

Presto!'s cruise February 29th 2012. Pinelands to the Florida Keys

Anchored between Big Pine Key and No Name Key in about 7' of water.

We left Pine Island on Monday 20th February, with Carroll, Sue and Mary aboard, who were sailing with us to St James City where Bill, Mary's husband would pick them up.

We managed to sail for a bit and then had to motor, as the wind was dying and we had to get our crew ashore, we were heading for the South East side of St James City, to visit Stanley, who is also a proud Presto 30 owner.

The charts showed very little water in the canal leading to Stanley's house but since he could get in and out of there, so could we.

We went in through the narrow canal, between mangroves, into a larger pond where Dolphins were having a great time fishing.

As we got further into the pond, houses and docks appeared and before long we spied another Sharpie rig lurking around the corner and there was "Dragonfly" and Stanley and his wife Svaha waiting to take our lines. Bill, Mary's husband had just arrived so the timing was perfect. We enjoyed a glass of wine which Stanley's vineyard in Virginia had bottled, a few crackers with some cheese and then Carroll, Sue and Mary & Bill left to go back to Bokeelia.



A delightful evening was spent with Stanley and Svaha. Rodger and Stanley compared notes the next day and did a few rigging adjustments to Dragonfly, which is quite a different layout to our Presto.

We left heading for Naples around noon but realized that we would be entering in the dark around 9.30 at night, decided to swing around to go to Fort Myers Beach, where a



client of Rodger's offered us a dock for the night at the Matanzas Inn and Resort. We had a terrific dinner at the restaurant, the best squid we have tasted for years and served with a delicious salad. Perfect end to the day.

The Matanzas Inn was very accommodating with showers, fresh water and WiFi and even a printer. Rodger had a good meeting with his prospective client who recommended that we put into Wiggins Pass for the night. We had a nice sail down the coast and sailed into the harbor.

Not a very good place for anchoring, OK if you owned a dock. The entrance was narrow, and very shallow at the edges, a centerboard makes for a good anchor while deciding where to go! We motored up the creek and found a small spot just off the mangroves, thank god for our mosquito screens!



The next day we set off for Gordon's Pass, motoring as the wind was strong out of the south east. Entering the pass, we turned right and headed south, stopping for lunch in one of the creeks along side the pass inside Keewadin Island and caught our first fish, albeit a bit on the small side, so we let it go and felt guilty about catching such a beautiful creature.



We found a nice anchorage close to Marco Island Pass, spent a very comfortable night and left early on Friday for Marco River Marina to pick up Ice, top up with fuel and drop off the garbage. The last marina until the Keys. After coming out of the river/canal we entered the Gulf at Coon Key Pass and put up sails and sailed to anchor that night in West Pass. The most amazing thing was the absolute silence. Both Rodger & I can't remember never hearing any sound, whatsoever. It was amazing. The other thing was that although we seemed to be in the middle of the Everglades there was cell phone service! Next morning was low tide and Pelicans and a Roseate Spoonbill were wading off the point of Tiger Key. Off again good winds and a fantastic sail to Little Shark River, we managed to sail the whole way, ending the day with incredible squalls, black clouds darkened the horizon and we dropped anchor under sail at 6.45 with an outgoing current. The Little Shark River had a light at the entrance and is deep and easy to Navigate in the dark, and since we had been in there a couple of times, we felt very comfortable sailing in. The sad thing was that we were the only boat anchored. In years passed we have seen several motor and sail boats anchored. Not this time. Maybe it is to do with the economy?



Sunday 26th

Pancakes for breakfast. Pelicans, White Pelicans, Grey Herons, Great Blue Herons, Great White Heron, Snowy Egrets: (Egretta Thula), Great Egrets, White Ibis, Kingfishers and Anhingas abound. We have yet to see our first Alligator; probably have to go further away from the salt of the Gulf. We were headed inland up the river to Oyster Bay and the Shark Cutoff, which would take us to the Harney River, making a big loop and back to the Shark River.

An interesting waterway of rivers and streams, with a couple of Chickees (camping sites consisting of two platforms joined with a portajohn in the middle, these are about 10 feet above the surface of the water). Both were occupied with tents and a small powerboat tied along side. After a few hours of motoring we put up the sail and set off back down



stream for the mouth of the Harney, a little convoluted but with a retractable keel and kick up rudder, no problem! A romping sail brought us back to the anchorage at Shark River, again in the dark...

On Monday we were going to sail to East Cape (Cape Sable) and spend the night, but since we had fair winds we decided to keep sailing to Marathon. What a great sail, lots of lobster pots and when we slowed from 6 kts to 3, we

knew we had caught something, we had to come head to wind and drift backwards to get free. Weed was also a problem around the rudder.

Monday night anchored off Marathon Shores, had a swim on Tuesday morning and then did chores and maintenance for the day. The ice was finished and we had warm gin & Tonic, time to move!..

Wednesday 29th February. We went to Captain Pips to pick up ice, a tiny Marina, which had not seen a sailboat as long as "Norm" had been there for 2 years, could remember. Not a place for full keel boats. Sailed with just the Mainsail and tonight we are at rest off Big Pine Key.



Until next time

