

Working and Waiting in Port Royal



Yup, we're still in Port Royal. We're working to rebuild our "cruising kitty" before leaving again. I'm writing this on June 24.

We're looking at Nov 1 as our departure date. Only 129 days before we leave again! (But who's counting... smile!).

That's one year as a hiatus. We got the yearly dock rate at the marina, and Mary committed to work for a year when she took the nursing job at the hospital. Having a break from cruising also provides a chance to catch up on maintenance.

We're getting anxious to leave. When we've been gone a few months, we'll probably be anxious to get back! We still have one kid in college, plus, the boat maintenance expenses are more than I had budgeted for. Thus, our "new paradigm" is to work six months and cruise six months.



By chance, we stumbled into Port Royal Landing Marina. It's a beautiful place, and there's a dozen or so live-aboards which forms a nice, friendly, cohesive community.

Here's Bill the Pirate working the grill at one of Port Royal's famous Friday night steak cookouts. Bill is our neighbor, living with his wife on a 38' Hunter, "Eclipse".

Bill volunteers as the Grill-Master for Friday and Saturday cookouts for the local cruisers. He does a fabulous job!

Here's some more of our local cruiser friends. Barry and Sammy from "Ever After", John and Margaret from "Boomerang", and Larry from "Liquid Asset"

They joined us on "Gideon" as a stop on a progressive dinner that took place aboard a series of boats.

It makes a HUGE difference to be where there are other cruisers. Being at a marina with no other live-aboards isn't much different from anchoring out. The only social contact is with each other and the marina manager.

But, when you find a place with a lively group of fellow cruisers, you're in a new social network of friends. It's a "quality of life" factor.



We've had time for family visits and to do some local sight-seeing. Here's Mary with her "Pops" and his lady friend Joyce, at the Chocolate Tree. It's a store with every possible kind of chocolate !



We've visited Charleston, saw the sights, went through the museums, and saw the replica of the USS Hunley.



Here's our daughter Theresa and her husband Matt on a visit to the top of Hunting Island lighthouse.

And, our son John and girl friend Laura with Mary at Hunting Island beach.

Why is this woman laughing ???





Mary is working as an RN at Beaufort Memorial Hospital. It's the only hospital on the ICW with a dock! We've joked that she could commute to work in the dinghy.

And, here's where I work as a Captain for Tow Boat U.S. This is a photo of "Pops" and Joyce on a visit, in the cockpit of the TowBoat.

The tow line is stored in the gray container, and the towing mast is on the right side of the photo. No more air conditioned office for me!



FUTURE CRUISER NOTES:

Mail Forwarding.

There's half a dozen mail forwarding companies around. Interesting... they're all in states with no income tax ! What a coincidence ! (Smile!). We chose St. Brendan's Isle, located in Green Cove Springs, Florida. <http://www.sbimailservice.com> They've been great. While cruising, we would forecast when we'd make a transient stop, and

we'd call SBI and tell them to send our mail there. If we timed it right, the mail would be there when we arrived.

Actually, there's not much mail. When we left Georgia, we did it without leaving a forwarding address. That was intentional so the "junk mail" doesn't get forwarded by the post office. I set up the SBI mail forwarding service a few months in advance, and carefully submitted a change-of-address for bank accounts and insurance policies. The rest of it I don't care about. For all of the usual junk mail, all the post office has is "moved – no forwarding address".

P.S. If you want to research this, look at the internet comments from the folks that call themselves "full time RV'ers". They're the experts on it. Full time cruisers copy what the RV'ers are doing.

Residency:

Part of SBI's sign up package, if you ask, are the forms to declare yourself as a Florida resident, and to register to vote. Remember, Florida is a no-income-tax state. We visited Florida and stopped in a driver's license agency, and got a Florida drivers license. For all legal purposes, we're Floridians.

Financials:

Every possible thing I could find I put on electronic access. All of the bank accounts, credit cards, etc. are managed over the internet. I've selected the option to "turn off" getting paper copies. Regular monthly payments, such as our storage unit, are on "auto pay". Even where I kept a membership in an organization, I often "declined" to get their monthly magazine. The idea is to minimize dependency on mail and reduce the volume of mail.

Internet:

If you minimize mail, you're maximizing your dependency on the internet. There are wireless broadband plans from Verizon, Sprint, and AT&T. Basically, it means your laptop can connect to the internet at a reasonably fast speed, from pretty much anywhere. That includes remote anchorages. I chose Verizon. The only place in the U.S. where I've failed to get an internet connection is on the Shark River, in Florida bay, which is extremely remote. Everywhere else, including "wilderness" anchorages in Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, and around Chesapeake Bay, we had internet access every day. U.S. ICW cruisers usually have one of the wireless broadband plans.

Internet access isn't just for e-mail and checking your credit card and bank statements. Remember weather? With the internet, you have the latest weather information, in detail. That alone can justify the cost for the wireless broadband.

What about the islands? The wireless broadband plans don't work there. Most sizable places in the Bahamas now have someone selling WiFi access to cruisers for a few dollars a week. You need a really sensitive external WiFi adapter and antenna for your laptop; one where you can stretch out a long USB cable and put the external antenna up

on deck. I have the EnGenius EUB-362 and a special +9 dBi 15" antenna. It's far more sensitive than my laptop's built in WiFi receiver. The popular solution for Bahamas cruisers in places like Georgetown is to use a set up like this and pay the local access fee.

Low budget ICW cruisers use the same idea. In populated areas of the U.S., a sensitive WiFi receiver may allow you to tap a home or business access point with no password.

One technology note. I tried to work up a plan for permanently mounting the antenna, perhaps up on the dinghy davits. But, (long story short) there are problems with having a long antenna lead at the 2.4 ghz frequency. A more workable solution is to have a long USB cable, and put the little adapter up on deck under the dodger. It's a jury rig solution, but it works and it's very effective.

For true off-shore sailing, crossing the ocean, you can set up a ham radio and a pactor modem to connect and get e-mail. But, It's expensive; the tab is around \$5,000 for all of the components. Thus, people on the ICW and in the Bahamas are using the simpler and less expensive ideas listed above.

....Roy & Mary Stegall
aboard S/V "Gideon"