

21st Trip Report – Thursday, June 12, 2008

Departed: Pilot House, Key Largo	Miles Traveled: 70.5 nm
Arrived: Little Shark River, Florida	At Anchor: 5:30 pm

We left the Pilot House Marina early – 6:30am – both to take advantage of the tide and to get a jump on what looked to be a long day. I have talked about getting in and out of this marina. The canal is narrow enough that you need to announce your intentions on the VHF radio so that someone else won't try and travel the other direction until you pass through.



Early in the morning there was no traffic to worry about.

Starting off the day, we still had some concern about the weather. There already were waterspout warnings for the area off Miami and points north. The weather pattern over southern Florida was not as nice as it could have been – and the pattern had shown no signs of changing.

As the day developed, the lower keys also had marine warnings. The XM satellite weather was particularly ominous. It showed a huge storm cell over the Everglades – the edges of the storm covered the area where we were heading to spend the night. We weren't overly concerned because we had ten to 12 hours of sailing to get to that part of the trip and figured that the storm would dissipate or move on by then.

When we got out of the marina, we were pleasantly surprised to find wind – it wasn't forecast. That set up a very nice motor sail down Hawk Channel to the Channel 5 Bridge.



Channel 5 is one of only two places we can cross the Keys. The other place we can cross is the famous 7-mile bridge south of Marathon. Both bridges offer 65' of vertical clearance and we need about 61' of that. Looking up, it isn't apparent that we will be successful getting under the bridge.

The bridge is a significant milestone for the trip – both going and returning. The bridge marks the change from Florida Bay to the Atlantic Ocean. On the return trip, it marks a return to familiar waters since our sailing club often cruises to Marathon or Islamorada.



We faced another challenge on the return trip. We were going to be passing Spriger Bank at dead low tide. As you may recall from the outgoing trip, this is the area where we have watched our depth gauge read 0" under the keel for long periods. In none of our previous transits of this area had we ever had less than 9" of tide. According to the chart, there is 7' of water here at Mean Low Water, so we decided to test it. (No other choice – if we hit, it is mud and we would just have to wait for the rising tide to float us off.) Interestingly enough, the lowest reading we saw was 4" and we had far fewer alarms than we normally get. I attribute the change to something happening to the grass beds – storms or something caused a lot of grass to break free and float in big mats on the ocean.



I believe the net result was that we were getting better bottom readings – the depth gauges weren't reading the grass as being the bottom.

We now faced the storm we had hoped would dissipate. It was sitting on top of Cape Sable. Most of it was over the land, but as we got close the winds that precede a thunderstorm hit us. We went from 9-knot winds to gusts as

high as 36 knots. The seas went from flat to 1 to 2 feet. The seas would have been higher but we were close to shore and they didn't have much time to build.



We started looking for an anchorage to ride out the storm, but over a period of an hour, the winds steadily decreased and the thunderstorm in front of us finally dissipated. We arrived at our anchorage at Little Shark River in the Everglades National Park at 5:30pm and anchored among three other boats.

So far, the only bad weather we had on this trip (and it wasn't that bad) was close to home.

Friday, June 13, 2008

Departed: Little Shark River, Florida	Miles Traveled: 56.5 nm
Arrived: Marco Island, Florida	At Dock: 3:07 pm

Friday the 13th. Little Shark River is in the Everglades National Park. This means that everything is left natural. There is no spraying for mosquitoes. When we made the trip down, the mosquitoes hadn't yet come out. However, the return trip was a different story. We went to bed early, put the bug screens on and buttoned up for the night. When we awoke, we found the hatch screens and the cockpit were black with mosquitoes. There was only one thing to do. Get up, raise the anchor, get out of there and kill as many of the little buggers as we could. We were killing mosquitoes all the way to Marco Island.

We started off the day with a great sailing wind. We raised both sails and had 12-15 knots on a close reach. We did 7+ knots under sail power alone for about 4 hours, then the winds shifted and we had to also use the motor. Just before we got to Marco Island, the winds died almost completely. It was the calm ahead of the storm. All week, afternoon thunderstorms have been building over the center of Florida and working their way to the coast. It was clear when we left the Everglades, but our trusty XM Satellite weather

display on our GPS shows the activity just as we entered the channel for Marco Island.



The display below Gordon Pass shows the direction of a major storm cell – right across Marco Island. We took this picture just before anchoring.



As I am writing this report, it is pouring. Fortunately, I was able to drop the anchor in a light rain before the skies opened up.

Our plan for the rest of the day is to go ashore to the marina, if the rain quits, to do some shopping. We have some friends coming down tonight to join us for dinner at another of our favorite restaurants – the Snook Inn at Marco Island.



Weather permitting, we will dingy across the bay to the restaurant.

Tomorrow should be the final leg home.

Jerry and Sandy
S/V Rum Daze

22nd and Final Trip Report – Saturday, June 14, 2008

Departed: Marco Island, Florida	Miles Traveled: 42.2 nm
Arrived: Cape Coral, Florida	At Dock: 1:30 pm

We got up and left just like the old horse smelling the barn. We were anxious to finish the trip and start the clean-up process. We started the day with a great sunrise.



We had a little wind so we were able to motor-sail until about 11:30am. Then, true to the weather pattern that has been in place over Florida for at least a week, the wind died and the clouds started to build for another round of thunderstorms. Just before the wind died and we were approaching the San Carlos headpin, we ran through a gathering of CMCS sailboats who looked like they were preparing for a race. Some familiar faces.

The last significant point on our trip was the return trip under the Sanibel bridge. Those of you who read last year's report will remember that the bridge was not yet finished and open when we returned last year. This year the old drawbridge has been completely removed.



We are arriving home on a weekend – a very busy day on the waterways of Florida. It was a big change from the Bahamas.

Trip Summary

Miles Traveled: 1,265 nm	Hours Gone: 1,085
Diesel Purchased: 165 gallons	Water Purchased: 240 gallons

We hope you enjoyed our trip with us. We also hope that you find your retirement as enjoyable as we do. We like this anonymous quote and offer it to you for your consideration.

“Life should NOT be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in an attractive and well preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways - Chardonnay in one hand - chocolate in the other - body thoroughly used up, totally worn out and screaming, woo hoo, what a Ride!”

Jerry and Sandy
S/V Rum Daze