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FERNANDINO, FL TO ST. SIMONS, GA

From the Logs of the Knotty Dog

FERNANDINO TO ST. SIMONS

Left the dock at 8:00 AM on a rising tide and no wind. It's muggy and buggy, and everything is covered in wet dew. Had to take Ziggy out this morning in a wet buggy. He's slow to get up this morning, lazy in his bed with one eye open, pretending to be asleep but keeping an eye on us.

It was a noisy night last night in Fernandino. The pulp mill was working all night, sounded like Gods rolling logs down massive shoots and then those annoying nonstop beeping alarms to warn all those that are trying to sleep to beware and move out of the way. The train was at it too with its strange whining whistle that sounds like brakes screeching to a slow stop. Add to that what seemed like strange electric pulses in the water, bouncing off our hull. And you can't leave out the little nibbling shrimp munching off the bottom of the boat, sounding like little popcorns popping. In other words, didn't get much sleep.

Larry slept on the floor of the salon as his back has been hurting. He's blaming it on the stateroom bed which he swears is sloping at an angle and he's going to replace as soon as we get to the Chesapeake. It seems like the hard floor is helping a little but mostly he needs to stop lifting Ziggy,



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who feels like a 40 lb bag of potatoes. Could we be getting too old for this? Never.

We decide not to take a shower last night as the



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water tank was low and didn't feel like filling it up in the bug ridden darkness, so we are feeling muggy and sticky.

I bring Ziggy and his wet buggy back and stow the buggy in the cockpit. We walk the boat down the dock a bit to give us some clearance to get around the boat in front of us and then push off. Two dock hands come to help. They are such gentlemen here; they don't want a lady to do the lines. "Mam, please!" he says, insisting on taking the chore away from me. It was the same gentlemanly treatment coming in.

This town is so friendly. We remember their warm welcome the first time we came through 2004 and it hasn't changed one bit. The boaters suddenly are more friendly too and more talkative. I think maybe it's because we all feel a need to share info about where it's shallow or confirming our deductions on how

the tides will effect our travels, which have become very important. The ICW through Georgia is a challenge that way. These are well worn trails, that everyone is traveling and they all have a story about the "best place to stay or how and when to go and what to avoid." That is the one thing that I miss about cruising more remote places, I don't really like everyone telling what the next stop is like. I like it to feel like it's a new adventure. I guess that's why I don't read the cruising guides until after I've been there to see if my impressions concur. It's more fun for me that way, then I have my own impressions and not swayed by others, and their views and opinions.

We are now crossing St. Mary's Entrance. We heard the radio chatter about the submarine coming in here on the radio yesterday. We'd love to see one but none in sight and nothing on the radio this AM.

We pass Cumberland Island and some shrimp boats. It seems we are always reading articles about Cumberland Island and how wonderful it is and again we are not stopping. We always said we wanted to anchor and explore the island to see the ruins and wild horses. I'll have to be satisfied looking at it through my binoculars. We



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and houses and tree lined streets. They have done such a fine job preserving their historical buildings. Though it was hotter than blazes we walked the town several times admiring the architecture and talking to so many people. You can not come to this town and feel unwanted.

One highlight for me was having a great meal at **29 South**. Everything on the menu sounds interesting, lip smacking good and right up my alley. I had such a simple southern dish, country fried chicken and mashed potatoes but OMG, they drizzled honey on it and WOW! Good! The donut bread pudding with coffee ice cream is worth driving all the way across country for. I'm not exaggerating one bit. Do not miss it.

We also had a great pulled pork sandwich at **Sliced Tomatoes**. Wish I had bought some of their delicious BBQ sauce. That was YUMMY! We ate a **Brett's** on the dock one night and about roasted ourselves in the sun there for the benefit of having Ziggy sit beside us. I had cheese grits, collard greens and white Georgia shrimp with South Carolina BBQ sauce on it. Yum again. I'm ready to move here...except the....awful BUGS!

are so bug bitten right now that the idea of walking around in the woods or on the beach getting more bites doesn't interest us, and add to that, Ziggy in the buggy, coming by way of a dinghy, and then pushing it on a sandy trail? Nope, don't need to add that to our challenges these days.

We can see the range markers now for the submarine base. Have to stay 500 yards away from their docks.

Fernandino has certainly changed a lot. There are many more restaurants and shops, so more to see and like. I love the old buildings



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Larry pulled out our old paper charts today. Wow, they still have notes from our last trip!



the red right reverses and where "ancient sand dunes" and shoaling areas were, things like that. Funny thing is, we rarely read the warnings now. We just keep our eyes open and watch the markers and curves and movements of the water and currents for shoaling and watch the weather reports. I actually was going crazy one day trying to read all the hazard notes on Active Captain, some were 2 and 3 years old and others that are

Can't believe I checked off each marker as we went by it...YEP, the whole trip down the ICW! Now with the iPad I always know which marker we are at even if I don't pay attention for awhile. It was interesting to see all the notes and warnings we had copied from the cruising guide and put on the chart in the appropriate places: notes to remind us when

that are just dam common sense. People have to think and not rely on everybody telling them what to do or they'll never gain the experience to know what to do when you have a real situation where you have to make your own decision.

The reds are on the left heading north up the ICW. But this morning we have the reds on our right in the St. Mary's Inlet and it will be like that as far as the submarine station and then it will reverse as we enter back into the ICW at Crab Island. We will know when it changes by checking the the chart, our position and the numbering system. If you don't remember to make your turn, don't worry, the military police will remind you!

We just passed the submarine base. Very exciting! Saw two subs I think at the dock. The military police are quick to put themselves between you and the subs. Funny thing was later that day when I magnified the picture of the marine police, the two people manning the military police boat were women. No guns on the bow sprit.

We stayed two days and two nights at Fernandino. The second day we were there a



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We will have to briefly go out and come back in an ocean inlet by Jekyll island today so hope it stays nice and calm. Yesterday one of the boaters at the dock said a friend just called to tell him he was stuck (grounded) taking the "back way" so he didn't have to go out into the inlet. Now he will have to wait until high tide to get off. He only draws 2 1/2 feet! A lot of people don't like going out that inlet. It can be scary in bad seas or if the current and wind

small cruise ship came in and docked on the other side of the dock from us. No kidding! We were wondering how in the world can this cruise ship go up these waters? There were about 50 passengers aboard - is what we heard. We asked the dock master if we could move down the dock a ways to regain our view out to the marshes. "No problem" they said and helped us walk the Knotty Dog down a few yards. The passengers were so inquisitive about all of us cruisers. It seemed like we constantly had a several people from the ship standing by the boat asking questions about Ziggy and where we were from and going, etc.

Off to the left today as we cruise through the marshes is a parade of 4 white pelicans flying about 4 feet off the flat water in an equidistant formation, flying in perfect unison. Amazing to watch just like the Blue Angels but no preplanned coordination! They do such it with such ease too.

are opposing each other. It's always shoaling so you have to watch for the moving cans (markers) so can't rely on the charts necessarily and if the



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seas are choppy the cans are hard to see.

We didn't know there was a "back way". We have no problem with the inlet as long as the winds aren't too bad and the currents are right. But..it sure doesn't help to see the mast of a ship wreck on the shore of the inlet as you go by. It's still there, same place when we came through in 2004 and 2006, just a little reminder.

Tried to put a position report in at the sub base for the fun of it but they must have the internet blocked. In fact we couldn't post anything or get or send emails for a couple hours.

We have gone half the length of Cumberland Island now and suddenly the current switches to the opposite direction heading in now from the inlet up by Jekyll. We are fighting a 2 knot current. A little fishing boat, like a Boston Whaler, races by waking the heck out of us. He gives us a friendly wave, clueless I'm sure to the fact that created some momentary havoc for us as we quickly reached for our coffee cups to keep them from spilling. We waved back and smiled.

We are almost to the cut at Floyd Creek where the guy got stuck taking the back route. We look at the chart to see the route he

must have taken. That looks scarier to me than going out the inlet in bad seas.

Up ahead I see our first shrimp boat meandering through the marshes. You can only see the top half because the marshes hide the bottom half. It's so funny to watch as he goes left and right winding his way through the marshes. He's a mile or two away by the ICW route as it winds like a snake but only a stone's throw away in actual distance.

We make a turn in the river and are now facing the bright morning sun so lose the ability to identify the colors of the markers but since square is green and triangle is red no problem. Larry said there was something on the chat room



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about color blindness and how difficult it is for people with color blindness to see the markers but to us you know what it is by the shape and can keep track of the numbers.

We hear a woman on the radio, channel 16, talking back to a boat that she thinks wants to pass on a certain side. She is totally confused and so this long discussion goes on about who and what and where. Finally someone else comes on, totally exasperated, and tells her she isn't the boat the guy is trying to hail. Then a little later we hear someone wanting to pass their sailboat. She answers back "fine". He then asks "what's that long line dragging from the back of your boat?" She doesn't know and says she will check. A man comes back on and says that it's the zinc line left from the dock.

We're getting ready to cross the inlet between Jekyll Island and Little Cumberland Island. We can see several shrimp boats out in the ocean working the water with their paravanes down spreading their nets. It's very calm today. It's

nice to head out into the ocean a bit to get some cool fresh air and a nice breeze as it's been so hot and muggy. I check the old charts and remember this... A big note saying we "lost depth sounder" as we went through the most critical part. I still get nervous thinking about it but again it all comes down to watching the markers. It was much windier and choppier that day.



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The green marker is missing! I see it beached on shore of little Cumberland Island.

Went from 59 feet to 10 feet at the lowest. We stuck with the

rules of the markers and did not follow the magenta line (which is the line that guides cruisers down the ICW) which went off course.

Pelicans are dive bombing all around us. We could go north on the outside today as it is flat calm but don't have enough fuel. Larry says we may make a long day to Savanna tomorrow if we want but would mean we will miss seeing the little fish camps. It's 79 miles and we will have the high tide all the way. I can tell he wants

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to take advantage of the tides.

29 A green can is missing too, just off the point of Jekyll Island.

The old half buried rusty mast is still there projecting out of the sandy shore, still serving as a dire reminder to not take anything for granted here. Lots of shore birds. And now, we head through what we call the mud river, as it is very shallow and muddy on the bottom. It goes the length of Jekyll Island. We've seen a few sailboats get stuck in the mud through here, tilting and turning by the force and direction of the current, impatiently waiting for a higher tide to set them free again. Some set sails while stuck trying to keep them upright and pointed in a certain direction.

We see many dolphins feeding in this area. I remember when we stayed at Jekyll the last time we watched the dolphin intentionally and brilliantly herd the fish into a small area, trapping them so they could feed on the fish. We also watched the cormorants do a similar thing but they directed the fish by loudly flapping their wings in the water and worked in teams to

accomplished their objective. Really amazing.

It's funny to hear the southern drawl over the radio now as we are NOW in Georgia. It's "bah bah" instead of "goodbye".

The range marker in the mud river is missing by Jekyll. Up ahead though we see the Coast Guard fixing another range marker, so maybe they will get to this one today too!

It's a short trip today to St. Simons, to Morningstar Marina. We need fuel also so will be taking on several gallons. We are still discussing whether to make it a long day tomorrow to just



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south of Savanna or stop half way in some rustic fish camp.

Docking was a surprise as the current was running a good 6 knots. Woke us up that's for sure. I immediately put Ziggy in the buggy and headed down the dock to give him some relief. Wow...that dock is a long en' and it was hotter than heck. Feels like a 100 degrees out. Zig and I finally got to the end of the long dock and then up the ramp and across through some buildings, past the restaurant, then past the pool, down the long crisscrossed handicap ramp finally to the parking lot and there is one little patch of crummy looking dead grass about 10'x10'! Wait...a short sign about a foot tall, stuck right in the crummy grass...it says **ABSOLUTELY NO DOGS!!** Plain as day. What a welcome. Are they kidding?

Screw this. I look around and can't see any other lace to take Ziggy, nothing but asphalt, so heck with them.

Wow, what a welcome. We later found a sign directing you even further to their "dog walking area" which is past the parking lot. More walking! And in this heat over the hot asphalt, not good for any dog, I found it. It was by the



buggy wet smarth with plenty of starving no see ums to bite you while you walked your dog. And to top it off, there are stickers in the grass! Poor Ziggy got stickers in his paws. What's with this place? Do they dislike dogs? So we ended up going out by the highway, even further away to get away from the stickers.

WELCOME TO ST. SIMONS!



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