long decimation of that poor species. We had brought a critter catcher to hold whatever animal he may catch and he filled it to the brim the very first day. We then taught him about catch and release. He taught us about keeping just one.

The cold front that had brought all of that wind forced us to use the tent for the pop-top that we had only put up once in all of the years that we owned *Per Diem*. We slept pretty good that night except for the clanging halyard mast on a boat adjacent to our slip, I was too tired to deal with it. We also learned that night that Ike grinds his teeth in his sleep and sounds like a pelican. We then learned how an electric fan can drown out all of that noise.

SATURDAY— The next day it was forecast to be light in the morning then build all day to about 20 from the SW, which coincidentally was the direction we were headed. We decided to get going early and try to leave early. As usual that never happened and we were some of the last to leave. Denny's, Publix, West Marine, Lowe's, ice, crab catch and release, etc. etc.



We had a pretty nice sail south down Choctawhatchee Bay, then rolled up the genoa and motor sailed with the main west towards Spectre Island. It was blowing pretty good by time we got to the island. There was a little carnage as one boat had their roller furler jammed and sailed around the lagoon a few times before anchoring away from everyone and sorting that mess out. We found a spot to beach anchor and in perfect fashion, I forgot to raise my rudder before hitting the beach. I quickly sorted that out then rammed the prop into the sand and stalled it. Nailed it. Luckily there were helpers and we got anchored.

It blew 20-30 all night long. I trusted my 12 pound Danforth or the beach behind me to keep us in one place all night. The bonfire was canceled and we set up the lifesaver of a pop top tent to give us some refuge for the night taught me how to play a card game called Slamwich which kept us entertained down inside the belly of our small boat. We may have been the only ones having fun at that point.

SUNDAY— The day was beautiful and we had a lot of water to cover to get to Little Sabine at Pensacola Beach. The super light west wind was right on our nose so we motor sailed to Navarre Bridge. By then the wind had shifted more NW and we rolled out the genoa and shut off the motor. We had a wonderful upwind sail across Santa Rosa Sound (my perennial favorite) and only tacked twice. That was approximately 20 miles btw. Ike spotted the first dolphin which we told him was lucky and he insisted that it meant he could do whatever he wanted. We are still not sure we ever got that straightened out. It was blowing 15 to 20 by time we reached the Pensacola Beach Bridge and we were very happy our sail was over. We ate some dinner then took an Uber to Gulf Breeze so we could buy a new one burner stove to replace the one I had broken that morning while fixing it. Coffee is a must on this trip and yes 40 dollars on Uber was worth it for a 12 dollar stove. For some reason, that was a highlight of the trip as we had some very interesting conversations with some eccentric Uber drivers.

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MONDAY— We walked to The Native Café for breakfast which is always a treat. The weather continued to improve that day as we slowly sailed west across Pensacola bay. The wind gradually built as it usually does in Florida as the day heats up. We blasted across Pensacola cut with Guy and Tina on *Forget Knot* and Chris and Amanda Edwards on *Islander* while dodging barges. The wind was great and we actually sailed right up to the anchorage in Big Lagoon in front of Fort McRee. Katie and I beach anchored perfectly and we were quite proud of ourselves. We were pumped to see the fellow Privateers Brian and Marc Simons on *Golden Fleece* in the anchorage. They were headed east down the ICW from Mobile Bay. Ike began his hermit crab plundering again and we had a Kentucky Derby style horse race in the sand. We then explored Fort McRee with flashlights and spooky ghost sounds. This is always by far the best day as we got to build a huge beach bonfire and enjoy the most beautiful location with our friends.

TUESDAY— We started the day slowly as we were only going to sail to Pensacola Yacht Club on the north end of Pensacola Bay while the rest of the fleet headed to Wolf Bay near Orange Beach, Alabama. We played on the beach all morning where Marc showed off some of his aerobic abilities and taught Ike some neat tricks while buried knee deep in the sand. Our little trio (*Per Diem*, *Forget Knot*, *Islander*) eventually sailed North in light easterly winds along the west coast of Pensacola Bay. We watched the Naval Air Station go by and received a private air show from the Blue Angels. We were quickly at Pensacola Yacht Club and Ike quickly noted the PYC logo everywhere. We were treated cordially with free dockage, clean restrooms, a white sandy beach (with some glass), a swimming pool (out of service) and free ice! We played all day on the beach then crashed early after gorging at The Oar House for dinner.



WEDNESDAY— I awoke early as usual to percolate the coffee before anyone else woke up. I noticed that Ike's sleeping bag and sheets were absolutely soaked as I remembered the gallon of water he drank before going to bed. Sensing the impending disaster of a day ahead of us, I searched out the club manager who then showed me the free washer and dryer. These guys are great! We sorted that mess out quickly. We helped Chris and Amanda haul out *Islander* as they had to head back to Chattanooga. We then headed back south east towards Pensacola Beach into a light SE breeze. Guy and I decided to try to find Peg Leg Pete's by boat. We eventually found the tiny inlet on the south side of the bay. We squeezed in through some skinny water and was treated with a beautiful little community and free dockage. The food was great then when crossed the



street an absolutely stunning beach. Needless to say we stayed there all day. We eventually left for Little Sabine and had a nice evening cruise across the rest of the bay. Feeling somewhat ready for food that did not come from the sea, we had Pizza and ice cream for dinner. We were finally on island time and went to bed with the sun.

THURSDAY— Katie went to take a shower while Ike was sleeping. After he woke up I had to go to the bathroom. I told him to stay on the boat and not to leave under any circumstances. Within minutes I was back at the boat, but there was no Ike. I ran over to Guy and Tina's boat since I figured he got bored and had moved on. No Ike. By now I was in a cold sweat fearing the worst. I looked in the water around the boat and boarded it a second time with no child to be seen. I hopped off the boat and began yelling his name in earnest. "Hey Daddy!" he laughed as he crawled out from underneath the v-berth bulkhead and our sleeping bags and popped his head out of the forward hatch. "I was hiding" he said. I calmly explained that it wasn't funny.

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We had a long sail ahead of us that day so we left early. We motored for 5 minutes to the Pensacola Beach Bridge. Once under it, we hoisted the main, rolled out the genoa, set the whisker pole and shut the motor off. We sailed downwind this way for over 3 hours until we reached Navarre Bridge. By now the wind had shifted slightly more south and we dropped the pole. We then power-reached for the next 3 hours back to Spectre Island. Guys said he saw 8 mph on his GPS. I saw 7 on mine. Once back to Spectre, I was going to show that anchorage how we could do it. This time I got the rudder up no problem, but again rammed the prop into the beach and stalled the motor. I chose to quickly throw the stern anchor at the beach and jump off the boat to set it. What I had not realized was that the boat had sprung back out into deep water and I was now in over my head. I yelled for Katie to come tie off the stern anchor. We salvaged the situation and I received perfect 10's from the spectators for my dive.



Only 7 out of the 20 some odd boats decided to stay the night since some forecasts predicted big weather that night and the next day. Not of that materialized and we had a relaxing beach bonfire with our small adventurous group.

FRIDAY— We were the last to leave the anchorage as we had decided to stick around Fort Walton for the next two days to play on the beaches. We motored to Fort Walton bridge then power reached north across Choctawhatchee Bay and then back to FWYC. We stowed the boat and prepared for the rain storm. We drove over to Destin and spent a bunch of money on absolutely nothing at the Boardwalk while we waited out the rainstorm. We caught a movie that was WAY too mature for Ike at the local AMC. By now, we were a little overloaded with civilization and wished we had just gone to Red Lobster with everyone else. That same halyard clanged all night even after my attempts to bungee it in the dark. The boat' battery died during the night which left our noise-canceling fans obsolete, and I won't even begin to describe the full porti-pottie incident. Maybe we were pushing this trip a little too far; after all we had 3 people on a 22-foot boat for nine days at this point.

SATURDAY— We decided to regroup and hit the beach. We hung out at Okaloosa Island public beach all day and recharged our human batteries. Ike learned what walking around in a swim suit full of sand all day can do to one's inner thighs. We learned what perfect parenting looked like. Ike and I took Katie out to eat for Mother's Day at Bortula's in Destin which was superb. We crashed early that night learning from our previous day's mistakes.

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SUNDAY— Day 10 and the last day. We hauled the boat and prepared for our journey home. Ike caught a chameleon lizard and for some reason we let him keep it. (Can you say free entertainment for 8 hours.) We got out of town no problem and almost made it to Montgomery when the trailer tire exploded. Luckily we were able to pull over quickly with no major damage. Of course it was the driver side tire on the interstate side of the trailer that blew. I went into full NASCAR mode and had the trailer ready to roll in 20 minutes.

Katie thought I was going to die working 3 feet from semis doing 75 mph and she was already spending the insurance money in her head. At one point I cracked myself in the jaw with the tire iron, bit my tongue and almost knocked myself out, but those are just details. Luckily, we were only 30 minutes from a Walmart with a tire service center and we got the tire fixed. We made it home the rest of the way with no incident, unloaded the boat, unpacked the car, and unpacked bags until 11 o'clock. Just in time to get plenty of rest for the next work day.

Epilogue: It was a wonderful trip. We survived 10 days with 3 people on a 22 foot boat and we all still love each other. The good times far outweighed the bad. It is just that the bad times make for a better story.





20th Annual Northern Gulf Coast Cruise

By Ted McGee

Prologue

The following conversation takes place on VHF radio, channel 71.

*Ted: "Tango, Tango, Tango . . . Rhapsody in seA."
No response.*

Ted: "Tango, Tango, Tango . . . Rhapsody in seA."

Beattie: "Hello Ted and Dora, where are you?"

Ted: "Hi, Beattie, we are just passing by your house now on our way to Specter Island."

Beattie: "I see you now. Have a safe trip. We will get together at the club when you get back."

Ted: "Thanks Beattie. Rhapsody in seA standing by on Channel 71."

Beattie: "Tango standing by on Channel 71."

The Story

There isn't anything Dora and I look forward to more than the Northern Gulf Coast Cruise (NGCC) which is held every year in May. This year marked the 20th sailing of this cruise.

The Northern Gulf Coast Cruise is sponsored by Catalina 22 Fleet 77. Ten Catalina 22s took part in the first Northern Gulf Coast Cruise. Three of the ten boats had planned to go as far as Specter Island or Navarre Bridge. The remaining seven boats sailed west to Wolf Bay, Alabama and back. By the end of the cruise we were hooked and knew we would be back. We have made all but one-and-a-half cruises. We were unable to make one cruise due a calendar conflict and we had to cut one cruise short.

Sadly, two of the regular participants have passed on. We lost Vernon Senterfitt a couple of years ago and Beattie Purcell this year. Vernon made many of the trips. He was an expert craftsman and several cruisers have beautiful wooden dinghies made by Vernon. Beattie also participated in many of the cruises. Those of us that sail a Catalina 22 know that Beattie was instrumental in the early success of the boat. Beattie was an active member of Fleet 77

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as well as known and loved by Catalina 22 sailors everywhere. When Beattie was not on the cruise we usually spoke with him on VHF radio at the beginning of the cruise. His home was on the water and we would pass by on our way to Specter Island.

In years past the cruise was limited to Catalina 22s only. The past couple of years Fleet 77 has invited others, who have made this cruise before but no longer own a Catalina 22 to participate. Of the 27 boats that participated on this year's cruise only four were non-Catalina 22s.

This year there were two groups. One group of five boats started their cruise a few days early, leaving Milton, FL on Sunday April 30th. They planned to sail from Milton to Fort Walton Yacht Club and join the remaining boats.

The Milton Group, led by Paul Gallant on *Hooligan*:

Hooligan – Paul Gallant

This Side Up – Jon, Len, and Dianna Schwake

Outrageous – John and Anita Kjallberg

H.M.S. Monkey Butt – Tom Scott

Champagne on Ice – Roger Bailey and Sue Furth

A storm moved in the first night of the Milton group's sail bringing with it 50 knots winds. Catalina 22s are tough little boats and most weathered the storm fine. *This Side Up* lost a rudder but they were able to retrieve it. *This Side Up* was also towing a dinghy which was damaged. The real damage came to *Champagne on Ice*. The boat was thrown up against some rocks and left a hole in the hull. *Champagne on Ice* was unable to continue with the cruise, but Roger and Sue joined us later at Big Lagoon on their deck boat.

The Fort Walton Group, led by Floyd and Carole Ann McKenzie on *Honey Do*:

Honey Do – Floyd and Carole Ann McKenzie

Habit – Graeme Wilson and Rob Boteler

La Serenidad – Jim and Kathy Mathews

DixieSea Breeze – Gary and Dee Harwell

Seagull III – Jack Remus and Rex the Invisible Wonder Dog

Rhapsody in seA – Ted and Dora McGee

Islander – Chris and Amanda Edwards

Margaret Rose – Yel Yelvington

Lo Ki – Ken and Tammy Palmer

Liberator – Ned Westerlund

Endless Joy – Earl Wilson and Deborah Stilson

Serene Dream – Don and Gloria Garrison

Cay Cat – Stan and Annie Connally

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Freebird – David Williams

Line Dancer – Robert and Bonnie Donehoo

Seanachai – Eric and Liz McCafferty

Flash – Gordon Kayser and Robert Richardson

Per Diem – Josh, Katie, and Ike Landers

Forget Knot – Guy and Tina Campbell

Almost Done – Greg Haymore and Nancy Benaquis

Stray Cat – David Dinnes

Leap Frog – Kent Overbeck

Both groups met at Fort Walton Yacht Club Friday, May 5, for a social get together and cruise briefing. The cruise got underway on Saturday May 6, with both groups headed for our first destination, Specter Island. Saturday the wind was 18 – 20 kts on our nose and most of us opted to motor or motor sail. Everyone arrived safely at Specter Island. Most of the boats beach anchored but some of us anchored out. We could use our dinghies to come ashore. We would normally have a beach fire at Specter Island but due to the winds we opted to chill out on our boats for the night.

The winds had subsided by Sunday to around 10 to 15 knots, but still on our nose. Boats either sailed, motor sailed, or motored east to the next destination. Due to the size of the group not everyone goes to the same place on this day. Some opted for another anchorage at Big Sabine or Quietwater, others went to the Pensacola Beach Yacht Club in Little Sabine and some went to Palafox Marina in Pensacola.

We opted for Palafox. This marina is in a historical section of Pensacola and we enjoy stopping over there. We met up with Hal and Sally Smith, longtime friends of ours and of the Catalina 22 National Sailing Association, for dinner.

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Big Lagoon was the destination for everyone on Monday, May 8. Big Lagoon is large enough for everyone to beach anchor. The day was highlighted with horse race games to recognize the Kentucky Derby, lady's hats, a nice beach fire, and stories of previous cruises. Anita Kjallberg organized the activities. It was also a moment to remember Beattie Purcell. Anita gave a traditional gaelic blessing and toast for a lost Catalina 22 sailor.

“May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back;
May the sun shine warm upon your face;
the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again,
may God hold you in the palm of His hand.”

Big Lagoon also offered an opportunity to provide special recognition for some of the cruisers. Dora McGee, the Secretary/Treasurer for the C22NSA, presented Robert and Bonnie Donehoo with the Sailing/Cruising Family of the Year award. In addition, Anita Kjallberg received two national awards, Best MainBrace Contribution and Best MainBrace photo. Jon Schwake was presented the Sandy Kennedy Spirit Award.

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Our destination Tuesday was Barber Marina. This would be the turnaround point and the last location we would be together as a group. Barber Marina is an upscale marina with wonderful amenities and a hospitable staff. They made sure we were located as close together as possible as well as close to the marina store. They prepared a place for us for a pot-luck dinner. Everyone participated and there was more food than could be eaten.

On Wednesday, we started the journey back to Fort Walton Yacht Club. Some of the cruisers would opt to stay in Big Lagoon, some at Palafox, some at Little Sabine, some at Big Sabine, and some at Pensacola Yacht Club. With a beautiful breeze blowing offshore we all enjoyed an easy sail to our destination. We sailed into the Big Lagoon area just in time to watch the Blue Angels practicing overhead.

Specter Island was the destination for the Fort Walton Group on Thursday. The Milton Group made their way back to Milton. Unfortunately, some inaccurate weather information was being circulated. One of the things I have learned from cruising is to check my own weather. Boats began reporting they were bypassing Specter Island and returning to Fort Walton Yacht Club in advance of severe weather forecast. *Per Diem* was close by so Josh and I both looked at weather forecasts and listened to NOAA on VHF. There was no mention of severe weather. We weren't sure where this information was coming from but we knew with 27 boats out not everyone would bypass Specter. We dropped anchor about 1400 at Specter. Dora communicated with Carole Ann, who went on to Fort Walton, to make sure we had an accurate accounting. In all, 7 boats stopped at Specter, 4 boats returned to Milton as planned, and the rest bypassed Specter. Our evening at Specter was, at least for me, the best night I had on the cruise. The sunset was spectacular, followed by an equally beautiful moonrise. The weather couldn't have been better.

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It was significant to me that 7 boats, all Catalina 22s, dropped anchor at Specter Island on their return trip, the same number of Catalina 22s that anchored there 20 years earlier for the first Northern Gulf Coast Cruise. Also, significant to me was two of the boats that anchored Thursday night were part of the original cruise that anchored at the same spot on a Thursday night 20 years earlier.

Many toasts were offered during the cruise as a “thank you” or a recognition. I add one more, “To the seven.”

Friday was the last sail. With good weather and good winds, we sailed back to FWYC. Many of the boats had already pulled out and were ready to head home. We pulled into our assigned slip. This cruise took a toll on some of the cruisers. *Champagne on Ice* was unable to continue due to damage from the Sunday night storm on their way to FWYC. *This Side Up* had to leave their dinghy because of damage sustained in that first storm. *Endless Joy* had issues furling their sail on the first night. *This Side Up* had to replace their outboard after the wind blew them back on the beach too hard. None of those affected were disheartened. With support from everyone and their own good nature and spirit, all continued.

Friday afternoon did deliver heavy rains for a while, but everyone was already safe ashore. The cruise was over. We were already talking about the twenty-first NGCC. We met one last time for a group dinner at Red Lobster. A final chance to see friends, to offer thanks to Floyd and Carole Ann, who worried over everyone and made sure everyone had safe dockage or anchorage every night, Paul Gallant who watched over the Milton Group as well as the Fort Walton group, Greg Haymore and Nancy Benaquis who supplied t-shirts and bags, and Anita Kjallberg, who arranged and led most of the group shore activities. It cannot go without thank you to all those who help set beach anchors, tie up boats, make repairs, and any number of things to help fellow sailors enjoy the cruise. Many of the people there we knew from the beginning, others joined later and continue to return. On this night, we also knew new friends would return.

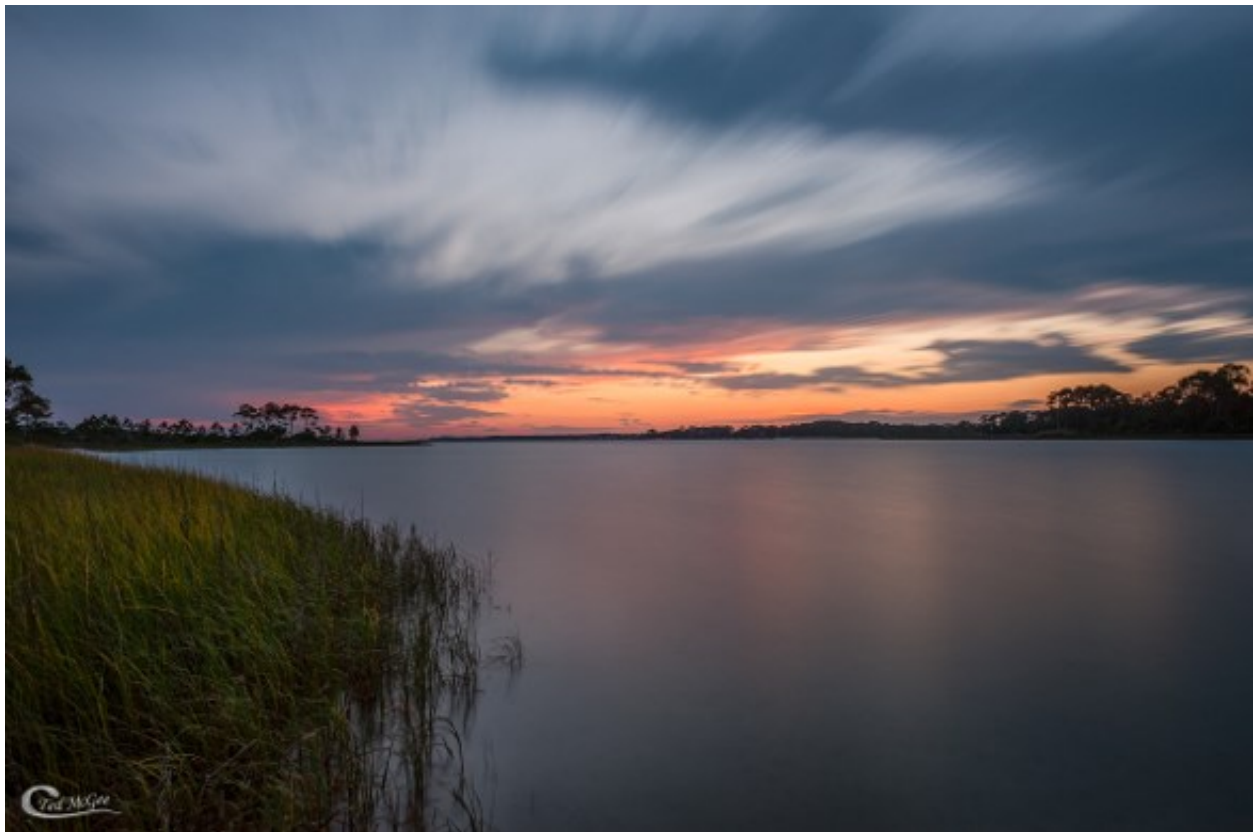
Epilogue

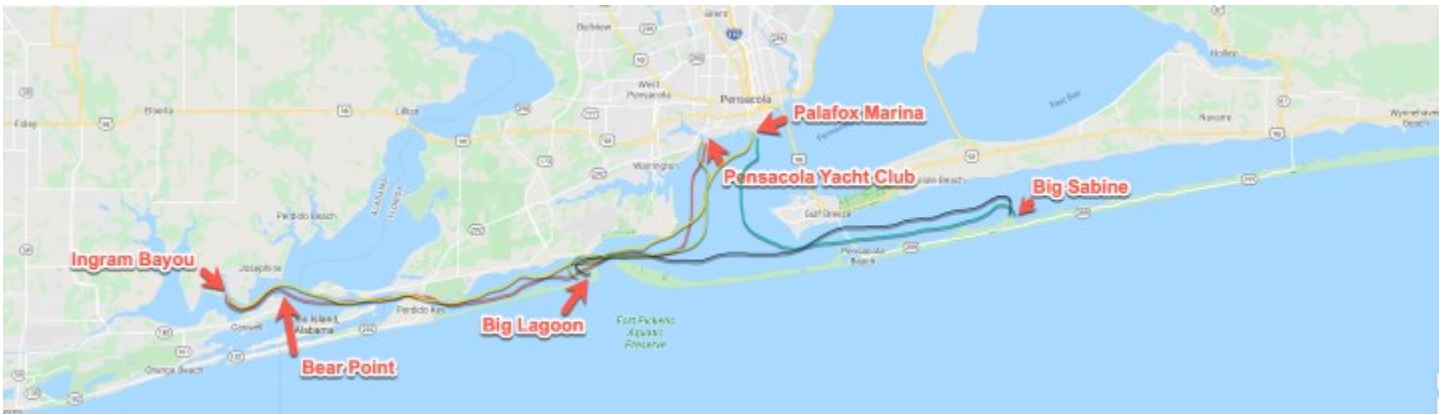
The following conversation takes place on VHF radio, channel 71.

Ted: “*Tango, Tango, Tango . . . Rhapsody in seA.*”
No response.

Ted: “*Tango, Tango, Tango . . . Rhapsody in seA.*”
No response.

Ted: “Negative contact with *Tango. Rhapsody in seA* standing by on Channel 71.”





The Northern Gulf Coast Cruise – 2020

By Ted McGee

An argument could be made that the 2020 Catalina 22 Northern Gulf Coast Cruise never happened. Some of us, however; may disagree.

Every year for nearly a quarter of a century the Catalina 22 Northern Gulf Coast Cruise has been a favorite cruising experience for Catalina 22 sailors. Over the years many of our sailing friends have moved on to other boats but there are still a few of us left that love the C22 and the camaraderie that comes with it.

Events conspired to derail the 2020 cruise. The Covid-19 pandemic put us all in quarantine. Our favored month of May came and went with no relief from the pandemic in sight. Normally I would not look for sailing opportunities in Florida in June. It just gets too hot and humid and you wind up trying to sleep in a pool of perspiration. With May out of the picture June became an option and it looked like things would start opening up. A start date of Friday, June 5 was agreed on. The pandemic was still a factor and we knew we still had to operate with caution. A new obstacle presented itself in the form of protests. We hoped the worst of that would clear up in time for the June 5th date and with fingers crossed we watched and waited as the date drew nearer.

Tropical Storm Cristobal made its presence known and as June 5th drew closer so did Cristobal. In fact, Cristobal looked to make landfall right when we wanted to sail. With pandemics, world events, and now tropical storms, it looked as if this trip was not going to happen. Most folks have vacation limits and other time constraints and participants began to make other plans.

Some of the cruise participants had already launched in the protected waters of Blackwater Bay in Milton, Florida. Dora and I, along with Robert and Bonnie Donehoo, opted to wait until the storm passed before launching. As it turned out boats that were already in place when the storm made landfall did not make the cruise. The storm pushed a lot of water into Blackwater Bay, flooding docks and launch ramps. After the storm passed some boats day sailed around the local water, others opting instead to head home.

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I guess it can be said then that the four of us and our two boats, Rhapsody in seA and Wing'n It were the only Catalina 22s to make the 2020 Northern Gulf Coast Cruise. Pensacola Yacht Club generously opened their doors to us, allowing us to rig, launch, and leave our tow vehicles for the duration. We arrived at Pensacola Yacht Club on Tuesday, June 9th, spending the first night there. Tuesday night was typical of the Northern Gulf Coast in June. It was hot and humid. Fortunately, a cold front was on the way bringing cooler temperatures and reduced humidity. The remainder of the cruise was comfortable with excellent sailing weather each day.

Wednesday June 10, we sailed to Big Lagoon. This is one of my favorite locations. We like to beach anchor and stroll along the sand. It almost always favors us with a gorgeous sunset. With only a couple of other boats anchored we spent a lovely evening away from the cares of the world. Thursday June 11 was a sail from Big Lagoon to Bear Point Marina where we stopped for lunch and ice. From Bear Point Marina we sailed on to Ingram's Bayou for the night. During the day Ingram's Bayou is a popular destination for rented jet skis out of Big Bear Marina. It wasn't long until evening approached, and the jet skis went away. Time for another awesome night.

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Friday June 12, we sailed for Palafox Marina in Pensacola, with a stopover for lunch at Holiday Marina. We found out a protest was planned in Palafox for that evening. The protest was peaceful and respectful. We never felt threatened by it. Jacko's is a restaurant at Palafox. We ate dinner there and were treated to a firework show across the water.

Big Sabine was our destination Saturday June 13. Sailing under the bridge at Quietwater Beach was amazing. Traffic was bumper to bumper across the bridge and as far back into Pensacola as one could see. We anchored for the night in Big Sabine. The weekend is always busy here and this particular weekend was no exception. Towards evening most of the boats went home and we had the area to ourselves.

Sunday June 14 found us back in Big Lagoon. I have never seen as many boats crowded into Big Lagoon as we saw Sunday. There were well over 200 boats but surprisingly boats were practicing social distance and we found a nice spot with plenty of room for the four of us. Typical of other anchorages, when the evening came boats left. Soon it was us and 4 other boats for the night.

We returned to Pensacola Yacht Club one week later on Monday, June 15. Being retired has its benefits, one of which it allowed us the extra time to wait out the storm. The weather was cooperative all week. We had warm days, low humidity, and breeze all week long. Nights cooled off for a comfortable night's sleep. We were greeted with a northerly breeze in the mornings and a

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southerly breeze in the afternoons. In many respects one of the best cruises we have made. The weather was unexpected. We certainly missed seeing friends who often make this cruise with us.

In some ways it seemed appropriate for just the two of us. The first Catalina 22 Northern Gulf Coast Cruise occurred in June of 1998 and was called the June Moon Cruise. That cruise also consisted of two Catalina 22s who were exploring the possibility of a national cruise. The weather was comfortable and cool, as it was this year. The cruise officially opened in May of 1999 and eight Catalina 22s participated. Over the years the cruise grew, boasting as many as 25 boats with participants coming from as far away as Idaho, California, and Canada.

We very were careful about choosing outdoor eating at the restaurants we visited. The one exception being the Ruby Slipper Café in the Palafox area of Pensacola. They had very limited seating and they kept folks at a distance for dining. Each location was taking extra care in keeping things clean and sanitized. The other area we took great with was showers and taking care of personal hygiene. We brought our own shower for on the boat and enjoyed a nice hot shower every night. Public restrooms were shunned for our own porta-potty. We carried masks, WHO recommended hand sanitizer, and lots of soap.



Rich Fox, Editor



Northern Gulf Coast Cruise: A Collection of Stories

Fourth Edition (November 2024)

During my participation in the 2006 Northern Gulf Coast Cruise, somebody had suggested an idea for compiling all the articles about the cruise into a single publication. That was the inspiration for this publication.

My plan for this publication was to include one article from each year the Northern Gulf Coast Cruise was held. Unfortunately, not everybody's article was published, and this is only due to the enormous amount of time needed to prepare this publication (which was much more time than I had originally expected). I also wanted to maximize the diversity of authors.

Thank you to all the Catalina 22 sailors who contributed articles and photographs to *MainBrace*. Please continue to write your articles and send them to my attention for inclusion in future issues of *MainBrace*.

I want to also thank Bob & Trish Endicott for taking the time to write the opening article ("*How It All Began*"), and for providing the lyrics to the "*Ballad of the Northern Gulf Coast Cruise*" and the inspiration of the ballad.

I apologize that the photographs for the earlier years are quite poor. I was not able to improve their quality for this publication. If you have digital photographs from 1998 to 2007 that I can use to update and replace those in this publication, please send them my way via e-mail to c22mainbrace@yahoo.com. For a couple of the earlier years, I was not able to extract any of the photographs from the earlier MainBrace files.

-Rich