

June 24, 2007

## GETTING LAUNCHED !

Last November I had the chance for an “early retirement” offer from IBM. It didn’t take too much thinking. I was getting paid to leave a job I no longer really enjoyed! I was eligible for retirement, so I got both a lump sum payment and the start of a monthly retirement income. Gee, 55 years old and retired. That’s what I had been shooting for back in my twenties, but I hadn’t believed I would really make it!

For years my wife Mary and I had talked about retiring and living on a sail boat. Cruising the islands. Maybe even around the world. It was always the dream just over the horizon. Hmm.... our youngest kid is graduating high school, and will live in a dorm room at college. Empty nest. Retired. So why not?

Mary and I have been recreational boaters for year. We’ve owned ski boats, and more recently a small cabin cruiser. We’ve been active with the Atlanta Sail & Power Squadron and their meetings and social activities. We knew we loved the water. But could we be full time sailors?



Some friends invited us out as guests on their sailboats. Mary loved it! “Quiet... peaceful... serene” is how she described sailing. Is this really my wife? Her usual comment on our Bayliner cabin cruiser was “can’t this thing go any faster?” But sailing was *different*. It’s like the philosophy of the ancient Greeks; “it’s not the destination, it’s the journey that matters!”.

Here’s Mary on our old boat. OK, it’s a stinkpot, but it got us started!

As a further test, we took some lessons through Windsong, and then arranged for a week long charter in Florida with a Windsong instructor aboard in January 2007. The boat was an Etap 37, about the same size as we might retire on. The charter was based at Burnt Store marina, in Punta Gorda Florida. Being “liveaboards” didn’t have too many surprises for us since we had experience staying aboard our cabin cruiser. The new part was the sailing lessons with “Captain C. J.” which were wonderful! Mary and I discussed it afterwards, and we agreed; it’s a green-light for a sailing / live-aboard retirement. Woo-Hoo !!!



Our Windsong instructor Captain C. J.! Thank you for a great week of hands on learning!



Here's Mary at the helm, during our week on the water in Punta Gorda.

We listed our house for sale in April, and got two offers for it in early June. A deal was struck, with closing set for June 29<sup>th</sup>. The furniture has mostly been moved out, with some sentimental items going into storage. I've sold one vehicle, and we'll keep the other for occasional shore-side trips.

Separately, we identified Island Packet as the type of sailboat we wanted to retire on. We've been working with Ed Whiteaker, of Whiteaker Yacht Sales, and finally made an offer last week on a very nice used IP-38. Ed is very gracious and kind to work with, and has been specializing in Island Packets for years. The boat he is selling to us, he previously sold new, and then sold used to it's present owners. He REALLY knows the Island Packet community! The offer was accepted, with Ed's help, and we'll be closing on our sailboat ( our new home! ) will be mid-July.



We're closing on the sale of our home in Cobb County is June 29<sup>th</sup>. On June 30<sup>th</sup>, we drive to Florida, and move into a short term rental. On July 15<sup>th</sup>, we close on our sailboat. At last, we're getting launched!

...Roy & Mary Stegall