

Sailing the Bronwyn C

This log brings Bob Mills's sailboat, the Bronwyn C from Baltimore, Maryland, to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina where he lives, and where the boat will stay. The trip may seem a bit boring and tedious at times, as we are traveling for the most part down the intracoastal waterway. In the beginning we have pretty cold days though little rain. Since we figure our days based on an average of a 5 nautical miles per hour a 50 mile day is also a 10 hour day. We do make up some time though, since once on the intracoastal the distance on charts are statute miles so we are going faster than the charts show. We also travel with currents so our average speeds are probably closer to 6 knots which is just about 7 Miles per hour.

We don't get to sail much since when you are delivering a boat you travel straight line and only raise the jib while going down wind or when the wind is off of the beam (from either side of the boat).

At the end of this log I have entered the Latitude and Longitudes of some of the places that we stop as well as the nearest mile markers. I do this so that you can check out these spots through google earth or a chart or an atlas if you wish. If you don't, take it from me we are in the middle of nowhere. I do this for the most part to show a part of the country that most of us never see, as well as to demonstrate why we stay inland versus going out to the ocean.

Most of us during our first cruise do not realize why we go through the Cape Cod Canal versus sailing around, and again why do we come in through the Chesapeake instead of staying on the ocean and going around Cape Hatteras. Also why stay in Elizabeth City to wait out bad weather in Albemarle sound? On this trip why not go out to the ocean in Beaufort, North Carolina and around frying pan Shoals?

A trip along the east coast of the United States is a southwest trip, and basically your compass heading for the most part is southwesterly the whole distance.

The shortest distance between Gloucester and Montauk long island is through the Cape Cod Canal, if you go around the tip of the Cape you have gone off course and you now have to add more time to your trip as you get back on your southwesterly heading.

At this point you may think as all of us have, that a trip to the Bahamas would warrant a rest in Bermuda on the way by. Again we would be off course, as Bermuda is in the middle of the ocean and far off of our southwesterly course.

Back to Montauk , we have a choice of going through Long Island Sound and down the East River as we travel through New York City, or staying on the ocean. I have done both . With a full crew, staying on the ocean, and sailing through the night, you can make up time and distance as well as avoid the tug and barges swearing at you in the East River.

I like to stay in the sound and take advantage of the currents in both Long Island Sound as well as the East River. I have made this part of the trip during all times of day and night and have learned that you can stay out of the channel, and out of the way. Going through Long Island allows you to stop, if you wish and catch some sleep.

Once back on the ocean after Sandy Hook, New Jersey there are stops that you can make at Barneget Bay, Atlantic City, and Cape May, all nice breaks to get out of the weather or to get some sleep.

You are better off staying on the ocean and not traveling up the Delaware and down the Chesapeake. A trip from Cape May to Virginia can be done in around 24 hours. If you decide to play it safe by going down the Delaware and then the Chesapeake you will add around 6 days to your trip.

While transporting the Bronwyn C , we had to travel almost all of the Chesapeake Bay (130 miles) on our way to Hampton Roads, which is the entrance to the intracoastal waterway in Virginia.

We don't go out to sea after the Chesapeake, again for the safety reasons of avoiding Cape Hatteras, where the Gulf stream would be hitting us pretty hard on the nose as it combines with the different currents from the north as well as the gulf stream. It again would also be off course as well as dangerous.

So we stay in the waterway as we travel southwest. We have 2 choices as we leave Hampton roads, one is the Chesapeake, Albemarle Canal or the Dismal Swamp. I choose the Dismal Swamp for its historic significance, and the fact that there will be less boats, that are not allowed to leave wakes in such a small body of water. The boats have to travel the Dismal Swamp slow because of floating logs and tree branches that pop up once in a while.

The Dismal Canal turns into the Pasquotank river which passes by Elizabeth City. Showers are few and far between, and Elizabeth City is a nice place to get a meal and a shower, as well as to do some grocery shopping, which by the way can also be done in the Deep Creek Canal (Chesapeake Virginia) The Pasquotank is a pretty wide River and empties in to Abemarle Sound. If you google earth, the Abemarle, you can see how large this body of water is, if it were not for the outer banks of North Carolina it would be ocean. Since it is so shallow, when the wind builds it can become extremely choppy.

From the Pasquotank across Abemarle sound, in our case is only around five miles if we took the Abemarle canal instead of the Dismal Swamp it would have been much longer. The Abemarle is 55 miles long from east to west.

The Abemarle turns in to the Alligator River . The Alligator River is another wide river and takes a few hours to travel it's wide section, that finally narrows for quite a few miles as it becomes the Pongo river. The Pongo river winds past Dowery Creek, and Belhaven before turning into the Neuse river.

The Neuse is another wide river and in this case we have a chop building for the approximately 20 miles that we had to travel.

Our next major city is Moorhead City, and Beaufort NC, where again, we have a choice again of going out on the ocean or staying on the waterway.

While delivering the Ker Mor the choice was easy, the monotony of being on the waterway was getting to Preston Luce and I , and the trip was getting long. By going back out to sea on the Ker Mor we were able to get to Beaufort, South Carolina, from Beaufort, North Carolina in three days . Avoiding the aggravation of groundings in shallow water and also adding 7 to 10 days to the trip if we decided to stay on the waterway.

During this trip the Bronwyn C was not ready to go on the ocean, and the weather was turning for the worse and going out around frying pan shoals would actually be off course on a trip to Myrtle Beach.

A trip down the intracoastal waterway, is a very taxing trip on a crew, with long days, close quarters, and a slow boat, the novelty soon wears off.

When it gets to be more than you can handle the dolphins come up and play so that changes it up a bit. Also going through the neighborhoods once out of the woods breaks up the tedium.

These days with cell phones and wireless internet we are at least in touch with the outside world, not always a good thing.

Bob Mills and I arrived at the Bronwyn C, at the Maryland Marina around 5 pm on April 5 after driving all day from Myrtle beach, and stopping for some last minute shopping.

After loading all of our provisions we quit for the night in order to have an early start the next day.

On April 6 Bob Mills and I left the Maryland Marina out of Baltimore on the Sailboat Bronwyn C on a trip south bound for Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. The Bronwyn C is a 30ft TMI, sailboat, constructed in 1980 by the Chrysler corporation , it has seen better days and is already quite tired.

The weather is also less than favorable, it has been pretty chilly at night, in the low 40's. During the day when the sun is out it becomes a little pleasant , but still to cold to be on a boat.

Off we go heading south, Bob Mills and I, On the Bronwyn C.

April 6

We headed out around 9 am on the 6th and headed down the Chesapeake Bay heading for Lake Olgelton around 25 miles away. This would be our shake down cruise , short and sweet. We arrived at Lake Olgelton around 1:30 in the afternoon, after motor sailing with a following sea and the wind behind us.

It was to early to stop but there were no other logical stops within the distance that we would be able to travel that day.

Lake Olgelton was a nice anchorage and well protected. We heated the boat by cooking a supper of macaroni and cheese with chicken, and later that night by burning candles. Bob was cold, however I was nice and toasty and that is all that really matters.

April 7

We left Lake Olgelton at 7 am on April 7 and headed once again, down the Chesapeake, now headed for Smith Creek (Point Lookout) located 6 miles down the Potomac river from the Chesapeake Bay, which was around 50 miles from Lake Olgelton. That was actually our third and longest choice of places to stop that night. We were able to make it there because we had such a nice wind behind us, and at times we were motor sailing at 7+ knots. We landed in Smith Creek at 5 PM with the engine running a little warm. Bob took care of this problem by cleaning the water strainer and replacing a hose going to the water pump that had a kink in it.

April 8

We held back on April 8 because of bad weather. We actually did go out the 6 miles down the Potomac, but after checking out the seas in the Chesapeake, we turned around and came back into Smith Creek. We tied to the dock at Point Lookout Marina where we filled our water tanks and had a chance to take showers. We went to Spinnakers restaurant for some great crab cakes.

April 9

We were going to stay another day because of the weather. The weather was not as bad as they predicted, so we headed out, on our way to Chisholm Creek around 50 miles away, having a couple of other places in mind if it started to get to dark. We arrived at Chisholm Creek just before 7:30 as darkness fell around us.

April 10

The weather has been improving, and as we left Chisholm Creek at 6:30 AM it was already in the 60's. We left early so we could get out ahead of the predicted southwest winds that would be on our nose. As we headed around Hampton Virginia and down to Hampton roads on our way to the Dismal Swamp we did hit ground once, but were able to persuade the boat off with a little extra pressure on the throttle. Bob was a little nervous about that, but I told him that he better get use to it, as there would be more groundings ahead, as we traveled down the Intracoastal waterway.

Before going into the Dismal Canal we fueled up at the Oceans Marina, moving in a hurry so we could catch the 3:30 opening of the locks in Deep Creek. As luck would have it, the Gilmenton bridge before the Dismal Swamp would not open because the railroad bridge after it was having problems. The Gilmenton bridge finally opened at 2:30, and we were able to make the lock opening at Deep Creek with time to spare.

After raising the water in the locks and giving us an in-depth history of the canal, Robert the lock tender opened the gates, and we were let out. We spent the night tied to a dock along side the parking lot of a Mexican restaurant La Familia.

While in Deep Creek (Chesapeake) Virginia, we did some grocery shopping and had super at La Familia Mexican restaurant.

April 11

We took our time leaving Deep Creek because the weather was going to be bad on tuesday and we were not in a rush to run into bad weather. We thought that we would take advantage of the protection that the canal would give us from the weather, as it is surround by trees. We would take our time and visit the visitors center, and maybe stay there for the night .

As would have it, when we reached the visitors center I went below and saw water on the floor of the boat. A mile before that point we had hit a log pretty hard and thought that we may have broke something, and that was why the bilge was overflowing. We also found that someone left the switch to the bilge pump off.

We emptied the bilge both by hand and bucket for about an hour. When we had the water level low enough to trouble shoot the leak we found that the screws to the sea strainer had become loose, luckily the problem was not the hull of the boat. Deciding not to stay at the visitors center, and possibly getting down stream of the next set of locks, in South Mills, incase the weather changed for the better, we left the visitors center.

When we reached the bridge before the locks in South Mills the wind was picking up, and we sort of went side ways in the canal because we could not hold a straight course for the amount of time that it was taking for the lock tender to open the bridge. He was having problems with the gates that stop the traffic. A commercial truck not knowing the problem, tried to go forward when the gate came crashing down on top of his windshield. By the time the police came to make his report, and the maintenance people came to repair the gate, we had waited an hour tied to the bulkhead, before the bridge.

Finally making our way to and through the locks, being dropped 8 feet we made our way to Elizabeth City, North Carolina, where we tied to a bulkhead along side a town park.

We will stay in Elizabeth City, for April 12 because of small craft warnings in Albemarle Sound and the predicted thunder storms.

April 13

We left Elizabeth City ay 6:30 Am and ran down the Pasquotank river for Albemarle Sound leaving early to beat the weather that was again predicted in the sound. There was a light wind from the beam and the sea for the most part was pretty light as well. We made it across Albemarle sound to the Alligator river by around 11:30 Am and through the Alligator river bridge a little afternoon, after running around one more time.

Made it down the Alligator river to where it narrows by 2:30, and finally stopped at the Fairfield Canal, along the Alligator river at 4 pm. We had to stop early because we are still apparently chasing over heating problems with the engine.

We have to stop tomorrow for fuel, and when we do, we will try to buy a water hose, with hopes that the one that seems to have a kink in it going to the sea strainer may be the culprit. From the beginning the motor never pumped as much water as I would have liked . Now we are in the middle of the woods 15 miles from the nearest marina. Bob says that if you like to be in the middle of nowhere surrounded by quite and woods this is the place to be. I have spotted a few eagles above us, and many vultures. I would also think that if you would like to be part of a scene out of Deliverance, with three men having a total of twelve teeth, this may be a good place for that as well.

April 14

We woke around 6:30 for breakfast, and to get an early start, but the anchor would not come up, it must be stuck to a tree stump. After trying to break the anchor with the boat for about an hour Bob had to cut it free with his commemorative knife. It is never a good thing to loose an anchor.

I have to say this about this knife. He used it during the first day of the trip, to repair either the torn jib, or a line at the bow of the boat. That night and for next few days he took the boat apart looking for the knife. He later found the knife in his shoe, I believe while we were tied to the dock in Deep Creek.

If you are going to spend any time on a boat don't take anything that has any sentimental value because it wants to seek water, or get sat or stepped on. I have my computer with me but I try and keep it in my backpack at all times.

We finally made it underway from the Fairfield canal around 7:30 and we made our way to Dowery Creek around noon to fuel up, we thought that we may need to work on the engine over heating but that problem has seemed to go away for now, also Dowery Creek is also in the middle of nowhere and the nearest place to find parts would be 40 miles away.

After leaving Dowery Creek we headed down and across the Pungo River to Goose Creek and are so far, anchored at a little anchorage at mile marker 160 . I say so far cause you never know what the night brings.

While going around buoy #10 Belhaven we passed Fred and Pat Manly on Marianne and also Merlin, both local boats to me in Newburyport. We past a Southern Cross 35 Nemo on the alligator river on April 14.

We have been eating pretty well, however if I was home I would consider some of our meals pet food. Tonight and last night as well we had pasta soup made with canned pork it was pretty good but way to much salt, so I will have to tank up on water and a coupe of Advil before I go to bed.

I had to reprimand Bob today for constantly being on the phone and also for always having to call his wife, or his friend Jonathan to find him an anchorage. I like to bang my own drum, my phone never works out here in the woods and in the eighties we had no cell phones anyway. We are anchored just a couple miles south of the Hoboken bridge. The days are getting long.

Tomorrow with any luck we will be at mile marker 210 Spooner Creek, then on April 16, Hammock Bay, one of my favorite spots.

April 15

Tonight we are anchored in Spooner Creek North Carolina . We had a rough trip across the Neuse River this morning after leaving our anchorage at Gale Creek mile marker 160. After the Neuse river we entered Adams Creek and had a real nice trip through it, passing a couple of large barges, one in particular was a barge carrying all of the equipment for dredging. If anyone had seen any of the dredging project on the Merrimack you can imagine all of it in one giant long barge. It pushed us up and out of the river for a second and we did ground a bit. Bob gets pretty nervous when we ground, but you just have to keep plugging on.

We grounded again as we made the entrance to spooners creek though it did not stop us we just scratched our way in.

There is a bad storm coming for tomorrow so we will be hunkering down here probably till Sunday April 17, I have to be off the boat by the 18th.

We saw our first dolphins today.

Saturday April 16

Sitting out a storm in Spooner Creek

Sunday April 17

Turned out that it was quite a storm during the night with high winds and tornadoes. We ended up dragging anchor, so we moved the boat to a dock near a luxury hotel. Bob went and checked out the pool and the water was blowing out of it. We woke early and headed out for Hammock Bay, but we got there to early so we proceeded down the waterway to Surf City, where we were able to get some showers and a real meal . We have been eating pretty well, last night we had salmon and angel hair spaghetti. We ran a ground a couple of times today on the way to Surf City, we also saw a few dolphins.

Monday April 18

Last day for me on the Bronwyn C We left Surf City at 6:30 after a breakfast at Hardies , not bad it was nice to have a real cup of coffee for a change. We made it out to the Surf City Bridge with time to spare, we were through at 7:00 am . We also made the next 2 bridges, Figure Eight Island, and Wrightsville Beach bridge, each on time which was pretty tense because a miss would have cost us a minimum of an hour. Also during today's trip we did run a ground a few times . Also the dodger was to dirty and old and was getting on my nerves today because I could not see out of it. The trip is now over for me, Bob will make the rest of the trip with his wife Dale. The last goal of this trip was to take a picture of Warren on Lenny, and Sharon Blocks, boat Discovery which I had found in the SouthPort Harbor Marina.

Stops along the way. If you look up couple of these spots you will see that we are pretty close to the ocean most of the time though separated by small stops of land and sometimes in large bays. If you got this far reading this log thanks for staying with it. You can have a cookie
Captain Ed

Star Middle River	Lat 39° 56.5'N	Lon 76° 27.8'W	Baltimore
Lake Ogleton	Lat 38° 56.5'N	Lon 76° 27.8'W	
Smith Creek	Lat 38° 07.5'N	Lon 76° 24.5'W	Potomac River
Chisholm Creek	Lat 37° 07'N	Lon 76° 25'W	
Deep Creek Locks	Lat 36° 44.47'N	Lon 76° 20. 69'W	
South Mills Locks	Lat 36° 22'N	Lon 76° 20'W	
Elizabeth City	Lat 36° 17.81'N	Lon 76° 12.57'W	mile 50
Dismal / Pasquotank			Mile 37
Pasquotank / Abemarle			Mile 65 http://www.albemarle-nc.com/albemarlesound
Alligator River			Mile 80
Fairfield Canal	Lat 35° 35.43'N	Lon 76° 14.43'W	
Anchorage near Gale creek			
Mile marker 160	Lat 35° 11.67'N	Lon 76° 34.77'W	
Spooner Creek	Lat 34° 48.44'N	Lon 76° 44.22'W	
Topsail Beach	Lat 34° 22.54'N	Lon 77° 38.76'W	
Cape Fear	Lat 33° 55.52N	Lon 78°00'W	