

## Sunny South Florida!

We took a month to mosey down the ICW from Port Royal to Miami. It was 4 days to Jacksonville, where we stopped for a week while we had a bottom job done at a local boat yard. We also stopped for a few days at the mooring field in Vero and again at Stuart over Thanksgiving weekend. Still, we left Port Royal on November 1<sup>st</sup>, and arrived Miami December 7<sup>th</sup>.

Not counting the week in the boat yard, that's 30 days to travel 550 ICW miles. We were traveling 40 to 45 miles a day, but the times we stopped for a few days cut the average in half. Some of the stops were for weather, and others were for sight-seeing or for holidays or provisioning. The "effective" rate of travel is about half the nominal rate.

Here's our arrival point;  
Dinner Key Marina and  
Mooring Field in Miami.

Like many other things in life,  
we didn't choose it. We landed  
in Miami because... well... it's  
the first place we could stop  
after we got the hell out of Ft.  
Lauderdale.

Ft. Lauderdale was traumatic.  
We were in Lake Sylvia, and  
nice protected anchorage that's  
popular with cruisers. When I  
started to raise the anchor the  
next morning, things started  
going wrong, and then went  
from bad to worse. The anchor switch stuck "on". The anchor was continuously coming up, even when I didn't want it to! I was on deck, while Mary was below, so I yelled at her to "turn the switch off!!". Before she reached the breaker, the chain jumped off of the gypsy. It was an accident, and everything was shut down and safe. OK... now the mistakes start.

Mary said she had trouble hearing me on the "marriage saver" radio headsets we were using. Our division of labor is for me to be on deck, while Mary is inside. She flakes the chain in the anchor locker, so it will run fair the next time we anchor. We communicate via the "marriage savers". But, with all the static, it seemed like it might be better to use low power. The static seemed like it was less, anyway. We both switched our headsets to low power. But we didn't test that we could still communicate from deck to cabin. Mistake number 1.



Mary went below to turn the windlass back on. Our plan was for me to tell her when to turn the breaker off, since the deck switch wasn't working. This was a lousy plan; but, we were in a hurry. Mistake #2.

Mary switched on the breaker. The anchor started up. It didn't have far left to run; the bow dipped. I knew the anchor was loose. "Cut it off!". The chain kept coming, rolling up over the bow roller. "CUT IT OFF !!". The anchor broke the surface. "CUT IT OFF !! CUT IT OFF !! CUT IT OFF !! " I see a 50 lb bruce anchor flip over the bow roller and come flying at me. "CUT IT OFF !! CUT IT OFF !!!" And... I realize I'm still alive and unhurt. The anchor flipped out of the bow roller, came over the bow pulpit towards me, and stopped about a foot away when it banged into the side of the bow spirit, and was finally stopped when it clanged against one of the pulpit stanchions. It cut gouges in the fiberglass, dented the stainless stanchion, and gouged the teak wood decking. Ouch! I would have preferred to have the gouge in my nose rather than in the woodwork of my boat! OH NO!

After calming down ( days later ) I realized the damage was slight. You can't mess around with 50 lb anchors without getting a few dings. We were lucky.

What could we have done differently? A lot. Check communications. Or use better communications. We now have ham radio HT's with headsets. There's no static on FM 2M band. And, there's other ways to deal with a stuck "on" switch. It would have been fine if I'd been smart enough to go below and swap the wires to the "down" switch. Or, taken a few minutes and used the handle to work the windlass manually. Ah, hindsight. As the British say, "too smart by half".

Enough mea culpa. We'd been headed to the Florida Keys, but we stopped in Miami because the windlass wasn't working. You can't travel and anchor out each night without a windlass. (cranking it manually is no fun!).

It turns out we landed in a nice place. Serendipity! Dinner Key mooring field is somewhat exposed, and it's occasionally rocky. But, it's a lovely location in Biscayne Bay. Here's the view from the mooring field. You can see the sky line of Miami over the stern. It's beautiful at night!



The marina is adjacent to the beautiful Coconut Grove area of Miami. It's an upscale dining and shopping area, and there are several unique sight seeing attractions near by.



Plus, Miami has an excellent public transit system. It's pretty easy to get into downtown Miami, the Bayside Center, and down to South Miami and Sunset Place shopping mall. Hey... we like it here!

Here's Mary in front of Miami's Christmas Tree on the downtown waterfront.



And me in front of the pirate that guards Scotty's restaurant, near the marina.

It's a nice area, and there's lots of fun stuff to see and do. And, the mooring is only \$321 a month. Let's stay a while!



We're on foot; no car. But we can get around on Miami's public transit system. The bus by the marina is only 25 cents, and takes you into Coconut Grove, and past several restaurants, a grocery store, two marine stores, a hardware store, and a liquor store. Everything a cruiser wants !

After a week here, we figured out which train to ride to go to a movie theater. Oh Boy! A movie! We saw Avatar in IMAX 3D on it's opening weekend. WOW!



And, we can buzz around Biscayne Bay sight seeing in the dinghy. You've heard about the famous stilt houses in the bay? Here they are, on Biscayne Channel, south of Key Biscayne.

We made a circuit and saw the stilt houses, No Name Harbor, and Hurricane Hole.

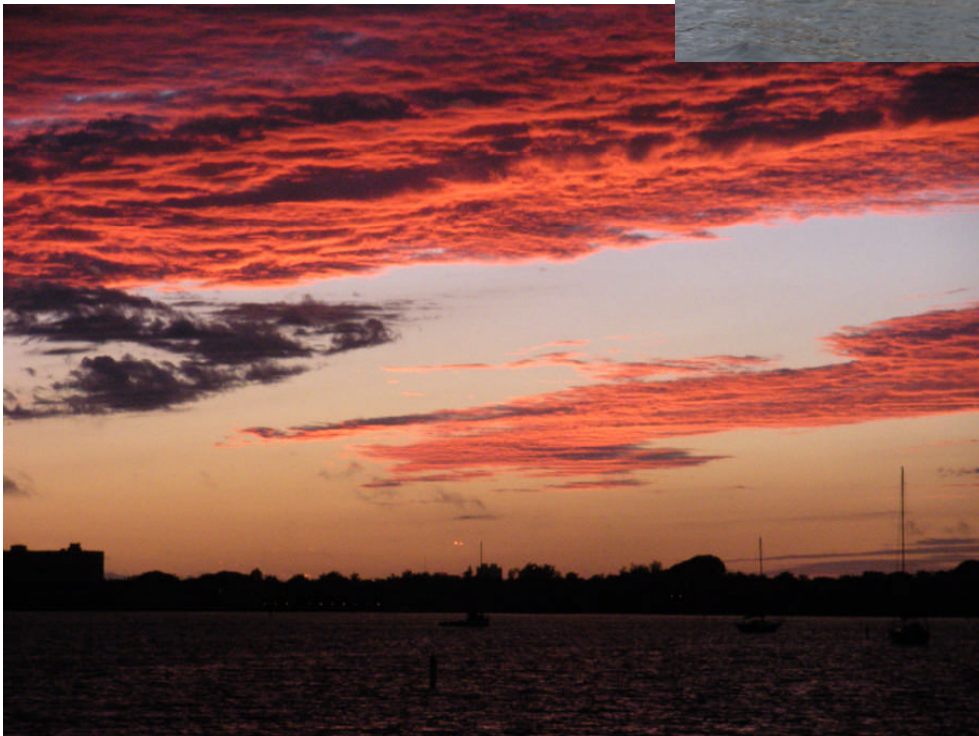
We've had tons of fun in Coconut Grove. It's only a few blocks from the marina! Very easy walking distance. We go there often.

One day we had lunch at "The Knife", a Brazilian steak house. While we enjoyed our meal on the balcony, I passed the time counting cars. Two Bentleys, one Ferrari, one Lamborghini, and five Maserati's. I didn't bother counting Mercedes or Porsches. It's fun watching two Bentley drivers argue over a parking space!



Here's some more of the sights of Miami. There are several sailing clubs in the area. Here's the little Laser's going out for a day on the bay.

Villa Viscaya, the Deering estate. It's on the water, so we had a good close look on a dinghy trip. Sadly, there were signs on the docks that we couldn't tie up. But, we ran the dinghy around the "Stone Barge" and saw it close up!



And finally, the famous tropical sunsets. Here's evening twilight over the Coral Gables skyline, southwest of the mooring field.

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