

## SOUTH TO MARATHON !



We're finally in motion. Homeless and car-less and now slip-less. We have no marina home port. We left Burnt Store marina on Friday December 28<sup>th</sup>. First night anchored off the ICW by Cabbage Key. We had dinner there. Guess what? They don't offer the cheeseburger-in-paradise on the dinner menu. Still, it was delicious. I left a well-worn \$2 bill as a memento on the wall.

We motored down Pine Island Sound the next day, past Punta Rassa, and through Matanzas Pass to Ft. Myers Beach. They've put in a mooring field. It seems to be the coming thing in Florida that cities by the water install moorings as a means of shops. Guess what? As "cruisers" we've totally checked out of the middle class consumer mind set.



Neither Mary nor I had any inclination to buy tee-shirts, back-scratchers, souvenir mugs, salt shakers, plastic alligators, or any of the other junk in the beach stores. We don't need it, and THERE'S NO PLACE TO PUT IT !

Hey, for all of you Trekkies out there, I found it! Intergalactic Headquarters is in Fort Myers Beach. ( Smile! ).



The next day we motored south to Marco. I'm not opposed to sailing, but the wind was hard out of the south; the direction we needed to go. Tack to

windward? In an Island Packet that will barely go 55 degrees on the wind? Ha! It would take a month! We motored south at 6 knots and arrived in Factory Bay about 4:00 p.m.

Marco's Factory Bay is the site of the big anchoring controversy and lawsuit. By the time we arrived, a judge had ruled the local ordinance was in violation of Florida state law. The city vowed to appeal. See <http://www.cruisersnet.net> and click on "Marco Island Mess". We weren't bothered while we were there. A sheriff's boat did cruise by but didn't stop. I can appreciate the nice homes on the bay, but, gee, the local bars and night spots on the north shore make more "noise" than any of the sailboats in the harbor!

Next morning we got an early start, heading towards Everglades City. There was a forecast of a cold front coming through, and it seemed ideal to be in a protected harbor and tied up to a dock, rather than be anchored out. Out around Cape Romano (way out!) and then we finally raised the sails as we turned east. Ah... quiet, except for the water past the hull, making 5 knots in a light breeze. This is the life! We dropped the sails and motored past the Indian Key anchorage and through the winding 6' deep channel to the Barron River. In Everglade City we tied up at the Rod and Gun Club. See <http://www.evergladesrodandgun.com/>.

It was built in 1864, and has hosted famous movie stars and politicians, including presidents. Wow! The décor is incredible. All varnished wood inside. Beautiful! We signed up to stay two nights to allow the cold front to pass while we enjoyed the visit.



The cold front came through as expected, but it left us with a surprise. WE'RE AGROUND! AT THE DOCK!



Aaaarrggghh!





Here's Mary inside the boat while it's aground. See the jacket hanging next to her? It's the boat that's tilted, not Mary!

The guide books and charts show 6' at the club's docks, and in the Barron River channel. But, that's MLLW "mean lower low water". There are exceptions. Spring tides can exceed predictions, and, when there's a strong wind across a shallow

harbor, the wind can "blow the water out of the harbor". It happens regularly in Chesapeake Bay, Charlotte Harbor, and here in Florida Bay. Rather than try to pull it off, we just waited. After four days, enough water returned into the river, and we were able to leave Everglades City.



We left January 4<sup>th</sup> on the afternoon high tide, "mid-tide-rising". We anchored for the evening behind Indian Key. Here's a photo of the sunset... waiting for the green flash.



Monday night we anchored at Little Shark River. Tuesday we sailed and motored on south across Florida Bay to Marathon.



Hurray! We made it!



Now, time for some catch up on chores. Things like trash, shopping, and laundry. Boredom isn't a problem. There's ALWAYS something to do.



Here's the dinghy dock in Marathon. Busy! And here's Mary with taking the trash ashore in one hand, and again with the laundry bag over her shoulder.





After getting caught up, there's time to take the "Dollar Bus" into Key West. If you've not seen it before, it's a hoot. There are chickens and drunks on the streets at all hours.

We did a lot of window shopping on Duval street. But, no buying. Not even a tee shirt! The boat is full of tee shirts. We're just not consumers any more.



Is there a local harbor hangout at Boot Key Harbor? There are several! Here's the most notorious one, the "Overseas", across the street from the marina. It looks like the kind of place where you need a police escort!

Inside, there's a mixture of local working men and cruisers. They serve a decent blue plate special meal at the bar, and a free buffet on Sundays. It's a rough looking, but really a very mellow place.

We've had other dramas. One of them was a 3:00 a.m. dinghy ride to the hospital emergency room. I had a severe gastritis attack one night, and the ship's surgeon (Mary) advised we should go. So, across the harbor in the dinghy in the dark, and then a walk to the Hospital emergency room. Fortunately the hospital is close by. The books aren't closed on this yet, as I'm seeing a GI specialist and getting more tests. I know we're all mortal, and we'll all face health issues. Still, the thought went through my head... so soon? I'm 56. It bears saying again. If you want adventure, do it while you can.

#### CRUISING NOTES:

Gee, it's different when you're not at a dock. The issues are electricity and water. After hauling 5 gallon jugs of water to the boat, I understand about water makers! For electricity, I was running the engine two hours a day, but now we have a Honda generator. I have a new appreciation for wind generators and solar panels! My "wish list" now includes a water maker and a wind generator as future upgrades. These will make it more comfortable to anchor out for weeks or months at a time in the Bahamas. We won't have to run the engine daily or hand-carry those heavy water jugs!

#### CRUISING TIPS:

Yes, we're showering together. Often at the marina showers to save hauling water to the boat. Also, if you do laundry on the boat, you can save water by using lemon ammonia to wash the clothes in. Directions are on the bottle. Afterwards you can get double duty by using the laundry solution for cleaning.

Our next step is to leave Marathon, and to start our way up the keys, and on up the east coast of Florida in February.

Mary & Roy Stegall  
aboard S/V "Gideon"

#### ITINERARY:

July 13 – December 27	Burnt Store Marina as liveaboards
December 28	anchored by Cabbage Key
December 29	mooring ball at Fort Myers Beach
December 30	anchored in Factory Bay, Marco Island
December 31 – Jan 1	Everglades City Rod & Gun Club
January 2 – 3	Everglades City condo docks
January 4 <sup>th</sup>	anchored at Indian Key
January 5 <sup>th</sup>	anchored in Little Shark River
January 6 <sup>th</sup> – Feb. 6 <sup>th</sup>	mooring ball in Boot Key Harbor, Marathon