Log of the S.V. Póg Mo Thóin

Ft Walton Cruise July 1-5, 2006 — by Lance B. Jones

Lance and his girlfriend Kitty left Atlanta early on July 1st for the relatively short drive to Niceville, Florida, Lance's home town. Arriving at noon, we had off loaded the boat and supplies in good order and even had the mast raised by 1:00pm. After dropping the trailer off at a family friend, we motored out of Boggy Bayou's Lions Park for Choctawhatchee Bay.

The first night was spent beached on the south side of Destin Harbor. We fired up the grill and had a wonderful meal of steak and potatoes. Unfortunately, one of the bars on the water stayed open to 3:00am! Needless to say, very little sleep was had due to the loud music being played.

We awoke to a beautiful day and went for a nice walk along the sugar white beach. There were several other boats beached there including a Hunter 25, Hobie 16 and an old Pearson 28. Returning from our walk we grilled breakfast and then headed across to one of the marina's to stock up on ice and to get a few snacks.

The Destin East Pass is a beautiful sight/site. The emerald green water was flowing in on the morning tide as we motor sailed out to the Gulf. The winds were light; but, we still managed to keep a steady 3-4 knots. We headed west down the coast staying down wind with a following 2 foot sea roughly 300 yards off shore. This allowed us enough depth to not worry about being washed ashore by the waves; but, still be close enough to observe all of the hurricane damage. I was amazed to see that the island had lost about half of its width! Whole military concrete buildings had been washed away – gone, vanished and no trace of them.

We anchored off, what use to be, the Eglin Officers Beach Club (No longer there) in about nine feet of crystal clear water. Kitty took this time to float in the cool Gulf water and get some sun while I snorkled looking for shells. I saw several Cobia and Pompano swim right under Kitty and a small Sand Shark lurking on the bottom several yards away.

After the refreshing swim, ***Póg*** headed out into the Gulf about seven miles off-shore and enjoyed the good winds and the jumping porpoise. We returned to the harbor, took a shower from my camp solar shower and then went to the Harbor Dock restaurant for dinner. In the future, I will not go there again. Both the food and service left a lot to be desired.

Póg was anchored further down in the harbor near a Pearson 36 in the mooring area. It was much quieter and we had a nice evening sleep! The porpoise were cruising the anchorage looking for breakfast in the morning. We stopped to get more ice and a crab trap at the marina on our way into the bay and the Inter-Coastal Waterway. Kitty's son and girlfriend were to meet us in the evening so we slowly sailed across the bay to Shalimar. We anchored ***Póg*** near the channel marker and spent the morning swimming and cleaning up the boat. Kitty has made super progress on organizing the contents of ***Póg***.

After that stop we sailed to the Brooks Bridge and lunch at Rick's Crab Trap. We docked at their dock and walked right in. They had great food and prices. I highly recommend it to anyone. We also learned that there was a Publix right up the road so we went up there for a few more supplies we might need.

We met Kitty's son and girlfriend across the ICW at Brooks Bait and Tackle, picked up 2 gallons of water to mix up some Celtic Lemonade. You take 2 gallons of water one-half a bottle each of Boru Vodka and Celtic Crossing (Irish Mist will work too) and mix in the lemonade. You now have a potent Celtic refreshment. How appropriate for the boat – ***Póg Mo Thóin***!

The ICW between Ft Walton and Pensacola is rich in beautiful scenery. We had an evening sail down past Pirates Cove and anchored off one of the inland islands. The grill was set up and we were ready to cook; but, we discovered the lighter didn't work. We tore ***Póg*** apart looking for another one. None could be found!

So, noticing a huge bonfire on the next island over, I grabbed a flashlight and walked the 200 yards. They were glad that I announced myself as my appearance out of the water surprised them. They were very generous and gave me half of their matches and tore off half of the striking board. I returned to the channel. During the trip over and back, I must have stepped on 3-4 Flounder or Stingrays and avoided that many more.

Soon after my return, we had a grilled chicken dinner washed down with copious amounts of Celtic Lemonade. What a combo!

We spent the 4th sailing and swimming! We motored to the Ft Walton Beach Yacht Basin for more ice AND a real shower with hot and cold running water. The folks at the FWBYB were great and please stop there if you can.

Póg returned to our spot in Shalimar for swimming and crabbing. We had plenty of both. Lance got in several running battles with crabs that were avoiding the trap. One got a good grip on his finger that left him bleeding! Well, who won out in the end? Ummmm that crab was good!

The Destin fireworks display was to be the main event for the day. So, we sailed over to Destin Harbor, beached the boat again and fixed a traditional 4th o' July picnic meal of hamburgers, hot dogs, crab, potatoes and corn on the cob. We were all stuffed. Again, we stopped for more ice at the marina before going to anchor for the fireworks. The location was great! We had fly overs by a flight of three restored T-6/SNJ's, two F-15s and a Coast Guard Falcon Jet. The first fireworks we could see, other than the gazillion privately purchased ones fired from the boats, was the Ft. Walton display and then the Niceville display was next. All of these could be seen clearly from our anchorage.

Finally, the Destin show kicked off at 9:30. What a sight. Several boats nearby had their radios tuned to the local station for the simo-cast of the 4th of July music. We were also having our own Celtic Lemonade to add to the glow. After it was all over, the hundreds of boats made their way to their respective marinas. What a circus! Everything from Johnboats to 40 foot yachts were heading home in the dark. There were plenty of marine police out so, everything was fairly safe (Ha!). We used my GPS exclusively that night to get to Brooks Bridge to drop Kitty's son off.

We wanted to get an early start on the road the next day so we did a 10 mile in the night sail back to Niceville. It was so relaxing just feeling the breeze and the vibration of the boat. GPS kept me true all night. Arriving about 2:00am, we anchored and fell right to sleep. We didn't even bother inflating the mattress we'd been using.

Awaking on our last morning in Florida, we readied the boat for the short trip to the ramp. On the way in, we came across a couple of pods of porpoise. All had at least two young ones. We slowly motored around them and Kitty took some great photos!

Alas, we arrived at the dock and readied the boat to go back to Georgia. Somehow, when I loaded the boat on the trailer, I shattered the port side keel guide. Don't know how that happened as everything was done slowly. So, I will replace that AND add the trailer guides as well soon. A great trip!