

B.E.E.R. cont.

Our speed kept increasing as we neared the Quietwater Bridge, but I still opted for motoring under it. We cleared the other side and the wind and waves increased to 15kts of wind and 2-3 foot waves. We popped into a starboard tack to try and clear the shallows at Deer Point. Once that was done we kicked up to 6kts on a port beam run with only a little stress from the confused waves in the relatively shallow Pensacola Bay. We sailed into the cut for PMSC and Becky furled the main and mizzen while I fired up the motor for the short run to the ramp. One of my latest "improvements" fizzled out at the ramp. I was getting tired of cranking BB out of the water so I bought a 2,000 pound electric winch from Wally World. Unfortunately, it didn't have the power that it was supposed to and we had a tough time getting Blue Bayou back on her trailer.

We parked and unrigged, took a shower, and hit the road. We stopped an hour or so later on I-10 at DQ for a foot long chili dog and Blizzard to celebrate another successful BEER Cruise. An hour after that we stopped at a basic, no frills hotel for the night, got up the next morning and made it home by 1pm.

Ed Note: The full unabridged version of Ed's BEER report can be read at his website - on the WCTSS Links Page.

St. John's River and Lake George June - 5th -7th 2009

It was almost beyond belief. Seven Squadron boats were anchored forty yards from Silver Glen Springs. It was June, and it was overcast, but what was so hard to believe was the temperature! It felt like a cool spring afternoon. Seventy-Five degrees felt very cool, especially after taking a dip in the crystal clear, 72 degree spring water.

The day before, on Friday, we'd all found our way to the little town of Astor, on the St. John's River. The river was higher than it had been the month before, and there was a bit of current. Bill Fite was setting up MoonShadow, his SeaPearl 21, when I pulled in to the ramp right behind Phil and Donna Reed with their WW Potter 19. After a few minutes, Dennis and Carol Marshall also pulled up with their Com-Pac 17 Suncat in tow. The floating docks at the ramp made it fairly easy to get going after our launch, and there was plenty of spots to park the vehicles less than 40 yards from the ramp right across the street.

There is a bridge at Astor and we let Phil Reed call ahead to open it since he had the tallest mast on his sloop rigged WW Potter. As I went under I saw that the vertical clearance was listed at 22 feet on a sign along the bridge fenders. I put that information in the back of my mind for the return trip, since a SeaPearl only needs 20 feet to get under a bridge.

Going down river was easy, but you had to remember that turning across the current took a lot more space as you were swept downstream as you turned. On both sides of the river were wonderful, and not so wonderful homes and cottage get-a-ways, and a few places to tie up for fuel and/or ice. The homes ranged from the palatial to the quaint including one that had a pontoon boat with an MG midget on the deck. I guessed that someone had a unique commute!

Farther downstream the Florida jungle like fauna extended right down to the shoreline - fallen logs, overhanging trees, snowy egrets, ospreys, turtles, and gators. I had a small print chart that I'd ordered over the internet that specifically said, "Not for Navigation" but I was able to make out most of the marker numbers, so I had an idea where we were. Four miles or so down stream, Phil moved Little Bit, his WW Potter over to "river left." I assumed that we were nearing the campsite that he had used the previous month. But with the higher water, I feared that we might not find it. Phil had the location well marked in his memory though, and we were able to cram our boats into the shoreline, or near enough to it to wade in. Just in time, too, as the sky was about to open up for a few hours with a deluge! Bill and I got our convertible cabins up and everyone ducked below for lunch and an afternoon nap during the rain squall. There was quite a lot of wind, and some lightning strikes, but we were snug in our cabins, and just waited it out.

When the rain stopped, we popped up and chatted from boat to boat. I got out and explored the Blue Island campsite. It was obvious that lots of people use it for camping or partying, but it wasn't the mess that it could have been. A large area in the center of a clearing was a long time campfire circle and there was even a supply of lumber for a fire.

About 4 pm we saw another fleet of Squadron boats coming down stream to the Blue Island anchorage! Richard Anderson, with his SeaPearl Sea Nile, Steve Wood with his Bay Hen 21, and Ted Jean with his WW Potter 15 pulled in and anchored off the site as best they could. The bad weather was over for the day, and we even saw some blue sky to the west as the afternoon went on. The campfire was stoked, and Ted passed around the "do-it-yourself Margarita" which consisted of Taquila, lime and salt in a certain order. Fun, but please do it in moderation! A few of the group enjoyed cigars in various sizes, and Phil, Steve and I worked on stoking the fire which with the wet conditions of the day was sort of a constant chore. Steve Wood regaled us with tales of being a Blimp pilot in the Canadian Rockies and in Turkey. Quite interesting.

The next morning, after a wonderfully calm and cool night aboard, we awoke and got ready for our big day of sailing on Lake George. The lake is over 10 miles in a North/South direction, and about 5 miles across. We had a nice breeze out of the southwest so we thought maybe we could sail to Salt Springs near the north end and then work our way south to Silver Glen Springs on the way back. Whisper soon took the lead, but we all noticed the large mass of dark threatening clouds to the west which seemed to be zeroing in on Salt Springs. So prudence being the better part of virtue, we altered course to Silver Glen, which was more of a beam reach and much closer.

Phil led us into the Silver Glen Spring Run, which as we got nearer to the actual Spring was lined with powerboats. But it was early in the day, and there was actually room for all seven of us up near the spring.