

WILMINGTON TO COINJOCK

In May we took a brief time-out and returned to Atlanta. It was time for our annual doctors visits, dental appointments, etc. However, the most important reason was to attend our son's graduation!

Luke received his degree from Southern Polytech with a 3.5 GPA in Software Engineering. FANTASTIC !!! Here's the graduate and his proud parents.



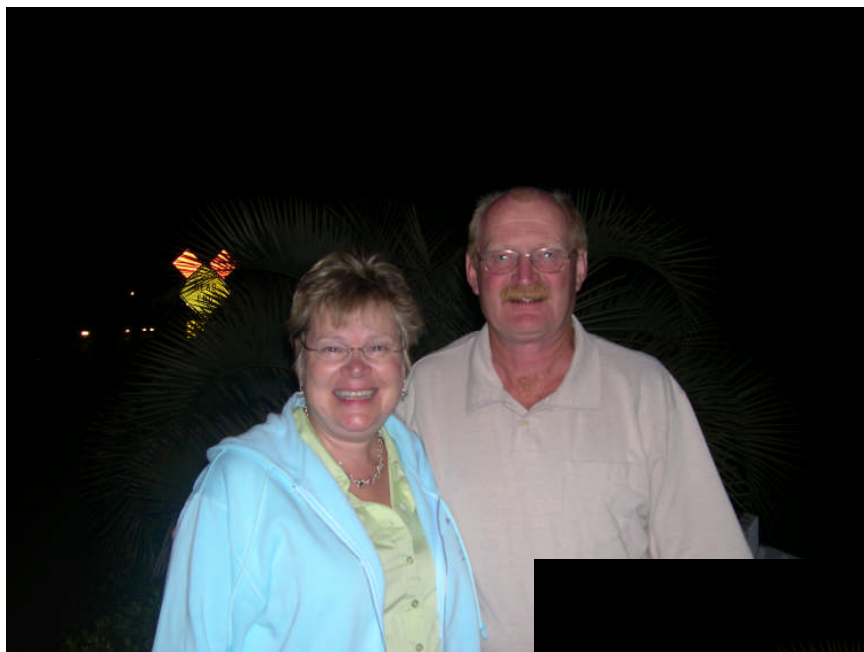
After getting all of the medical stuff out of the way, we started moving north from Wilmington in mid-May.

Why is this woman smiling? Mary is always eager to be on the move.



The first stop was Banks Creek anchorage at Wrightsville Beach. We launched the dinghy and went ashore. We found a small local grocery a few blocks away, and spent a pleasant hour walking on the beach looking at the Atlantic.

Here's a lovely old wooden schooner we saw in the anchorage. A classic!



Wrightsville Beach was where we said goodbye to family. Mary's brother Art and his wife Norma came by for dinner and to wish us Bon Voyage.

Mary and brother Art:

Mary with Norma:



North from Wrightsville Beach, we had nice weather as we passed Topsail beach and Onslow beach. The wind was from the north, but it was clocking and building during the day. By mid-morning it was 60 degrees off the bow and over 10 knots and we unfurled the genoa to motor sail. Hey, this is cool! I slowed the engine to 1800 rpm and we were going just as fast as before. The wind continued to clock and build, to a beam reach and over 15 knots. We passed 7 knots of speed. Do we really need the engine? I idled and shut it down. The wind cooperated and picked up even more. Wow! All we have up is the genoa, and we're hitting over 8 knots! Sailing on the ICW in a narrow channel! We don't get to sail often, but it can be spectacular fun when we do!

Beaufort is too far to make in one day, but the cruising guides list an intriguing place called Mile Hammock as a popular anchorage. We pulled in mid-afternoon just as the storm clouds were gathering.

Mile Hammock is a small harbor within the Camp Lejeune Marine Corps base. The marines were on maneuvers the day we were there, and we saw several high performance inflatables come in with their crews. Go Marines!



I anchored when we arrived at 3 p.m. with the primary anchor, a 50 lb bruce on a chain rode. Shortly afterwards the wind picked up and a light rain started. Several boats dragged their anchors. One was spectacular, a trawler that drifted almost freely through the anchorage! Other boats nearby blew air horns to alert the crew who was below.

My anchor was holding, but not perfectly. By 5 p.m. it was clear the anchor was slowly working through the poor holding bottom. The boat had moved about 50 feet or so over two hours. Hmmm... That's not a catastrophic problem, but, I couldn't let it go overnight. By morning, we could be on the shoreline! So, start the engine, and maneuver back up-wind and over to one side. I dropped the second anchor and then allowed the boat to fall back between the two. With both anchors set we didn't move again. It was just in time, as the rain bloomed into a heavy, blowing downpour. I'm glad I got the second anchor down in while it was still daylight!

Next morning as we got ready to leave, the reason for the poor holding became evident in another way. As I pulled up the anchor chain, it came up looking like a long, continuous black snake. It was caked with soft gooey black mud!

AAAAaaarrrrrrrgggghhhh !!!



My deck wash system is a bucket with a line; I got busy. One bucketful of water would wash one foot of chain. I had 175' of rode out. Throw out the bucket, haul it up with water, wash the chain, pull in another one foot, and repeat. My back hurt and the arms hurt from the repeated lifting. I remember someone asking "What do you do for exercise?" Ha! Washing the chain off was an hour's heavy work.

The next day, we motored northward through Bogue Sound on the ICW in clear, sunny weather. It seemed like a good time to catch up on chores. Mary grabbed her tray of cleaning / buffing / polishing stuff, and went around the boat polishing off any spots of rust or corrosion. It's a weekly chore in a saltwater environment, to stay ahead of corrosion.



OUCH! MY TOE! Mary hobbled back to the cockpit. Her little toe was saluting. It was sticking up and out at a very odd angle! She had stubbed it on a porthole drain spout hard enough to break it. (Her toe, not the spout.)

I know, schaddenfreud, it seems funny to break a little toe, but it wasn't funny at the time because of the pain.



That afternoon brought us to Morehead City, and the anchorage behind Sugar Loaf Island. We launched the dinghy and went ashore, and to a local minor emergency clinic; what Mary calls a Doc-In-The-Box. After x-rays and getting the toe set, we had a taxi ride back to the harbor and dinner out before returning to the boat.

There are LOTS of local boats permanently anchored in places like Morehead City and Beaufort. Some are quite unique.

Is this what they call a houseboat ???



We'd heard from friends about Cape Lookout. There it is, just 10 miles out from Beaufort Inlet. We motored out the inlet, hoping to set sail on the open ocean, at least for a little bit. But, it was not to be; the same way we wanted to go was where the wind was coming from. It clocked around a bit better as we were part way there, and we raised the sails.



See? We still remember how to sail!

The anchorage itself is great; it's totally enclosed behind a circular sandbar. The lighthouse is on the eastern end, and a nice wide entrance channel is on the western end. We launched the dinghy and went ashore to see the lighthouse museum and state park exhibits.



Guess what? The sand bar is named Power Squadron Spit! There's a plaque in the light house museum of a presidential proclamation naming it in recognition of the Power Squadron's public service.





Time for work. What's this?
Someone in the water? Yes, it's Roy
with his wetsuit on, scrubbing the hull.

Our next stop is Beaufort. We came c-a-r-e-f-u-l-l-y through the inlet and the winding entrance into Taylor Creek anchorage. The stretch of the creek near downtown was crowded with anchored boats. After motoring up the creek about a mile, we found space and anchored. I figured to only use one anchor here.



Why is the boat tilted? Well.... yes.... it's aground again!

I had thought the tidal flow would keep the boat in the channel. But, with a lateral wind, it doesn't work that way. One anchor won't keep you from swinging onto the shoreline of the creek. We came back from a dinghy trip ashore and found the boat aground and the tide falling. I had to wait for high tide at twilight to wiggle it off and anchor again with TWO anchors. Another lesson learned !

Beaufort was nice. We found everything except a grocery store within easy walking distance. The grocery was about 3 miles away, an hours walk, and we decided we didn't need groceries that bad. Still, we stayed four nights and explored the city, the maritime museum, and did our part to support the local economy.

Back in motion again as we headed north on the ICW through Newport River, Core Creek, and Adams Creek into the Neuse River. On the Neuse, we had a favorable wind and a wide open space. Let's raise the sails! Our course was a long run, and we had a strong steady wind from dead astern. Wing and wing!



As we turned back north in Pamlico Sound we tacked the genoa and really began to get some great boat speed.

Here's "Gideon" romping through the waves at over 8 knots:

HEY, THIS SAILING STUFF IS FUN !!



We anchored in Long Creek, and proceeded up the Pungo River the next day. It turned cold, windy, and miserable; we cut the day short and anchored in the Pungo, snuggled up close to the windward shoreline in the lee of the pine trees. The next day we came in early to Dowry Creek marina, and used their courtesy car for a reprovisioning trip into Belhaven. After loading up, we left the next morning and passed through the canal to the Alligator River, and crossed the Albemarle Sound.

The Albemarle has a nasty reputation. When the weather is contrary, it can build steep short period waves. Many cruisers wait for weather before crossing. We were lucky, and were on the last day of a period of calm conditions. The wind and the waves were building as we started across, and it was just right to unroll the genoa and motor-sail. The wind continued to build, and I cut the engine and just let the genoa carry us at over 7 knots.

We had another beautiful wilderness anchorage in Broad Creek, in the North River. Highly recommended!

Mary checked, and sure enough there was cell phone coverage.

Here's Mary in a classic pose with the phone in here ear. (Smile!),





Next day we easily reached Coinjock Marina as the first sailboat arrival. We tied up for the night and ordered one of their famous 32 oz prime rib dinners. We shared it and still had left overs!

The end of May. We'll be in Virginia for June 1st !

April 11 – May 18 Cape Fear Marina, Wilmington

May 19 Banks Creek anchorage, Wrightsville Beach

- nice spot, with dinghy access to shore and a grocery near by.

May 20 Mile Hammock anchorage, Camp Lejuene

- poor holding. I had to put out a second anchor.

May 21 Morehead City anchorage

- crowded with local boats permanently anchored; not recommended.

May 22 Cape Lookout Bight anchorage

- a great anchorage! It's a fabulous location at the state park.
just ease up close to the upwind shoreline to minimize wave slap.

May 23-26 Taylor Creek anchorage, Beaufort NC

- lower stretch is crowded with local boats permanently anchored.
- we finally found a spot after going a mile or so north up the creek.

May 27 Long Creek anchorage

- a beautiful wilderness location.

May 28 anchored by the shoreline, east of Belhaven NC

- it was raining, cold, and miserable. Anchored in an open part of
the Pungo river by pulling up close to the windward shoreline.

May 29 Dowry Creek marina

May 30 Broad Creek anchorage

- another beautiful wilderness spot.

May 31 Coinjock marina

- the 32 oz prime rib will feed two people and still have leftovers!

June 1 Great Bridge – free dock by the drawbridge

- restaurants and a grocery store are a few blocks south.