

A Few of Our Favorite Places Cruise

June 28, 2023 – July 1, 2023

The cruise was originally supposed to begin on June 26. However, the threat of frequent heavy thunderstorms and high temperatures caused us to delay the beginning by two days. We also changed the Wednesday anchorage to Dun Cove to make it easier for all boats to arrive at the first anchorage in a reasonable time.

Wednesday, June 28: The winds were out of the North/North West, which made it a fairly good sailing day for those coming from the north. Not so much for those coming from Oxford. Moonshadow did sail down the Tred Avon. However, as fate would have it, she was pushed by the winds and current into a trot line, which got captured on her rudder post. After hailing local waterman and Towboat U.S., one of the nearby watermen contacted the owner of the trot line. That waterman came out from Trappe. They tried to disengage the line but, in the end, had to cut it. The waterman was very cordial, and Moonshadow owes him at least a 6 pack. That was the end of Moonshadow's sailing for the day.

Mistral anchored in the north end of Dun cove and was joined by Whisper (with Barley aboard) and Capricorn. Moonshadow rafted with Mistral. Soon, Mystic arrived and anchored. Gambrinus, having gotten a late start, arrived last and rafted with Mystic.



At five p.m., everyone gathered on Mistral/Moonshadow for a "Taste of Belgium" dinner. A traditional aperitif of Kir or Kir Royal was served with appetizers. A choice of either a Belgian beef or fish stew followed and Leonidas Belgian chocolates for dessert.

Before adjourning for the night, Mistral announced that there would be a contest during the next day's sail to Solomons – a "Favorite Places Story Writing Contest." Each boat was to write a story about something that they saw or experienced on their journey to Solomons, beginning after they hauled anchor and before they anchored again. The story had to be possible (not a fantasy) but not necessarily plausible. Each boat was given a small notebook and pen to record their story. They were to bring the completed story to cocktails the next night for judging by the cruise leaders. There would be a "fabulous prize" awarded on Friday for the best story.

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It was a calm night, so the rafted boats decided to stay together.



Thursday, June 29: After an 8am captain's call, four boats sailed south to Solomons (Capricorn, Gambrinus, Mistral, and Whisper). Moonshadow and Mystic decided to stay local and sail the Choptank. As we left the anchorage, the smoke from the Canadian wildfires was so thick, the adjoining shoreline was barely visible. Moonshadow alerted everyone that they had met a pod of dolphins on Harris Creek. Mistral and Gambrinus both saw the pod of about eight dolphins approach and dive under the boats. The winds were less than five knots, so it was a full day of motoring ahead. Plenty of time to write a story for the cruise contest.

We arrived midafternoon in the Mill Creek anchorage beyond the Patuxent River bridge. Capricorn had passed by and chatted with friends who own the schooner Heron as they came up the Patuxent.



Everyone enjoyed comradery, cocktails and snacks on Mistral. All boats turned in their story. Moonshadow participated by email.



It was a peaceful night with little wind. The only other boat in the anchorage, Sea Dragon, was also the only other boat anchored in Dun Cove the night before.

Friday, June 30: Capricorn, Mistral, and Whisper had a leisurely morning as they were only going 5 miles to Safe Harbor Zahnisers. Gambrinus decided to start back to home port due to the 50 miles distance. They had planned to anchor overnight along the way. However, a problem with the head and coming storms had them press on. Fortunately, the winds were out of the south at 10-15. The ride was a bit bumpy, but they made it home after a long 10 hour sail.

The other boats had adjacent slips at Zahnisers' new floating docks. The bath houses and offices had all been remodeled since last year. Everyone spent the day on their own. Friends of Arsho and Taline from St. Thomas were also at Zahnisers and would join us for dinner that evening.

The cruise captains spent part of the day judging all of the fun stories submitted for the contest. The story titles were:

A Chance Encounter – Capricorn

The Curse of the Little Choptank – Gambrinus

The Hazy Lazy Crazy Days of Summer – Moonshadow

Barley's Dream – Whisper

We met on Whisper before going to dinner to announce the winner and award the prize. It was a hard decision, but the story Barley's Dream won the day. The fabulous prize of a tin of Belgian chocolates was awarded. We have included the winning story at the end of the report.

We enjoyed a dinner at Island Hideaway and some stopped for ice cream on the way back.



Saturday, July 1: The winds were from the south at 10 – 15. The waves were a bit choppy. But everyone was able to safely sail home.

Dave and Barb Taylor, Cruise Captains

Cruise Nights: Capricorn – 3

Gambrinus – 2

Mistral – 3

Moonshadow – 1

Mystic – 1

Whisper – 3

Barley's Dream

You could cut the haze with a knife as we motored out of the Choptank and headed down the Bay. There was no breeze and the sun was starting to bake everything. We were in the cockpit with our coffee, praying for a little air to sail.

Barley, on the other hand, was looking forward to a good napping day; no one making noise raising sails, tacking or any of that nonsense. He fluffed up his beds in the cabin and before long the hum of the engine lulled him to sleep; his back legs kicking as he chased rabbits.

Suddenly his Beagle nose twitched – something fetid and dank, redolent of decay. He sprang to the cockpit and went forward, prowling the deck and searching the smoky distance. And there it was – The Flying Dutchman! Tattered sails, seaweed trailing from the rigging, spectral figures pacing the deck!

Barley sounded the alert! "Avast me hearties! Break out the cutlasses! Light the slow match! Sand the deck so we don't slip in the blood!" he cried. It came out as bays and barks, but that's what he was saying.

Closer it came. A cable length away. Half a cable. Hearts in our mouths, unable to breath. Closer . . . closer . . .

The haze lifted and the LNG pier stood clear against the sky. It really did look like a ship. Really.

Barley gave on last bark in disgust, went below and was chasing rabbits in no time.

