



West Coast Trailer Sailing Squadron News

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B.E.E.R. Cruise

by Ed Combs

We took our time driving, due to the Jeep's shorter wheelbase, but still pulled in to PMSC around 5:30 for a total driving time of 9.5 hours. Not a lot of people from past BEERs, but I make friends easy and went to the Pig Roast. Another good meal by John Roddy. I wandered around the docks, checked out the other boats, drank a few beverages, and got to bed around 10.

On Saturday, I woke up around 5:30, cooked bacon and pancakes, and planned our day. We motored out into Pensacola Bay towards the Spanish 4 master that was visiting Pensacola. By about 10 local time Becky decided we should start sailing to Perdido Key and the anchorage, so we sailed ESE at a slowing pace. We were sailing near 2 Potter 15s and a Sea Pearl monohull, so instead of motoring we hoisted our new Mizzen Staysail. The staysail is really cool and we used it several more times on the cruise in light airs. We sailed slowly around the Naval Air Station on the point, dropped the staysail, and picked up the current going out the cut into the Gulf. As we neared the cut N of Sailboat Cove we fired up the motor since the dunes block the wind and the powerboats rip through at full throttle. Cleared the cut and killed the motor, and we sailed west to sail through all the anchored yachts on the cruise. There were more Macs (D,S,X,M) than I can ever remember seeing, 5 or 6 Potters, and everyone else. There were 20 boats or so anchored and we enjoyed sailing easily through them saying hello. We chose a shallows to the east of everyone so we would ground out with the tide that night. Two or three other boats tried to motor over near us and turned away because the water was only a foot deep. The other Sea Pearl sailed in an hour or so later and we met Dave and Helen from Tennessee. They beached/anchored 20 yards or so away. We decided to put the tent up, set up our chairs on land, and start partying. Our 9x9x7 tent went up easily, and Becky got our bed ready for the night. I was already ashore doing the meet and greet. I was impressed by the red hull catamaran. Too bad its 10-foot beam was too wide to trailer legally. I helped a few people anchor and couldn't get over how many people were just motoring. BB just sails so well we only use the motor in restricted waters (narrow channels and bridges). Allen, Potter 19 Joy, came in and we compared notes. Allen really knows how to make his Potter move. We pulled out a fake fire log for the evening bonfire, and spent a few hours circled around the fire listening to 4 or 5 musicians play and sing. Mike, Potter 15 1/2 Pint, has a beautiful voice. Some kind soul finally pointed out that I still had my sunglasses on about 9:30 - I thought it was really dark out - so Becky drug me off to the boat. We slept well!

Sunday morning I made big cups of good coffee, made eggs and sausage, took showers using our bug sprayer shower. found out that one of our fiberglass tent poles had cracked/broken but the tent still stood up. We motored past the cut to the Gulf since it was ripping, and pulled into Santa Rosa Island for a morning swim. While sitting in the tepid water along the beach we watched a dozen or so boats motor by and heard that two boats were dropping out with engine problems. That reminded us of the Sea Pearl couple that did the BEER Cruise without a motor a few years ago - Bud and Rhoda Tritsler sailed their Sea Pearl monohull "Nutshell" for the entire cruise without a motor, and they were in their late 70's. Anyway, we motored off the beach looking for wind. We kept stopping and testing for wind and finally got some 2 or 3 miles from Deer Point.

We popped the staysail out and moved along at 2kts or so while watching a lot of sailboats power by us out in the channel. The Drascombe Lugger came motorsailing by and we got to admire her lines. We sailed to 100 yards from the Quietwater Bridge, dropped the staysail, fired up the motor, and powered under the bridge rather than get beat up by all the big powerboats wakes. We cleared the bridge enough to turn SE away from the channel, killed the motor, and popped the staysail back up. We were passed by a few more sailboats under power but the wind was starting to slowly build. Our speed started climbing over the next couple of hours until we were doing 4.5 kts with the staysail up. We decided it was time for a swim, so we tried to strike the staysail and that is when we had a problem. I untied the halyard from the starboard aka and handed it to Becky, then turned to grab the sail. Becky gave a yelp and released the halyard causing the halyard to run up into the mizzenmast block. I made sure Becky was ok, hauled the head and clew in together, released the tack and stuffed everything into the sailbag. Becky put a little salve on her palm and berated me for handing her the halyard with that much load on it. We beached and swam/sat in the water waiting on other boats to show up. We finally saw several boats coming our way, and they were sailing. We pushed off the beach, sheeted in a little, and went ripping toward them at 5kts or so. It turned out to be Allen on Joy, Dan on Ol Geezer, and Catara - a beautiful Drascombe Coaster. We zipped by, turned and sailed between Dan and Catara to take pictures and began logging after Allen on Joy.

We continued on toward Navarre, listening to some of the boats already there discuss channels and anchorage issues. We sailed blissfully onto the sandbar the WCTSS always uses, set a fore and aft anchor, hopped out into 8 inches of water - an hour or so before low tide - and went in for dinner along the row of bigger boats backed onto the narrow strip of beach. Several people told us the water was really shallow where we were, so we thanked them each time and told them we sleep better aground than bobbing in the wakes the boat ramp causes. Had another poor meal at Juana's, but the Bushwackers were great. We sat out on the porch and watched some of the dock wankers, walked to the far end of the anchorage with Allen Russell, and yelled at the Grits bunch hanging out on 2 Beers boat. We wandered back to BB at dark and crashed.

We woke up about 6:30 and had coffee and oatmeal for breakfast. We struck the tent, dropped the mizzenmast to retrieve the staysail halyard, and motor sailed past the docks to the west. We turned to the west and got a light breeze off the starboard side, hoisted the staysail and took off at 2kts. We were becalmed for a short time and then the wind kicked up to 3kts or so out of the west, on the nose. We dropped the staysail, sheeted in, and started trying to reach as high as we could. Whoever said that gentlemen don't sail to weather was right. We were moving along at 3kts+ when we saw Allen's Potter 19 sailing off the south beach. We sailed by and yelled at each other as we took pictures. Allen kept up with us on a couple of tacks. One funny thing happened involving some type of Mac, probably an M, who came powering up to about a half mile behind us just before the wind shifted, popped his sails and started talking smack on the radio about sailing past all the little boats ahead of him. He blew a couple of tacks from our perspective, but it wouldn't have mattered - we smoked his butt. Within an hour they were lost in the haze astern of us.