

In late October 2011 I flew to Baltimore to help a friend move his Island Packet 380 to Miami. I had helped this friend move the same boat on two different occasions, once from Rock Hall, Md to Boston and then several years later from Boston to Baltimore.

A friend from Burnt Store Marina, Alan, who is the owner of an Island Packet 420 was going along to help out. With the owner and the owners non-sailing friend aboard we would have 4 people which should have been fine for the trip.

Alan and I arrived at BWI at about the same time and the owner was there to pick us up. We had lunch and then went to the boat to start getting ready for the trip.

The boat was a dump - quite literally it looked like nothing had been touched in several years. There was road slime and crud on the deck and topsides, the cockpit line lockers were molded and stuck closed, running rigging was badly worn and badly molded. The interior of the boat was a cluttered mess and extremely dirty and both lazarettes were chock full of "stuff"! I've helped move this same boat on two different occasions beginning in 2001 so I was shocked with the overall appearance of the boat this time.

We made a list of items that we needed from West Marine and off we went. We purchased new running rigging, light bulbs, materials for an anchor snubber, etc.

The next morning Alan and I (not the owner) started cleaning the galley, fridge, stove, head, and salon. We disposed of expired food and beverages, condiments, and tried to get a handle on the clutter inside the boat. We then washed the topsides, opened the line lockers (mud flats) and cleaned them out, replaced running rigging and I went up the mast to check the masthead and anchor light. We repaired a fresh water leak, finished installing a WiFi Router and looked for a mysterious leak elsewhere in the boat. We checked all the fluid levels, hoses, belts, etc in the engine compartment. At some point earlier the owner had a remote oil filter installed and then removed. A very large amount of sawdust and fiberglass debris was in the under engine area near where the oil filter was installed. We cleaned that up as well.

We spent several days prepping for the trip, provisioning, getting long underwear and warm clothing, and getting weather reports. Up until the day we departed we had reasonable weather. A cold front was forecast for the day of our departure but since we were headed down the Bay and then would be in confined water till reaching Beaufort, NC we decided to set off.

Underway:

We left Baltimore stopping at the fuel dock on the way out. The weather was reasonably nice till just about sunset when the wind

shifted to the North and then started building as did the seas. We were making our way down the Bay in the vicinity of Calvert Cliffs, with the owner at the helm, we had our first excitement. The owner narrowly missed an unlit yellow buoy while screaming that he could not change course - the auto pilot was on but the owner did not know (could not remember) how to disengage it!!!!

We discussed watch schedules and I stated that I preferred to do 3 hours on per person for the rest of the night but the owner stated that he wanted two people at the helm - me with his friend and Alan with him. So we settled in on a cold 3 on and 3 off watch schedule for the trip down the Bay. The small "Chartplotter" on board failed as we were about half the way down the Bay - as it turned out the plotter had to have new chart data entered fairly frequently as we moved. The Chartplotter would have been a good one for use on a small 25 foot fishing boat - not for a trip to Miami! The owner had additional chart data but was unable to locate or load the correct data so we used the onboard Dell Laptop, Visual Nav Suite and electronic charts.

The owner was again at the helm as we started up the Hampton Roads channel towards the Old Point Comfort Marina. We were being quickly set off course by a strong flood tide and it looked like we were headed for the rip rap at the edge of the Hampton Roads Tunnel. The owner asked me to take the helm and also to dock the boat. I'm pretty sure that not only could the owner not see the channel markers he could also not tell that we were being swept along by the current. We entered the wave screen at the marina and after quite a bit of "help" from the dock hand we tied up. The weather forecast continued to worsen with strong winds and heavy rains forecast for the next 24 hours but since we were going to be entering the ICW at Norfolk this was not an issue. Some of us toured the Casemate Museum and then returned to the boat where the owner was going to grill steaks for dinner. As luck would have it something was wrong with the grill so it took an exceptionally long time for the steaks but we finally had dinner. Alan and I did the cleanup.

We left the marina the following morning with strong winds and gloomy skies and started up the Elizabeth River passing by quite an array of Navy Warships. The sky fell as forecast and we discovered that the bimini and dodger were both shot - leaking like a sieve and that the strataglass side windows were also shot. I was at the helm and I drove the boat using the autopilot remote while looking out the port side so I would have some visibility forward.

Great Bridge Lock Temporarily Closed:

We made it to the Great Bridge Lock to discover that the lock was temporarily closed due to an unusually high tide and strong northerly

winds. We would have to wait for the tide to drop some before the lock tender could operate the lock. We anchored for lunch just outside the lock and while having lunch we were dragging anchor so we reanchored. This usually easy task was complicated by a chain jam at the stripper on the vertical windlass. We had lunch and then sat and waited for the Lock to open. I knew that there was no way we were going to make Coinjock so I suggested that the owner attempt to make a slip reservation at Atlantic Yacht Basin. We could spend the night and use the AC unit to heat the boat - it was really cold today and was predicted to be even colder overnight.

Later in the afternoon the lock finally opened and as luck would have it the owner wanted me to drive the boat to the dock. We tied up in the lock and after the water was pumped out we made our way slowly out of the lock and toward our slip at Atlantic Yacht Basin. At the North end of the Marina I noticed a Catamaran tied up at the fuel dock as we called the Dock Master asking for a slip assignment. We received our slip assignment and had to turn to the North and approach the face dock on the port side of the boat. As I started to head up I noticed that the Catamaran was headed our way so I accelerated into the wind and crossed in front of him heading for the dock. The owner and his friend were on the bow tending lines and Alan was on the stern with the stern line. The wind was blowing down the ICW at 25 gusting as I approached the dock. Unable to see forward and with very little help for the bow I kissed a piling at the dock and bent the bow stanchions pretty good.

Vision?

We left Atlantic Yacht Basin the next morning just after Sunrise in bitterly cold weather with strong North winds but luckily no more rain. The owner was distressed by the depths in the ICW and was having some difficulty sorting out the channel markers (pretty sure at this point that he cannot see them), more on this later. As we made our way down the ICW toward Coinjock we ran out of charting range with the charts on the Laptop! I asked the owner if he had the charts and he said he did but we were not able to locate them. I had my Laptop along so I set it up and we were back in business with electronic charts. As we got closer to Coinjock, channel markers were getting further and further apart, as the owners friend began pointing them out for him. More owner stress over depths and then he panicked and blurted out that "*were going to run aground*". I took the helm and moved us back to the channel and then drove the rest of the way to Coinjock where I docked the boat again. The high point for today was a great Prime Rib dinner.

We departed Coinjock just before sunrise with light fog and had a very long way to go hoping to make Dowry Creek marina. The trip was pretty uneventful with some discussion about depths and with the owners friend spotting channel markers for him during the day. We crossed the Albermarle Sound and entered the Alligator River with winds dying down some but still cold and from the North. We have a reservation at

Dowry Creek Marina but looking at the trip plan on the Laptop it is going to be well after dark before we arrive. As we exited the Alligator River/Pungo River Canal it was starting to get dark and we still had probably 35 - 45 minutes to go. I have been through this area several times in the past so the owner asked if I would drive the boat in to the marina. As we turned out of the ICW the private marks to the marina were barely visible in the failing light. We talked to the Dock Master on the radio and he directed us through the marks and indicated that he would be wearing a flashing red head light - "just drive for the red light". Perfect directions and the red light at the dock (on his head) were great - it was pitch black out by the time we tied up.

Alan prepared some of the catered food that the owner had put on board, nice big trays of various food stuffs that just had to be heated and served. Dinner was good and I took care of galley cleanup. Early to bed as we had another long day ahead of us in the morning as we headed to Greg's place, just off the ICW North of Beaufort, NC and a free place to tie up and visit.

Headed for Beaufort:

We left Dowry Creek before dawn headed for Beaufort and I was at the helm again. Just after dawn as we were heading South on the Pungo River I heard several other Island Packet owners on the VHF radio. I called one and we talked for a moment and wished each other a good trip. Alan made nice omelets with some leftover steak that we had from our first nights trip. We had breakfast, I cleaned up the galley, and the owner was at the helm with his seeing eye friend spotting channel markers.

Alan and I had a brief discussion about the owners willingness to have others dock his boat. As we approached our next stop just South of Ware Creek, Alan passed the helm to the owner. This turned out to be another show of seamanship (not). When the owner turned out of the ICW into a narrow approach channel there was about 2 knots of current behind us. With no apparent situational awareness of what the current was doing to the boat the owner very nearly ran aground on the mud flats just south of the channel. We had to provide some guidance on boat handling as we headed into the marina, again as we nearly missed a seawall, some docked boats and then had to struggle to get the boat close enough to the dock so that Greg could take a line.

We enjoyed showers at the marina, washed the boat down and then Greg took Alan in to town for fuel (and loaned us 5 Jerry cans), provisions and some boat parts. Greg and Kate had us all up for dinner that evening and we had grilled steaks, baked potatoes and salad. We had been looking forward to Kates' famous meatballs but that was not to be as they contain pork (the other white meat).

The next morning we checked the weather and it looked like we had just enough of a weather window to make it offshore from Beaufort to Charleston before the next front was going to blow through. We stowed loose stuff and made ready for a hurried departure from Greg's place.

Back on the ICW:

We headed back out into the ICW headed South with the owner at the helm. It wasn't long before the owner was having a problem with a Northbound tug pushing a barge. We were on the left side of the channel heading South and the tug/barge was to heading North and right at us. The tug captain hailed us on the VHF and I then discovered that the owner also lacked radio communication skills. We helped him with the communication, moved out of the tugs way and headed for Beaufort Inlet. Greg and Kate had driven over to Fort Macon State park when we left the marina and were on the beach waving and taking pictures of us as we headed out the inlet into the Atlantic Ocean.

We motor sailed through that evening and Alan again warmed up dinner and I cleaned up the galley. I added several waypoints to our Garmin GPS-76 so that we could get close to the Frying Pan Shoals channel markers. I wanted to make certain that we could physically see the markers before trying to make our way through the very shallow area. Alan came up on deck as we neared the first waypoint and I was able to use the floodlight to see the Green marker - yes, on to Charleston.

We continued our motor sail through the next day and evening as we made our way to Charleston. Alan was at the helm as we entered the Charleston inlet very early in the morning. There was a very strong current on our stern and with the background lights from the city it was very difficult to make out navigation marks. I provided some help from below using the Laptop and electronic charts and we made our way up the Ashley River toward the City Marina. We called the dock master as we approached the mega dock at the marina and he was on hand to take a line. The owner was at the helm as we started in toward the dock but could not see the dock hand and was having trouble handling the boat with the current. I took the helm again, turned into the current and brought the boat up to the dock and we tied up for the evening. We were secure and ready for a nap at 4:30am.

The next day we cleaned the boat, changed the oil and filter, changed the Racor fuel filter and proved to the owner that you do not need to bleed the fuel system after doing so and gave the boat a good inspection. A check of the weather indicated that a large cold front was going to be down on us within 12 hours and it looked like we were going to be stuck at the dock for several days. During the night the cold front hit and we were pinned to the dock. The only fenders we had were two flimsy dinghy fender pads that were quickly being chewed up. The next morning Alan went into town to West Marine with the owner and picked up fenders, a new GPS and some other boat maintenance items.

There was another IP on the dock very close to us - Jeff and his wife on Far Niente. We talked some and I borrowed a water hose so that we could fill the water tank on our boat.

The weather continued to degrade and Alan was running out of time. He had to attend a conference in California so rented a car and reluctantly drove back to Florida early the next morning. I was sorry to see Alan go, to say the least.

Now it was me, the owner and the owners friend on board. I spent the day doing some route planning and trying to decide if I really wanted to continue to "HELP" the owner move this boat to Miami. That evening we went into town for dinner and I was torn with the decision - should I stay or should I go. I had already been put into a similar position during an earlier trip helping the owner of an IP-40 move his boat and here the situation was repeating. I told the owner after dinner that I had volunteered to help him move his boat to Miami but that he had put me in a position of becoming responsible for the boat, himself and his friend. I was supposed to be helping out but that was not how this trip had evolved. I stated that I was going to leave the boat in the morning and that he have to deal with the boat.

The trip back to the marina from the restaurant was unreal with no discussion about the matter whatsoever. We got back to the boat and I started packing my things and getting ready for bed. The owner got a bottle of Brandy and went up into the cockpit. The owner made no attempt to discuss the matter and I headed back to Florida the following morning.

Never again will I volunteer to "HELP" someone move their boat!