

WHEN WE'RE NOT CRUISING WE'RE WORKING!

We're working through the boat projects, and the family events, that have kept us close to the dock this winter. One wedding down; but we still have a graduation and a wedding yet to go. Our son John will graduate and marry his high school sweetheart Laura in May! Hurray!

Meanwhile Mary and I are both working, to rebuild our savings for the next cruise. My time on the TowBoat has been S-L-O-W. Traffic on the ICW is down with the economy and the price of fuel; that means fewer people run aground or call for help. The TowBoat stays at the dock for weeks at a time.

Thank goodness Mary has steady work as an RN at the Hospital! She works about 2 or 3 nights a week. Her paycheck is what allows us to balance our budget month to month.

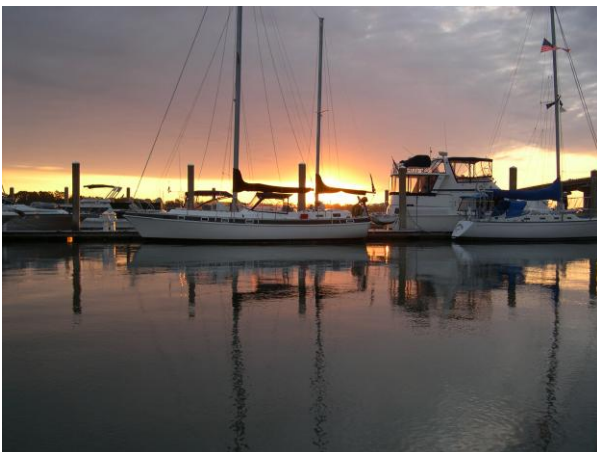


We've talked it over, and this will absolutely positively be the LAST time we winter on the "wrong" side of 31° degrees North! (31° N is approximately the Florida state line; it's also the boundary for offshore weather forecasts over short wave radio). We've done this twice; NO MORE!

Our plan is to work six months, and then "cruise" six months. Meaning, we'll go south for the winter, and return to Port Royal to work part time during the summer. We'll leave November 1st to go south to Florida and the Bahamas!

Why not just cruise full time? Almost every cruiser has some downtime in their annual schedule. A 3 to 6 month layover allows time for projects, refits, and upgrades. And we have the benefit of six months part time work to help balance the budget.

If you're going to have a layover SOMEWHERE between cruises, Port Royal is one of the best choices we've found.



Our criteria on marinas has changed; we value places where there is an active cruiser / live-aboard community; it provides us with a "social" group.



Port Royal ranks high on our “social network” yardstick.



And... the South Carolina “Low Country” has a special beauty. There’s live current flow through the marina so we’re surrounded by wildlife.



Here’s a pair of Hooded Mergansers who kept us company through the winter.

It’s not just a boat. It’s “home” !

Mary is a quilter. Here’s some of her handy work on display after laundry day. Home made quilts hanging on the life lines to dry.

And, my First-Rate First-Mate is looking better than ever! Here’s Mary with her new hair highlights for Easter.

I love her more every day !



During the last few months I've been busy with several more projects. Over the winter I started on some interior varnish work. Here's some before and after pic's.

Revarnishing an interior doorway, grab handle, counter edge, fiddles, and fittings.



And, I revarnished the door that fits in that doorway. I took the door out of the boat and worked on it on a pair of borrowed saw horses on the dock. Three coats of satin finish varnish and it looks like new!



Uh-oh. The water pump went out again. It's a recurring problem, so I carry a spare.

I'm getting pretty good at doing the replacement in less than an hour!



Of course, “Skipper” jumps in to help!

And, time for a new autopilot. The old one has never worked right; it allowed the boat to “wander” rather than holding a heading.

“Skipper” is helping again, by stripping the wire ends. (Smile!).



Does it sound like I’ve kept busy? These are only part of the maintenance projects over the winter. I also replaced a cockpit sprayer, repaired the galley sink faucets, did a varnish update of the wood in the galley, put a skid plate on the bottom of our RIB dinghy, and... I forget all of the other stuff.

A normal day is to work three to six hours on the boat. It’s a retirement life style that has a built-in hobby so you’re constantly amused and busy. I retired from being a computer guy to being a live-aboard boat handyman. Am I complaining? Yeah... but I love it! (Smile!).

We love visitors! The couple who inspired us and led the way to “cruising” came to see us in April.

Eric and Mary Harrs were with us for a weekend in the Low Country. They’re “clods” now; ‘Cruisers Living On Dirt’; but we fondly remember crossing wakes.





We took the boat off the dock for a couple of days, and anchored out with the Harts in the Beaufort River near the Marine Corps Air Station.

Why? Because it's FUN !

We saw the strangest things;

Dolphins... Jelly Fish... and Flying Saucers !



It's the B2 Stealth Bomber; it made a fly-by for the opening ceremony of the air show at the Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort.

We anchored strategically in the ICW near the air station, and saw the Blue Angels as they flew their routines. USA! USA!



What's next??? In May, our son John will have a graduation, a wedding, and a move into a new home! Wow, all in one month! Congratulations!!!



And, for the wedding, our in-laws from England will be flying over for a visit. Paul Revere has nothing on us; we already know The British Are Coming!

We're looking forward to hosting Jenny & Keven as guests for a visit on our boat next month!

Family first. Then, we think about the next destination. I really like this retirement!

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

