



West Coast Trailer Sailing Squadron News

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A Month of Chilly Winds!

It's been a crazy cold month; for Florida at least! The Squadron held two cruise events this month, the New Year's Cruise from Pine Island's St. James City to Ft. Myer's Beach led by Ed and Becky Combs, and the Ten Thousand Islands Cruise led by Terry Poling. Both featured less than ideal weather, but everyone who attended had fun of one sort or another!

To read a detailed account of the New Year's Cruise go to : www.flwwp.com/sailing_dates.htm and scroll down to Ed's narrative.

Ed and Becky, Dave and Teresa Barnicoat, Stin Linkert, and Paul Scribner were the only brave folks who attended this event, even though over ten boats were originally signed up! The weather forecasts for the area made others think more kindly of hearth and home, although when the weather actually arrived it was definitely boatable!

Terry and Dawn Poling's 10,000 Island's cruise had as many as 18 boats signed up! I didn't know if Port-of-the-Islands could hold that many, but I shouldn't have worried. That place is huge! Lots and lots of parking for overnight trucks and trailers... if fact a whole field of space. A nicely equipped marina (more on that later) and a motel where if you rent a room, the slip is FREE!

I knew that I couldn't arrive on Jan 4th by 10am, if I left on the 3rd and cruised on down the highway to the Collier-Seminole State Park, which is only a few miles from Port-of-the-Islands. I was lucky to get a camping site, as the campground seemed to be filled with visitors from Ontario, Quebec, and Michigan. I moved Whisper's masts onto her extended port akas, and opened up her canvas cabin. Making myself comfortable, I waited for Terry and Dawn's Telestar 28 to arrive. By the time they arrived and set up it was already starting to get cold and dark, so we headed west towards the outskirts of Naples to find some fast food. Molly, their boxer, was all for that, and so was I!

The next morning I arrived at the launch site anxious to get going. I was greeted by Nick Lackey and Terry Clements who were already rigging their boats, and by Steve Gilchrist, who's Hullmaster 22, Tiger Moth was waiting in a marina slip. There were a total of three boats who had arrived from Canada, and they were planning cruises on down to the Keys and beyond. Our little adventure was just the start of their winter season. Also launched was Ken and Brenda William's MacGregor X boat from Kentucky, and an O'Day 192 from Ohio! Word was that a whole nest of SeaPearlers from Florida had backed out due to the predicted cold front. Winds were predicted to be 20 to 25 knots out of the NW, and temps were predicted to be in the low 30's... for NAPLES!

Ever the optimist, I just frankly could not believe that it would get that cold that far south ... in FLORIDA! **I was wrong!**

So we all proceeded to launch. Terry Clements with his SeaPearl Riff, Nick Lackey with his Ensenda, and myself with my SeaPearl Tri-Sport, Whisper all departed down the 4 mile canal which leads to

the Fakahatchee River, and the 10,000 Island maze. Terry Poling was still putting his Telstar 28 Erector Set trimaran together, and the boats in the marina were waiting for him. At first the current in the canal was helping to move us along, so I sailed down to the river. At the river, the current suddenly switched, and we were faced with a strong incoming current. The engine was engaged and we proceeded out to Panther Key at a much reduced speed.

Now Steven Ladd had called a week before and warned me about a strange character who was inhabiting the east (calm) side of Panther Key, but I thought he'd be gone by the time we arrived. **I was wrong again.** As I sailed up to the beach, a tall scraggly guy in a straw hat asked me if I intended to spend the night on the beach? I replied that I would probably stay aboard my boat. He didn't like that answer and basically told me to get off the island, and that he and his three family tents were "in possession" of this side of the island (300 yards of white sand), and that we were not welcome to land there. Of course I was angry and said a few choice words to him, but after casting off I realized that it wouldn't be much fun for our group to share a beach with the likes of him! So I went back out and told Terry and Nick that I was going to beat around the point to the other side of Panther Key. Now the other side was the windward side, where anchoring off the beach would put us all on a lee shore. But that's what we had, so I took off around the point. Terry tried to go around, but found the going quite rough and wet (as did I), and turned back. Nick followed me around in his Ensenda. Sorry to say that I didn't hear from Terry again, and I'm very sorry that we lost touch with him.

As Nick and I came around the west side of Panther Key I spotted two gold colored masts sticking up behind what appeared to be a sand dune. It was Steven Ladd and Genny Phalen in their seagoing SeaPearl, Thurston! They had prepared a camp for us with a great campfire complete with seashell and coral rock fire ring and formed seats made of longs and other shore debris. I anchored off the shore and jumped into what I thought was a few inches of water. **I was wrong again!** It was about two feet deep, and I was soaked from the crotch down. The wind was blowing about 20 knots by now, and even though it was the middle of the day, the temperature was only in the mid-forties. Ginny gave me her sleeping bag to wrap around me, and I sat by the fire shivering. Nick waded into shore seemingly unfazed by the cold water and winds.

About this time we looked to the north and the rest of the fleet was following Terry Poling's Telestar 28 around the north end of Panther Key via a passage that I had not considered when looking at the chart... you guessed it... **I was wrong.. again!** Terry and six other boats anchored right off the beach and most of the crews braved wading in, or inflated boats or used their kayaks. Dogs roamed the beach excited to be on dry land. Steve and Ginny invited people to warm up by their roaring fire. A pile of firewood gathered from the island started to disappear. Captains were deciding where they would anchor for the night, most not wanting to stay on the lee shore especially when the winds were supposed to increase overnight!

I gathered myself and went out to Whisper, changed into my bathing suit and lined her back into the creek where Steve had hidden his SeaPearl. Two stout anchors in the sand, I