

Cruise Report
Spring on the Choptank Cruise
May 13-16

OK, here it is folks, the good, the bad and the ugly.....

The cruise was originally proposed for Wednesday, May 12 through the 16, but was delayed one day because of our schedule. As it turned out that, weather-wise, was fortunate.

Thursday, May 13: Eight CSSM boats were originally scheduled to be on the San Domingo Creek that evening; by late afternoon the Miller's-Grace, Anderson's (Prospective Members)-Tryst, Chuck Ellis-Ellis Island (with a new Yanmar engine), and the Campbell's-South Wind were comfortably anchored in the creek with a moderate 5 – 6 knot wind blowing directly up the creek. The S/V Gypsea, Pam & Jim McCloud, also arrived, but found they had a non-functional charging system so returned to home port to connect with a mechanic. The Dunton's called to tell us they would not attend because of boat problems.

The traditional Captain's Party started about 1700 Hours with enough appetizers to feed at least four more couples. At 1900-ish Hours, the Admiral of the South Wind announced that she had a hot beef vegetable dinner soup prepared for all who wished to have dinner aboard the South Wind—no one declined, so dinner commenced shortly thereafter followed by her famous brownies for dessert. About 2000 everyone disembarked for their own boats anticipating a quiet evening. Toward 2200 the wind started to pick up, still blowing directly up the creek. The Ellis Island remained rafted alongside the South Wind as the crews were somewhat concerned about the question of Captain Ellis having to deal with an anchor, having recently had some surgery procedures.

At approximately 2400 hours, with the wind now at about 20 kn., the crew of the South Wind realized the two boats were dragging despite a 28# plow type anchor, 40' of 3/8" chain and 60+ feet of 3/4" rode, in 8' of water, so we started the South Wind's engine, powered the two boats up to the anchor and pulled it aboard then had to drive the two boats up into the wind to re-anchor—this time with an additional 20' of rode. This was accomplished with much communication (yelling) from bow to helm of the South Wind (and back). Captain Ellis blissfully slept through the entire process. It didn't take long to realize we were dragging again so pulled the anchor a second time and after securing it, we woke up said Captain Ellis and re-anchored the raft with his 35# CQR and 100+ feet of chain and rode—this time it held. My conclusions from the event are (1) the mud hereabouts is too damn soft, (2) my Delta anchor & chain/line is not adequate for two boats of our size in a blow in this soft mud although it never failed to hold in New England & (3) I need to get serious about finding a manual windlass and heavier anchor as the present Delta and 3/8" chain taxes the limit of my 'arm-strong' anchor pulling system.

It now being about 0100 hours on Friday, Captain Ellis went back to sleep, but the Crew of the South Wind had so much adrenaline in their system that sleep for the rest of the night was fitful at best. Sleeping was over at shortly after 0500 hours when we all awoke to a tremendous crash and the sound of splitting wood. My first thought was that we had been T-boned, but it turned out that a local waterman had deemed it his right to pass us at high speed dragging what seemed like half of San Domingo Creek behind him. The splitting wood turned out to be just over four feet of my teak toe rail and drip edge. Fortunately within about 15 minutes a DNR Police boat came by operated by a Cpl. Tracy Campbell, a lovely, pleasant young lady, who took our report and took note of this same waterman still making a huge wake with no consideration of other anchored boats, and who had apparently not noticed her tied alongside the South Wind. She said she was going to talk to him about his wake; she probably also mentioned the damage he caused, and he must have given her some back talk (not smart); we could here the “discussion” from about 150 yards away. She must have gotten her point across because for the rest of the morning while we were there we never saw him making any wake!

Friday, May 14: The boats from San Domingo Ck. departed at various times throughout the morning and had a nice sail east from Broad Creek to the Tred Avon and Trippe Creek arriving between 1200 & 1300 hours. During the afternoon we were joined by the McCloud's-Gypsea--their charging problem having turned out to be some poor electrical connections—the bane of all things electrical & marine—but once found easily repaired, the Sokso's-Voyager, the Burke's-Chinook Wind, the Miller's-Grace, and the Kelting's-Makani. With the building winds and not too good forecast for Saturday, Captain Ellis, who was single handing, elected to return to Cambridge and get into his slip in lesser wind conditions than forecast. The Cox's called us to say that they had just gotten their starter problem fixed, but it was too late to start for Trippe Creek, but they would join us at the Cambridge Yacht Club for dinner on Saturday.

As promised Friday afternoon was spent quietly relaxing, reading, possibly sleeping, or waxing (Dennie). We were anchored in the South West corner of the cove sheltered by the building wind out on the Choptank. At 1700 hours we hosted another cocktail party on the South Wind with seven couples aboard. By about 1930 hours the storm was announcing its pending arrival with darkening skies and a sudden drop in temperature so the party ended shortly thereafter, and everyone returned to their own boats. A much appreciated phone call from Captain Ellis in Cambridge warned us about the pending storm's ferocity and tornado warnings. I think everyone let out 100 foot+ of rode in about 6-8' of water. The storm arrived a little before 2100 hours and lasted until about 2230. It was impressive—continuous lightning mostly to the north although there was at least one very noisy hit on the near shore off the bow. Some of the boats turned on their radar to watch the storm's arrival and reported in the morning that “the storm” actually included many cells. I sat in the cockpit to watch, and at one point when the South Wind heeled over about 10 degrees, I saw 43 knots on the anemometer. For a time we had hail the size of marbles. After the wind and the adrenalin surges died down, the entire fleet had a happily quiet night and sleep.

Saturday, May 15: The NOAA weather report for Saturday was again for building winds @ 15-20 kn. out of the south west throughout the day and possible T-storms in the late afternoon and possibly on Sunday. Most of the boats got a fairly early start for the Cambridge Yacht Club. The first out was the Gypsea at about 0800, followed by the Chinook Wind (headed home) and about 30 minutes later by the South Wind and the Makani (the latter also headed for home port). The Anderson's, who sail out of Oxford, decided that it made more sense to return to Oxford and drive to Cambridge for dinner than to sail down then have to make the return trip slugging it out on Sunday.

The sail up river to the Cambridge Yacht Club was delightful; most of it being broad reaches with 12- 18 kn. of the promised SW winds and reasonably flat water. We ended up with the Gypsea, Voyager, Grace, Ellis Island, and South Wind all in slips or on T-heads for the evening. The only incident of the day was the Grace grounding as she tried to get into the slip only to get free and then stick on an apparent hump just outside the slip...this incident can not be blamed on the crew of the Grace; the Cruise Captain mis-read the draft on the SCCM roster. The mud fortunately is soft so no harm was done other than JoAnn and Dave having to spend a couple of hours "on the soft". By about 1500 hrs they were tied up at a T-head with adequate water.

By 1700 hrs we had been joined (via car) by Molly & Pierce Anderson (Tryst), Barbara & Ernie Cox (Lynx), Linda & Jim Montague (Rejoice), Joan & Alex Collins (Avatar) and Alex's Sister-in-Law, Linda, for Happy Hour and Dinner—the group now totaled eighteen. Dinner was set up for 1900 hrs at two long tables in "the bullet" which has a three sided view of the Choptank and the Talbot county shoreline. From all reports everyone had good conversation, a good dinner and enjoyable evening; the group broke up about 2130.

Sunday, May 16: There were some light rain showers early Sunday morning, but in Cambridge ended by about 0930 hrs. Some boats departed during rain and all had left the Yacht Club prior to 1000.

Cruise Nights:

Chinook Wind	1
Ellis Island	2
Grace	3
Gypsea	2
Makani	1
South Wind	3
Tryst	2
Voyager	2

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Campbell
May 19, 2010