

## Heading South

In September, “Hannah” came roaring through. Officially, it was classified as a tropical storm. The winds were 70 mph, just short of the 74 mph of a hurricane.

We hadn’t left Urbanna yet when we heard the forecast, so we decided to extend our stay at the marina rather than let the storm catch us anchored out. Mary and I stayed on the boat, after carefully securing everything. We had seen hurricane preparations last summer when we had the boat in Florida. We laid in supplies a couple of days in advance. The day before, we removed the bimini and dodger canvas; removed the dinghy and stored it ashore; and lashed the sail covers over the sails. We doubled the dock lines and had our foul weather gear handy.



It turned to be a non-event. The wind roared, the boat wiggled and tipped slightly in the gusts, but nothing serious. We watched the barometer and kept a log. It dropped from 30.17 on Friday morning to 29.59 on Saturday afternoon as the storm passed. The winds were 49 mph according to the weather service. It was exciting, but not dangerous. Thank goodness, it had weakened by the time it reached Virginia!

After it passed, the weather cleared and the sky was beautiful!

Two days later, after a final provisioning, we left the marina to start our fall migration south. At last! Underway! Our first stop was to anchor out in the Carrotoman River, just off the Rappahannock.

The next night was in Carter Creek, home of the Tides Inn and “Miss Ann”. It’s a study in contrast; a beautiful millionaires yacht at an upscale resort, next to what may be the seediest marina we’ve seen!



Mary and I dingy’ed ashore and had an expensive lunch at the Tides. White tablecloths, wood paneling, candles, and impeccable service.



Our plan was to cruise and see more of Chesapeake Bay for a while. So, we left the Rappahannock and headed north to Solomons Maryland.



Our next anchorage was around the corner in Antipoison Creek. It was a short distance, but we had a brisk windy sail that wore us out. We were happy to get to the anchorage.

In the morning, we saw the locals lining up on the dock, with baskets and buckets in their hands. What’s up ?

The local watermen had left the dock at about 5 a.m. (Briefly waking us up.) Now, at 8 a.m. they were back again, and their local patrons were lined up to get the fresh catch!



OK. Change of plans. It's mid-September. Perhaps we should get headed south? We leave Antipoin Creek and turn right towards Deltaville Virginia. It's been a year since the boat was hauled, and ten weeks since the last diver cleaning. Other cruisers have recommended the Deltaville Boatyard, so we call ahead and schedule a quick haul and pressure wash.



It's another windy day on the Chesapeake. It started out as a nice brisk day, but the wind gradually died and we motored the final miles.

Hey, this sailing stuff is FUN !

We anchored for the night in Jackson Creek, in front of Deltaville.

The quick haul and pressure wash was handled professionally at the Deltaville Boat Yard. I recommend them highly to anyone in the area.

We were back on the water by noon, and headed out again. We sailed southwards along the Virginia shore, past the York River, and anchored in the Poquoson River for the night.



The next day we edged through the local races on our way into Hampton Roads. We circled around Fort Monroe, threaded our way through the fishermen in the channel, and turned a hard right into the Hampton River. This was a day stop only, since the anchorage is pretty constrained.

We launched the dinghy and Mary went ashore to the local Saturday farmers market in downtown Hampton.

We didn't bother mounting the outboard since it was just a few yards to the down town dinghy dock. I offered to do the rowing, but Mary thought she should give it a try on her own. OK....



Is she going north?

Is she going south?

Is she going in circles?

Rowing a dinghy is harder than it looks since it has no directional stability!



Mary got the hang of it, paddled safely to the dinghy dock, and back again with groceries an hour later. HURRAY !

Uh Oh. A couple of charter boat captains advised we couldn't stay where we were anchored. We were too close to the channel.



Well... the Hampton anchorage just doesn't have much room!  
OK, time to hoist anchor and move.

With fresh groceries aboard, we motored back out the Hampton River and headed to Portsmouth and the Hospital Point anchorage.





Portsmouth is a great stop over for cruisers. Hospital point is a spacious anchorage area, and there are down town dinghy landings on both sides of the river in Portsmouth and Norfolk.

In Portsmouth, we went ashore at the High Street Landing. There are restaurants, shops, and even a movie theatre in walking distance. The theatre is the “Commodore”, a beautifully restored old building with club seating that serves food and drinks while you enjoy the show.



Norfolk’s an exciting, busy harbor, and there’s always something going on. There are dry-docks in the Elizabeth river right in downtown. We sat in our cockpit and saw tug boats, freighters, Navy ships, and even the occasional schooner going by.

We stayed at Hospital Point for three days, which gave us a chance to go ashore several times, and even see a movie at the “Commodore”.

With a good weather forecast, we headed south again. On the south side of Portsmouth, after passing under the I-64 bridge, we made a hard right turn into Deep Creek and the beginning of the Dismal Swamp Canal. Here’s the mileage sign at the lock.

Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway			
← North		Destination	South →
NORFOLK	11	ELIZABETH CITY	40
NEWPORT NEWS	23	BELHAVEN	102
CAPE CHARLES	49	BEAUFORT	195
RICHMOND	114	WILMINGTON	305
WASHINGTON	208	SOUTHPORT	302
BALTIMORE	209	GEORGETOWN	395
PHILADELPHIA	297	CHARLESTON	458
NEW YORK	451	SAVANNAH	578
BOSTON	716	JACKSONVILLE	737
EASTPORT	966	MIAMI	1087
		KEYWEST	1239



Just inside the Deep Creek Locks, there's a FREE DOCK! We tied up for the night at Elizabeth's Dock and walked into town for dinner at the local Mexican restaurant.



The Dismal Swamp canal was surveyed by George Washington, and he was one of the initial investors in it. 200 years later it's still in use by pleasure boats. It's quiet, peaceful, serene, and a chance to see nature up close as you slowly motor along the canal.

How lucky can we be? Another FREE DOCK! This one is at the Dismal Swamp Welcome Center, near the south end of the canal.

The next day we exited the canal at the South Mills lock, and headed down the lovely Pasquotank River towards Elizabeth City. The Pasquotank is reminiscent of the Waccamaw. It's almost entirely undeveloped, winding through miles of ox bow bends shaded by hardwood and pine trees.







The problem in the Pasquotank are the snags, deadheads and debris. After a rain it's a very "dirty" river with dangerous snags.

Here's Mary on the bow keeping a sharp lookout, advising how to steer around 'em.

We make it to Elizabeth City mid afternoon. And guess what? Another FREE DOCK!

Elizabeth City loves their visiting cruisers, and has free docks in the heart of downtown. A local tradition is the welcome by the "Rose Buddies". These local volunteers visit each arriving cruiser, give a rose to the lady of the boat, and offer local knowledge and assistance. What a charming welcome!



We happened to arrive on the same day that the local town council held a press conference and banquet to honor the Rose Buddies. The ceremony dedicated a monument to them, followed by a demonstration for the TV cameras.

They needed some one to represent the cruisers being welcomed. Ha! We were the only boat at the dock that day!

Mary and I were guests of honor at the banquet. Free food. Free wine. And a video of us being "welcomed" on the 6 o'clock news!



The next stage is crossing the Albemarle Sound. It's wide and shallow, and can build steep waves when the wind is up. And, for the next two days it's very windy! We waited in port and enjoyed a walking tour of Elizabeth City while we waited for weather.



We had a beautiful day for sailing, and an easy crossing.

Here's Mary at the helm.

Hey, this sailing stuff is FUN!

Jumping ahead a few days, the next test is Pamlico Sound. The weather window was

closing. The forecast was nice weather in the morning, but with winds building to 25 knots and seas building to 3 to 5 feet in the afternoon, followed by several days of bad weather. We went for it, to get through before the weather shut us down.



Here's "Gideon" heeled over in the winds under reefed sails.

Below, we're cresting a four foot wave through the whitecaps and foam on the Neuse River.





We got through Pamlico and the Neuse river just as the seas were building to really scary (for us) levels. Once we were past Oriental into the safety of the Adams Creek, everything was great! We motored calmly along, with a strong wind-driven current helping us.

We stayed three days at the Sanitary Fish Restaurant. This old-time downtown eatery in Morehead City offers dockage for \$10 a night. We waited out the high winds and bad weather before continuing south.

We covered mileage every day for the next several days, to Camp Lejeune and on to Wilmington, Southport, Myrtle Beach, and Georgetown.

As September ends, we're still in motion headed south. We take a couple of days off in Georgetown, SC, and drive up to Raleigh to visit family. Our goal is to reach Florida, hang out for several months through a mild winter, and perhaps work locally in Stuart or Vero Beach to earn some extra cash. Then, over to the Bahamas in the spring.

But... Next month..... plans change !

