

Log of Ceilidh.....from Marsh Harbor to Beaufort, NC

Log of Ceilidh (Kaylee) Hull # 261 Pearson, 323 with Cliff and Bezy McKay

May 29th, 1999

Up at 6:30 am, we stowed the dinghy on the foredeck and readied the boat for sea. We were underway by 7:20, headed out north channel off Man of War Channel. We left with two other boats, Ariel, a 37' Tartan and Escapada, a 38' Tayana. The wind was from the East at 15 knots. It soon was gusting to 20 knots. We put in a reef. The seas were 5 to 7 feet, 2 feet more than projected, and they were confused to boot, coming from three different angles. The ocean resembled a washing machine with the agitator churning. Ceilidh leaped from one crest to the other. She made us proud, the way she moved. With the small 90% jib and a reefed main, she was sailing at hull speed. Wow!

We were perplexed by the weather. The morning forecast called "for a high to build over the area, with scattered thunderstorms throughout the morning." Kraig suggested we check the clouds with the radar. I had previously not been able to pick up any storms with it. The screen disclosed a cluster of storms about 4 miles ahead on our port bow, so we steered away from them. They passed harmlessly astern. The high was slow to build. We concluded it was building on "Island time." The wind remained steady, 15 - 20 knots from the east, but the clouds didn't say "high pressure system." We were puzzled. But we were bounding forward through the seas at a great clip.

Just before dark, when we were trying to decide the sail plan for the night, the wind increased a bit, so we bent in a second reef. Ceilidh maintained her speed and her jaunty attitude. She seemed to enjoy the challenge of the conditions, handling them with grace and excitement. Occasionally, she mischievously conspired with the wave caps to slap them with her topsides and send a couple of quarts of water into the cockpit to douse the unsuspecting. It was only once or twice an hour; the water wasn't very cold,

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so it was sort of a game.

Meanwhile, below, it was difficult to get about. The towels wouldn't stay on their hooks; it took two hand holds to stay in position; and the head, located on the high side of the boat was impossible to either sit on or stand at. And when you stood, the seat and then the top would fall down if you didn't hold them up, leaving you at least two hands short. In addition, since the head's water intake was frequently out of the water, it was impossible to pump.....Just one of the joys of passage making.

The full moon rose just before sunset. The night hours were never really dark. We just kept racing over the tops of the waves. Our course was four degrees off due north, so the east wind gave us an ideal angle for good speed and ease of handling. Our average speed which included the slower time motoring to the open Atlantic, grew steadily. We dodged freighters as they criss-crossed our course. We spotted them on radar, but the crew's good eyes picked them up promptly as well. We stood four hour watches with two persons on each watch, beginning at 9 p.m. The day watches were not formalized.

The bounce of the boat made food preparation, even food warming, impossible. We ate finger food, peanuts, fruit drinks, cheese and crackers, and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Fruits and vegetable snacks were very expensive in the Bahamas, so we had few of them.

May 30th

The cloud cover was confusing. It didn't look like high pressure. The wind still held from the East at 20 knots. Ceilidh was sailing beautifully. My appreciation of the boat and her sea-keeping abilities grew steadily. Other Pearson 323 owners had said theirs had done very well in off shore seas, but it was exciting to experience it. In mid morning the wind piped up to 25 knots. Ceilidh still sailed well and was comfortably within her lines. There was no indication from the clouds or the forecast that conditions might worsen, but we felt it appropriate to consider our options. We checked the High Seas weather broadcast with its computer generated voice of November Mike November to confirm what lay ahead. There was only

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more of the same conditions forecast. We were 158 miles from Marsh Harbor, and about that far, or a little more from every other port from Jacksonville to Cape Fear. The east coast of the US curves away from our straight north line, and in addition, the Gulf Stream, which is double nasty when the rest of the water is just nasty, lay between us and every US port. As best we could tell, our weather should moderate with a wind shift to the southeast. But the timing of the shift was not clear. Conditions where we were were very workable, but 25 knots blowing against the Gulf Stream when we crossed could have been very uncomfortable. Our average speed for the trip had increased to 6.7 knots, only 3 tenths of a knot below hull speed, a very fast average.

Meanwhile, the clouds were breaking up and looking more like the high pressure system we were expecting. The wind lay a bit. At this point, we didn't want it to drop too much, for that would have left us with big seas, light wind, less speed and a good jostling. For the first time, the seas became a bit more regular, coming from a single direction. The motion of the boat eased. We spotted a 55 gallon drum floating, end up, just below the surface. That was scary. It could cause serious damage had we hit it, but it was a boat length to windward. Other than that, there was little debris, large or small. The freighters continued to come and go, but we picked up each one at a the horizon and had plenty of time to avoid them. They are on you within about 12 minutes of a first sighting, and they cannot adjust their course or stop in time to avoid hitting you. It's really up to you.

For our second night, we had another near full moon and bright moon light, while the water rushed by. Ceilidh seem to glory in the adventure. The crew held up quite well. AJ, recovered after Mal de Mering most of the first day. The V berth was damp because water somehow got into the forward anchor locker and splashed through the louvers onto the bed. I still haven't figured where it came in, or how it splashed through the door. The port settee was very comfortable for sleeping, and the starboard berth in the main cabin was workable if you could brace against the center post. The head was still a challenge, and cooking was not yet an option. We made out with plenty of snacks and lots of fluids.

I noticed one morning that the head had a blue green color to the water. As

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a responsible and concerned captain, I inquired of the crew, whose urine had turned blue. Kraig confessed he had added a capful of Listermint mouth wash to the head to freshen it. He had noted we were using something (pinesol) for that purpose but couldn't find it. He thought it might be the Listermint. It was a good continuing joke for the rest of the trip. We made 165 miles on the second 24 hour run.

May 31st

About dawn, the wind lightened and clocked to the southeast. We were not at all unhappy at the change, because we were due to enter the Gulf Stream about 10:00. Actually, we were not sure when to expect the edge of the stream, nor did we know how wide it was at this point. We knew we could expect the stream to set us to starboard, and we knew the water temperature would rise. With the lighter winds, the seas laid down more quickly than I expected. It couldn't have happened at a better time.

At 11:15, the water temperature was up a degree and we were being set 15 degrees to starboard. This is the Gulf Stream. The temperature rose about a degree every 10-15 minutes and the angle of set increased, but we never felt a significant push from the stream. The wind was light. We power sailed, but the highest speed over the ground I ever saw was 8.1 knots for a few seconds, the average was about 7.3, a scant five tenths of a knot over our average speed. Where we crossed, the Stream was only about 30 miles wide, and it pushed us a little less than a knot. But at least it didn't kick us and knock us around. In retrospect, we allowed for too much eastward set of the stream. We could have simply sailed the rhumb line to Beaufort on this particularly trip.

We were still 160 miles from Beaufort, but having passed the hurdle of the Gulf Stream, it seemed like we were almost there. Some dolphins dashed at us from a distance to check us out. They enjoyed the game of non-tag with the "great red fish."....which we must have seemed to them. The seas were flat so everybody caught up on their sleep. We began to pick up the Coast Guard on the radio. It was Memorial Day, there were a lot of "Pan, Pan, Pan" calls of boats in trouble. Again the moon joined us at dusk and we played "Dodge Boat" with the freighters. We were "holding a constant

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bearing with one,” on a collision course, so we bore off and headed toward his stern, crossing behind him. A small fishing boat was almost upon us before his lights made any sense. We altered course to avoid him.

June 1st

By dawn, the wind was flat with the waves coming from astern. The sails were slack and slatting. It was time to wrap up the passage and bring it home under power. Beaufort emerged from the horizon about 10:30 and by noon we were heading in the channel, to Town Creek. We had come 509 nautical miles in 76.5 hours at an average speed of 6.7 knots. It was in every way a great passage. The weather could hardly have been better. We were ready to tie up, wash the salt off, and catch up on lost sleep. But first we had to check in with US Customs. I called. But instead of clearing us in over the phone, he said he would be out. A very nice young man came aboard. He chatted more than asked questions. He seemed more interested in a visit than an inspection. He told us about checking in a very large, very luxurious yacht with seat covers made of a special material that cost \$500 per yard. He said he found himself fondling the edge of the cushion, the material felt so good.

We managed to make a few phone calls, tend to a few boat essentials before eating a bite and slipping into the bunk as the sun slipped below the horizon. Despite our fatigue, we remembered to celebrate the sunset, Bahamian fashion with a salute with our conch horn . NOTE: We arrived three and four hours ahead of the other two boats that left with us, despite their longer waterlines.