

2014 Texas 200

The Texas 200 this year was going to be interesting. There were approximately 60 boats participating including 14 Puddle Duck Racers (PDRs) or commonly known as Ducks. The Ducks were going to sailing as a group as a fund raising event for the LiveStrong Foundation to raise money for cancer. There were a few other small boats that would sail with them as part of the fund raiser. Many of the Ducks were painted yellow and had yellow sails. Many of the Ducks had names of those lost to cancer and survivors of cancer written on them. One side of the boat was marked "In Honor Of" for survivors, the other side was marked "In Memory Of" for those who lost the battle to cancer.

In October 2013 I purchased a 1973 O'Day Mariner for this year's Texas 200 which was going to be sailed from Monday June 9th and finishing on Friday the 13th. The boat's name was the "Ancient Mariner", thought it to be a good name and decided to keep it. The past four times I have done the Texas 200 I have sailed my 1976 O'Day Day Sailer II, although the first year in 2010 I was unsuccessful. I spent the fall and spring getting the boat ready and making some modifications for the event.

I got the needed work done to both the boat and the trailer near the end of May. The trailer needed new mast supports, new tires, bearing buddies, re-wiring and have the bearings inspected and greased. After the trailer work was done it was time to get



the boat out to Canyon Lake for a shakedown sail. In the late 60's and the 70's I had learned to sail on my dad's 1968 Mariner. When I got my boat on the lake for the first time it all felt very familiar to me and I was very comfortable sailing it. All my preparations worked as planned.

The last thing I needed to get working was my 2.5hp Lehr propane outboard. Last year we had a problem with it causing the pull cord to jam. I tinkered with it a bit and finally called the Lehr help line. After describing the problem to the tech, he told me how to correct the problem. His description was spot on and I got the problem fixed.

My crew arrived at my house in Dripping Springs, Texas on Friday June 6th a little after 1:00 PM in the afternoon. My crew this year was Mark Neinast and his son Michael out of Plano, Texas. When they arrived, the boat was mostly packed. We added anything they had that could be put in the boat as well as a few things I still needed to get in the boat. The rest of our things (coolers, sea bags, and outboard) we loaded in my Jeep. The Jeep was already hooked to the trailer, so when loaded, we headed towards Port Mansfield which was our starting point this year.

I had told Mark ahead of time that I was going to buy them lunch at the Salt Lick BBQ in Driftwood, Texas on our way to the coast. It has become my tradition to buy my crew a meal there before the Texas 200. We were lucky getting there when we did as we did not have to wait for a table. Once we were all stuffed, we headed for Port Mansfield.

The trip went well. We activated the SPOT transmitter on the drive to make sure it was working. Mark called his wife and sent her the address so she could track our progress on the computer. We were going to be using the SPOT this year so others that might be interested could track our progress on the trip as we sailed up the coast. They could also get an idea where the rest of the fleet was. Several boats carried SPOT devices this year. The SPOT can also send an emergency SOS with coordinates in case there is a critical problem that needs the Coast Guard to provide help.

We arrived in Port Mansfield about 11pm on Friday the 6th of June. Knowing we were going to get in late, we called ahead to Harbor Bait and Tackle where our room was rented. They told us they would unlock the door and we would be able to go in when we arrived. When we got to Port Mansfield we found the place easily and parked; then we went up to our room at Harbor Bait and Tackle. It turned out to be a real nice place with 3 beds which worked out great. We had a porch overlooking the harbor and a slip for the boat that was included with the room. We only unloaded what we needed to and went to bed.



Our plan was to prepare and launch the boat on Saturday. So late Saturday morning/early afternoon we loaded the boat with

supplies and got it organized. It took a little longer than we thought, but it was easier to do on the trailer than on the water. Then we headed to the launch ramp and waited to get in line to rig and launch. The wind was very strong. We heard later that gusts were up to 37 knots. The first time we tried to put up the mast, a strong



cross wind caught the mast and we almost lost it and the tabernacle over the side of the boat. I was pushing the mast up with Michael's great help to keep it stable in the wind, while Mark worked the winch attached to the jib halyard to pull the mast up. I had used this method before without a problem (and no one to help stabilize the mast), although previously the winds were light. After a short break we made a second attempt which was successful. Other boats with tall masts were having similar problems. Michael helped the guy on the boat in front of us who was having problems as well despite what looked like a well practiced method of raising his mast.

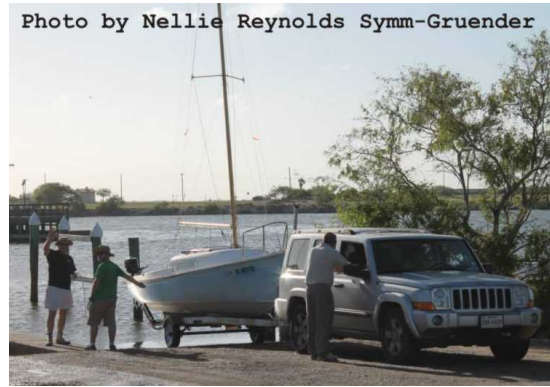
We got the boat rigged. Attached the outboard and after a few frustrating attempts we got it running. It hadn't been started in a year since I didn't get a chance to start it before heading to the coast. The motor worked great the rest of the trip.

While we were setting up the boat Andy Linn came by checking out the boats on the ramp. I met Andy during the 2012 Texas 200. He was the one who made a magnificent dive into the water to assist me when I had capsized my Day Sailer II on the fourth day of that year's event trying to get to the camp at Pauls Mott. He righted the boat and helped bail it when the boat towing us got to shore. Later that evening he performed a wedding at Pauls Mott.

Earlier in the year, there were several discussions on the Texas 200 forum on Facebook about several sailors getting cutlasses for "would be pirates". I said I would bring practice cutlasses that I had so they could learn what to do. These were original practice cutlasses used by the US Cavalry nearly 100 years ago. When I was doing Cavalry re-enacting, I used these to practice with others to do sabre work on horseback. When Andy approached, I pulled the two cutlasses out of the Jeep. I gave Andy basic instructions, told him how to hold it above his head to protect

from a head cut. Old habits, I hit the blade harder than he expected. The blade he was holding hit him in the head and left a nice bump. So much for being a pirate, Andy had failed "Pirating 101". I felt bad about it and apologized, but it was hardly noticeable by the end of the week.

We finally got the boat launched. Mark and Michael started the outboard and took the boat to the slip while I moved the Jeep and trailer to the parking area. I met them at the slip and we got the boat secured for the night. We went to the room, got cleaned up and headed for dinner.



At the restaurant we found three other Texas 200 sailors and sat down at their table with them. We talked with them while we waited for our meal. When they finished up and left, we were joined by a couple other sailors while we ate our meals. We had some good sailing talk during dinner. We then headed back to our room. This would be the last time we would be able to drive to get dinner. In the morning I would be driving the Jeep and trailer to our end point at Magnolia Beach on Matagorda Bay.

Sunday morning we got up early to attend the skippers meeting and turn in our event release forms. The meeting was at 7:00am. The meeting was in a parking lot across from a boat ramp on the other side of the harbor from where we were staying. There was a large gathering already there. We turned in our release forms. Then they called off the names of those registered to see if they were present for the meeting. Announcements about the event, a list of emergency phone numbers, and maps to the parking area at Magnolia Beach for those driving vehicles to the end point were handed out.

At the meeting, I met Hamilton Cowie and John Bruden of Reservoir Dog, the Day Sailer II that had traveled down from Colorado for this event. There were two other Day Sailers registered, but I never saw them. Matt Schiemer, the other Mariner skipper and his crew Chris Maynard (who sailed with him last year) were there as well. After the meeting was over, I drove Mark and Michael back to the place we were staying. We agreed to meet at the restaurant for dinner when I got back on the bus.

While I was driving to the other end, Mark and Michael were going to continue to get the boat ready. Get the sails ready and organize the cabin for loading our personal gear and coolers in the morning before we started sailing. They would also have the day to relax if they wanted to.

On the way to Magnolia Beach, we have to go through a Border checkpoint. When I got there, a few vehicles with empty trailers had already come through. I thought it might take a while since there was a van two vehicles ahead of me that appeared to be having a problem. The guard dog was barking a lot. After about five minutes, the guards directed the van to a side area for further inspection. When I got to the guard, he asked me if there was some kind of empty boat trailer convention. I told him what we were doing and to expect many more empty trailers. The trip to the endpoint was uneventful other than seeing several dead feral hogs along the side of the road. Glad none of those had run out in front of me along the way.

The parking area was at a convenience store in Magnolia Beach with a bar in the back. They would be keeping a watch on our vehicles and trailers during our week of sailing. The store also has a hamburger stand inside that makes a really good meal.

The Texas 200 Sailing Club bought all the skippers lunch while we waited for the bus for our return trip to Port Mansfield. The bus arrived at 2:00pm and we boarded the bus. Although it was announced that the bus would leave promptly, we had to wait about 10 minutes for a late arrival. Unlike last year, the bus was packed. There didn't seem to be as much conversation on the bus this year as in years' past or it may just have been the area around me. At the halfway point, the bus stop at a store to allow everyone to stretch and get snacks or do bathroom breaks.

When we arrived back at Port Mansfield we were given a choice to be dropped off at a restaurant or at the place we were staying. One of the restaurants in Port Mansfield was asked to stay open a little later than usual for a Sunday evening so we could get dinner when we got back. Chuck Leinweber had told us he would give people a ride (if needed) to where they were staying if we went to the restaurant. I was left off at the restaurant and called Mark and Michael on my cell phone to let them know I was there. They said before I left in the morning that they would walk over when I got there. It took them a short while to arrive. A large part of the group was in the dining room. We found a seat at the end of one of the tables and ordered our dinner. There was good conversation at dinner. When we had finished, Mark and Michael headed back while I waited for a ride. I have knee problems and can't walk long distances anymore. Once back, we got a few final things ready and headed to bed.

Monday morning was the first day of sailing. We got up early to a windy day. We gathered together our personal gear and the coolers and headed down to the boat. Mark and Michael got their big Yeti ice chest situated in the cabin. We put our bags in as well. We tried to keep a sleeping area open on the starboard side in case any of us needed to lie down inside the cabin to get out of the sun. We checked out of our room and turned our attention to getting the sails up and heading north.

Winds were strong, from what I heard they were over 25 knots, gusting into the 30's. The previous two years we had very light winds in the morning, but not this morning. Two other boats near us were getting ready to leave as well. One was a small homebuilt boat and the other looked to me like a Venture or McGregor 17. We set both reefs in the mainsail before raising it. We initially raised the jib, but then decided to bring it back down until we got out in the Laguna Madre where we could better judge what the wind was doing. In amongst the buildings of the harbor, true wind strength was a little deceiving.

While we were raising the mainsail, the small wooden boat headed out which was better for us so we wouldn't have to worry about hitting him while we tried to get out. As I recall Mark was holding the bow lines on the dock while Michael helped me raise the main. Once the main was up, centerboard down and we were

situated, we pushed off and Mark jumped on board. We were starting our adventure.

Many of the boats in the fleet had started getting out about 6:00am, especially the Ducks and other smaller boats. We got going after 8:00am. We had to sail about a 100 yards from the dock and then turn to starboard which would take us east to the mouth of the harbor. As we made our turn we saw the wooden boat that left just before us capsized. The sailor had righted it, but it was swamped and he was hanging on to the side of his boat. We asked if he needed assistance. He said his friends were on the way (that was the boat tied up next to him). We saw one of his cushions in the water and Michael picked it up. We told him we would give it back at camp. As we pulled away from him we saw the other boat under power pulling alongside. We headed on towards the mouth of the harbor.

Having come out of this harbor before, I made the decision to not follow the channel east a couple miles and then turn north into the main channel. Instead we would cut the corner and sail a route northeast until we hit the main channel. I have done this in the past without a problem. In the past however, I have followed the channel markers a few hundred yards before making my small turn to port, this time I turned sooner than in the past. Having sailed my Day Sailer in the past, I was use to needing less water than I needed with the Mariner. Not having sailed this boat enough before the trip, I didn't have as much of a feel for where the Mariner centerboard was in relation to the amount of line used on the downhaul. As we started to sail on our new heading we saw another small boat sailing down the channel heading east. The strong winds appeared to be causing him some difficulty. It was then we noticed that despite the sail being set and we were heeling, we didn't appear to be moving. Realizing we were probably aground, we raised the centerboard a bit and started to move with a bunch of mud to our stern. We bumped bottom a little more and brought the centerboard up a little more. In a short time we were in water deep enough to let the centerboard back down, but not full down. The wind was definitely strong and holding course was difficult.

We continued on this course until we got to the main channel and turned more to port to get into the channel staying on starboard tack. With the strong wind and the waves, we decided to leave the jib secured on the fore deck and continue on under the main

only. Steering was difficult with the waves coming from astern; the boat would occasionally surf down a wave. Checking the GPS, our speed was between 6 to 7 mph on average with peaks up to about 9 mph.

We could see a lot of the fleet ahead of us as well as several boats behind us. We started closing in on some of the boats ahead of us, and some of faster boats behind us were catching up. All of the boats were sailing with reduced sail, some more than others. As we approached the land cut, we saw our first barge of the trip. We moved just outside of the channel on our starboard side to let the barge pass; then moved back into the channel and continued on. As we moved along, some boats pulled out of the channel into shallow water to make adjustments to their sails or boats.



As we entered the land cut, the waves reduced in size and sailing, as well as holding course became easier. Shortly after entering the land cut we saw the "Duck" fleet beached along the eastern side. A few other boats were beached with them. We called out to one of the boats to find out what was going on. The skipper of the boat said it was a lunch break. We found out later that the



Ducks were making repairs. A short while after passing the Ducks, we were passed by Matt and Chris in the other Mariner. They had their jib up with their reefed main sail. We were sailing under a reefed main only. My Mariner, being fairly new to me, I was still getting used to how she handled. One thing for sure though, she was a lot more stable than my Day Sailer was. The heavy

centerboard and ballast really was noticeable.

The land cut is a part of the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) that has been dredged out of land areas. It is a few hundred feet wide. The eastern side is deeper than the western side, so we sailed along the eastern side. There are also fishing buildings on stilts placed sporadically along the way. Some are well maintained, some not. Most have docks; with some having large docks as well. All the buildings have their own water and power supply.

Photo By Michael Neinast



In past years, we started seeing dolphins surfacing in the land cut. This year we didn't see any, perhaps due to the high winds stirring up the water too much.

Eventually we could see ahead where boats were beaching. As we closed on the shore, Mark was at the helm. I directed him to a place to beach the boat. As we later found out, I had found the muddiest spot. As we came to the shore we brought the centerboard up and kicked up the rudder blade. I had modified the Mariners rudder a bit to allow the blade to come most of the way out of the water. In 2011, the blade on my Day Sailer rudder jammed in the mud when pushing off from shore and the rudder head cracked. We had been able to do sufficient repairs that year to continue on. From that experience, I modified my Day Sailer blade to rise out of the water the following year, and I followed this practice with the Mariner rudder.

Once we were as close to shore as the boat was going to get, Michael got the anchor ashore and set it, while Mark cleated the line on the bow. While they set the anchor, I got the sails tied down to the boom. The wind was still blowing very strong. Mark and Michael went about the task of setting up their tent. They found a good flat place. I had planned to sleep on the boat, so I didn't go ashore. I'm a heavy man with bad knees and walking in the mud can be hard. Once out of the water, the beach is solid, but no good place for me to sit where I can get up easily. I did get out of the boat briefly, but found I sank in the mud more than I wanted to.

Photo By Michael Neinast



Photo By Michael Neinast



After Mark and Michael got their tent up, they put their gear inside to help hold it down, then after a short while, they got inside to get out of the wind. I decided to lie down on the port bench seat in the cockpit and stretch out. The seat was low enough below the gunwale to get me out of the wind. The wind was blowing so hard that the boat was heeling to port as if we were still sailing, further blocking me from the wind.



While I was taking a nap (or trying to), the wind was causing problems for the tent. Their tent poles were breaking. Someone helped Mark repair the damaged poles, but they didn't last. When I decided to get up, the wind had died down a little and the Ducks had arrived. A few boats had arrived ahead of them. We had found out when the Ducks arrived that during the days' sail, they had 5 rudder failures, a boat capsized with dismasting, and few other equipment failures and damage. They had repaired en-route (the beaching near the start of the land cut) and continued to camp. The rudder failures were caused by parts being screwed together rather than through bolted. They bolted the parts together and solved their problem.

The tent was having major structural problems. One of the other sailors suggested to Mark that they move their camp to an area down the beach that had some protection from the wind. So they gathered everything up and moved to the far end of the beach. I didn't see much of Mark and Michael the rest of the evening other than when they came by to get dinner and beer out of the coolers. Mark had earlier, taken the cushion from the boat that had capsized when we left in the morning in order to try to return it to the owner. I had some beef jerky for dinner.



Just before dark, I got myself situated in the boats' cabin on the starboard side. As the week went on, I would get a little more comfortable each night. I had a small fan to circulate the air and a good light for when I needed it. The big Yeti cooler in the cabin with me proved to be a good place



to lay things on. I pulled out my Kindle tablet and tried to get access to the internet. I wanted to post on the Day Sailer forum how the first day had gone, but I couldn't get a signal. There was no cell phone signal either. Since I had a way to recharge my tablet this year, I decided to watch a movie before going to sleep. I had a good nights' sleep, except for some kind of bug that bit me a few times during the night. Fortunately the bug wasn't a problem after that night.

Tuesday morning I woke early to the Duck fleet and other small boats heading out at first light. The wind was considerably lighter than the day before. The Ducks sailed, camped, and left as a group during the event. I pulled out my camera and took pictures of them as they left including the now famous Chevy Duck. One by one they left the beach and headed down the channel.



After the small boats and Ducks left, I cleaned up the boat a bit while I waited for my crew to show up. I wasn't even sure where they had camped. Only thing I knew was that it was a lot further down the beach than I was willing to walk. I adjusted some of the rigging and got the sails untied to get ready to raise them. I started to wonder after 7:30am if they were still sleeping. I found some other things to do while I waited. After a while I saw them coming from the very far end of the beach. Glad I didn't walk down there.



When Mark and Michael reached the boat, we got their gear loaded. Mark showed me his damaged poles and said he didn't know if they would work a second night. I told him I had my two-man tent on board they could use if they wanted to use it. I had brought it in case sleeping in the cabin didn't work out.



Mark said he found the guy that the cushion belonged to. He said that the sailor had told him they had abandoned his boat at Port Mansfield after several attempts to sail it in the high winds. He then went with his friends on their boat and left his boat at

Port Mansfield to be retrieved at the end of the event. He wasn't the only capsized on Monday, there were others.

Once things were loaded we hoisted the sails, released the anchor from shore and tried to push the boat out. We had sailed easily in, but it seemed shallower pushing out. We assumed that tide may have been lower. On this part of the coast the tide doesn't fluctuate much more than a foot, plus or minus. We got out to where we could sail, but only managed to cross the channel and ground again. We soon got going and headed down the channel. The winds were lighter than the previous day, a welcome relief after the previous day. We sailed under full sail, no reefs today. We coasted along and passed Matt's Mariner that was sailing under main only while they had their morning coffee. They would pass us later after they put up their genoa. As we sailed downwind, we were unable to use the whisker pole for the jib as it was damaged. The whisker pole would be unavailable to us the rest of the week.

As we passed a few boats, we could see the bulk of the fleet ahead of us, and several boats behind us still leaving camp. It

was a nice day for sailing, although a little cloudier than normal. A few hours after we started as we got out of the land cut into more open water we started to see dolphins surfacing. We enjoyed watching them. Trying to get pictures of them was difficult. You can watch where they dive below the surface, follow along and see them resurface, but when trying to do the same technique with a camera they come up in a place you just don't anticipate.



Photo by Nellie Reynolds Symm-Gruender

Ahead of us we could see Kevin's McGregor 26x with his pirate flag and his large black UPS sail. We closed on him and then passed him. A little while later Kevin passed us, and soon Matt's Mariner caught up to us and then passed us both. As we approached the bulk of the fleet, the wind began to drop off a bit. In the distance we could see the yellow sails that most of the Ducks were using. We soon passed



Kevin again and started to catch up to the fleet. By noon the wind had really become light, we could still make headway, but speed wasn't great. We began to pass up the Ducks and other small boats that were hardly moving.



Just before 2:00pm the wind started to pick up again and was shifting more to the east. The clouds had cleared out with the freshening wind and the skies became clear. The boat began to pick up speed and we began to pass up boats that were ahead of us. We were probably a couple hours away from camp 2 at the point the wind freshened.



As the afternoon wore on the wind continued to freshen.

This is common on the Texas coast as the day heats up. In the morning, most of the fleet was ahead of us, now the bulk of the fleet was behind us.



We started to see some of the boats ahead of us start to turn out of the channel and head for camp 2.



We were following behind an Eclipse 6.7 and noticed they weren't turning off where most of the other boats had turned for camp. We made our turn and decided the boat ahead of us had a different course planned that maybe had deeper water. We later found out that their rudder had popped out of the gudgeons and they had lost steerage causing some hectic moments. The Texas 200 is known to be hard on rudders.

As we turned off out of the channel, we could see bottom in some places. We brought the centerboard up some to reduce our draft.



We continued on our course watching the water depth as we went. Several boats were already anchored in the shallow water of the camp anchorage. We sailed as close as we could get to shore. Once the sails were down, Michael pulled the boat a little shallower and set the anchor.

We checked for cell phone signal and had none again. My cell phone briefly had a very weak signal, but then it was lost. I sent an "Everything OK" message out on the SPOT to try to notify anyone following us that we were OK despite no contact.

Mark and Michael went ashore to find a place to camp. Hamilton Cowie and John Gruden from the Day Sailer "Reservoir Dog" came by the boat and asked if I wanted to see their boat. They had made some modifications per articles I had written from my past Texas 200s which I had sailed my Day Sailer. They also had their own improvements. We had been in e-mail contact prior to the event.



We walked over to their boat in the shallow water, perhaps a foot or so deep. The water was clearer here than at camp 1 and not near as muddy. The bottom had more of a sand/mud mixture. It was a little hard for me to walk, but not too bad. We talked to a few other sailors along the way.

Their Day Sailer was a newer boat than mine and was a very good looking boat. They showed me what they had done to prepare it and we talked about Day Sailers for a while.

When I got back to the boat, Mark and Michael were back from their exploration of the sand and grass beach. This beach had some places that



were better protected from the wind, although the wind was considerably less than the previous day. Several people were in the water relaxing and talking. I thought about getting in the water, but sat in the cockpit with Mark and Michael instead. Mark then asked me if they could sleep in the cockpit instead of

trying to set up their damaged tent. I said that wouldn't be a problem. If we hadn't had so much packed into the cabin, there would have been room for someone to sleep there. But we had supplies for a week for three people in the boat and a really big cooler and there was just barely enough room for me.

The sun was hot in the late afternoon with no clouds in the sky. No shade onshore either. I then got the idea to pull out my cockpit tent and set it up to provide shade. I had bought the used cockpit tent on eBay about six years ago and never used it, even though it has been carried on every Texas 200 I've been on. We got it set up despite not having the right attachments for the rub rail. We manage to get it up anyhow. The lower edges were designed to roll up, so we did that. The air blowing through the cockpit without the sun beating down on us made things a lot more comfortable.

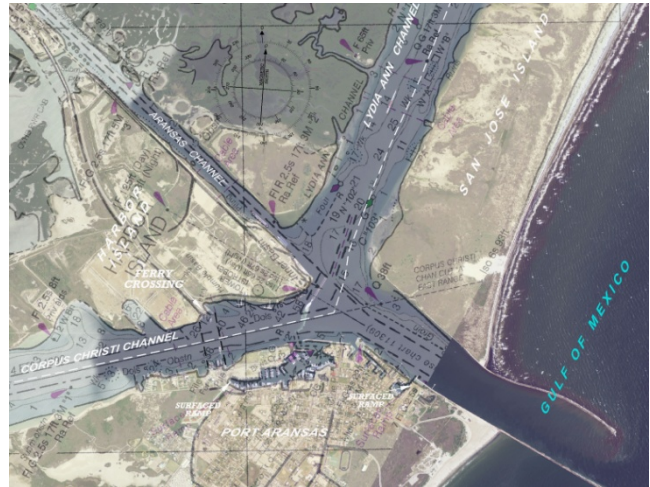


The Duck fleet arrived at camp and beached. Shortly after arriving they left and headed further north about 7 or 8 miles to reduce their sail the following day which was going to be longer than each of the previous days had been. They had a few hours they could sail before it would get dark.

When the sun had set a bit and was not as hot, we took down the cockpit tent as we no longer needed the protection from the sun. With the offshore breezes all night, mosquitoes were not a problem. We got Mark and Michael's gear out of the cabin into the cockpit. I moved into the cabin to get out of the way. After organizing the cockpit a bit, Mark pulled out his propane stove to cook some dinner. Michael got what he needed out of the coolers. The food I brought for myself did not require refrigeration, while my crew brought food that needed to be kept cold. I usually don't eat much when sailing the Texas 200, but accepted the offer of some of the food that was cooked. As I recall, Mark had cooked up some vegetables and some chicken. It was way better than the Hormel microwave meal that I planned to eat cold and I thanked them for it. They offered more than I could eat, so I declined as I could barely eat what they gave me, but it was most appreciated. After eating they finished getting their sleeping arrangements set up and we bedded down for the night.

Before going to sleep, I checked if I had a 4G signal for my Kindle tablet. No signal, so there would be no report to the Day Sailer forum or the Mariner forum. I put the tablet on a charger for the night and went to sleep.

Wednesday morning we woke early. Several boats had left at first light and were already headed north. Our goal today was to sail to camp 3 at Pauls Mott. This would be a long days' sail. The winds were around 10 knots. Not only would today be a long sail, but we would be crossing Corpus Christi Bay and pass through the



ferries at the highway crossing at Port Aransas. There is no bridge where the highway crosses at Port Aransas so the State of Texas maintains a fleet of ferries to get cars across. They operate every day, 24 hours a day. We also might have to deal with shipping traffic in both the Corpus Christ Channel and Lydia Ann Channel which meet at an opening to the gulf which means large ocean going ships can come through as well as barges.

Mark and Michael had commented that it had been a mistake to take down the boom tent before they went to sleep as dew had settled on them during the night, giving them a chill. I remembered that happening to me in 2011 the one night we slept on the Day Sailer with no boom tent up. We stowed the gear from the cockpit into the cabin. We also put enough water bottles in a canvas bag for what we drink during the day. We had filled the water bottle bag each day before heading out. Our water was stored on the quarter berth section under the cockpit. The bag made it easier to get water during the day.

As we raised sails, several boats were starting to leave, and like us several more were getting ready. The fastest boats would take their time, have breakfast, then leave. I had remembered using this camp area in 2011, and that year it was an easy sail out to the channel. Not this year however. We had only gone a few hundred yards when the centerboard (which was only partially down) hit bottom. We pulled the board up all the way and Michael

got off the boat in less than knee deep water. He pushed us off the high spot we had grounded on and got back aboard. We sailed another short distance and grounded again. We noticed other boats having the same problem. Michael went over the side again to push us off. This time the water got deeper a lot faster and Mark had to help get him back on board. We cleared our next grounding by just raising the centerboard, then finally we weren't hitting bottom anymore. We had passed a few boats that had pulled out ahead of us. We were now in the channel and on course. We got out some Clif bars and jerky for breakfast.

As we sailed up the channel we passed Kelly Davis in his rowboat. He was attempting to row the whole distance, but pulled out at Aransas Pass. He made it over half way. Soon after passing Kelly, we reached Marker 37 where there is a marina and a place called Snoopy's. Matt in the other Mariner had left well ahead of us and when we reached this point, we could see him tied up at the dock. He was getting an "ice" resupply. There were several other boats tied up as well getting ice re-supply.



Photo By
Nellie Reynolds Symm-Gruender

We still had ice in the big Yeti cooler. Mark had done a good job of preparing the cooler for the trip by keeping ice in it for a week and it was paying off. We also only



accessed this cooler in the evenings, so it was closed most of the time helping to preserve the ice blocks Mark had placed in it before we left. Anything that needed to be kept cold and accessed during the day was in a small cooler.

We decided to not stop and head for Corpus Christi Bay. We passed Snoopy's and sailed under the Kennedy Causeway Bridge and into the channel which would lead us to the bay. Along the channel we could see birds standing in the shallows along each side. As we sailed along we were soon joined by dolphins surfacing alongside the boat. We saw a couple young dolphins as well. One dolphin would swim alongside the bow switching sides from time to time. They seemed to know when someone was trying to take a picture because they would suddenly dive below the

surface and never surface where you would expect them too. We really enjoyed watching them play. As we reached the bay, the dolphins moved to the next boat behind us.

Consulting our charts as we came out of the channel we looked for water that would be deep enough to sail before we made a slight turn to starboard. We were no longer going to follow the channel markers along the ICW, but instead were going to cut across the bay passing between Mustang Island and Shamrock Island. Shamrock Island is a bird sanctuary and landing on the island is not allowed. The sail across the bay was enjoyable with good winds and not any large chop. There is a shallow place along the route between the islands and Mark wanted to get some navigation practice, so he was at the helm. As we got close to the bird sanctuary, Michael got out his camera to see if any good pictures were to be had, but found very few.

Once past the shallow area, our next goal was Corpus Christi Channel heading to Port Aransas. From the bay we would make a turn to starboard and sail northeast up the channel after navigating through Stingray Hole. Stingray Hole is a narrow twisty channel. One of the warnings about Stingray Hole is that if a large ship is passing through the main channel when trying to get through it, the water can be sucked out leaving a boat high and dry for a short time. We were fortunate there were no large ships when we went through. Mark again took the helm to navigate through this area. We only bumped bottom once, and made our turn to starboard to get out into the main channel. We sailed up the channel staying fairly close to the wind so we could stay on the south side of the channel. The wind had gotten a little stronger, which is common as the day gets hotter. We wanted to stay as close as possible to the south shore to provide more maneuvering room going through the ferry crossing. We also did not want to have to tack while passing the ferries. We were heeling a fair amount as we moved down the channel and both Michael and I would hike out on the rail as needed. I rarely hiked out on my Day Sailer when sailing, but was really comfortable hiking out on the rail of the Mariner.

As we headed down the channel we saw a barge moving in our direction. It was closer to the north side of the channel so we were pretty sure we could pass it without a problem. The Corpus Christi Channel is about three times wider than the land cut providing much more room. Finally we got to the ferry crossing

and we were able to get past them without incident. The ferry captains are very good at avoiding us.

We passed the ferries and headed to where we needed to turn to port and head north again up Lydia Ann Channel. As we prepared to make our turn into the channel, we could see the "Duck Fleet" beached about half way up the channel.

We made our turn and headed north. There were several barges parked on the north end of the channel, the Ducks were just south of them. There were also some people parasailing ahead of us. I

took back over at helm to give Mark a break after being at the helm all the way up the channel. The course I planned to sail was around the west side of Mud Island as I always have done in the past. As we got to the north end of Lydia Ann Channel there were several young people buzzing around on jet skies. They didn't appear to care about right of way, so we were wary of them. We were happy when we got past them.

We sailed on following the waypoints I had loaded in my GPS. Besides the waypoints for my intended route, I also had loaded waypoints for a route to the east of Mud Island going through Blind Pass. I did not intend to go through Blind Pass, but I was mistakenly following that set of waypoints. I wasn't paying close enough attention to landmarks and took a route where there was shallow water and a very hard to find channel. We bumped bottom which I thought was unusual as I had never bumped bottom going around Mud Island in the past. After a second bump, I looked around, then at my GPS and my charts and realized I was headed to Blind Pass and that if we didn't find the channel we would run out of deep water soon. My GPS showed the channel and I could see the area on my charts. I headed for the channel shown on the GPS. Luck was with us, we hit the very narrow channel. Slight course changes in the channel would cause us to bump. We brought up the centerboard less than halfway and pulled



the rudder blade up to reduce draft. The rudder blade being brought up makes steering harder, a lot of pressure on the rudder. At the end of the channel we were going to need to turn to port and catch a channel that



ran north about 10 to 20 feet off the shoreline. As we made our turn we again bumped. Michael was raising and lowering the centerboard as needed in the shallows. We found the channel we needed and made our turn to the north. This channel was a little wider and we were able to sail up it. As we sailed along, we saw a green Duck sailing on the other side of a mud flat, the area where we would have ended up if we had not found the channel. The Duck beached on the mud flat and it looked as though he was going to have to pull his boat across it. There was no way we could get close enough to assist him, so we continued on. We knew the rest of the Ducks would be along soon.

As we got to the end of Blind Pass we saw Pehr Jansson beached at the end of the channel waiting for the Ducks to catch up. Out of Blind Pass we made a turn to port to get back to the route I had intended to take. Out of the shallow water we got back on course and continued to sail down Aransas Bay heading north for Pauls Mott, our campsite for the night.

Once on course, Mark offered to switch out with me at helm. As we were switching, somehow downward pressure was exerted on the tiller and it cracked at the rear bolt of the two bolts holding the tiller cheek pieces in place. We stopped trying to switch places and I stayed at helm. We surveyed the damage and determined if we were careful, we could sail the few miles we still needed to go to get to camp. The split in the wood ran from the rear bolt downward as it went forward, missing the

forward bolt which was still holding well. Once we got to camp, we would switch out tillers with the spare one I had brought. I had brought the tiller from my Day Sailer and an old Rhodes 19 rudder blade (same as Mariner) as spare rudder parts. The Texas 200 is known to be rough on rudders, so I learned on past events that spare parts were a good idea to have. I had let Matt know I had them in case he had problems.

We made it to Pauls Mott without losing the tiller. We beached on the point of Pauls Mott instead of sailing around the end through the reefs jutting out from it and then tacking into the camp area. I had capsized my Day Sailer doing that in 2012, I thought this might be easier. As the boat beached, Mark and Michael jumped out to start to pull the boat over to the camp area. Somehow Mark snagged his wristwatch on something and it was pulled off his wrist into the water. He and Michael quickly tried to find it until the water was so stirred up they could no longer see bottom. Mark decided to let the water settle before looking again. I had gotten out of the boat as well to help move it to the camp area. Mark and Michael pulled-pushed the boat faster than I could; so I let them take it while I walked straight across. They got the boat in place and Michael set the anchor on shore. As I walked over to the boat; I hit something slippery and lost my balance and fell down in about a foot of water. The water actually felt refreshing, so as long as I was already wet, I laid there for a few minutes, then got up and headed to the boat.



Once at the boat, we got the tiller off and got the Day Sailer tiller out. Both tillers were set up basically the same. Both had a Tiller Tamer mounted and were set up for a tiller extension. We switched out the tiller extension and attached the tiller to the rudder. The main difference between the two tillers was that the Day Sailer tiller was about six inches shorter than the Mariner tiller. It would work.

Once the tiller was replaced; Mark set up his tarp over the boom as a cockpit cover. He thought the tarp might work better than the cockpit tent. He didn't want to wake up with dew on them again. The Ducks had arrived and they were pulling their boats

around the tip of Pauls Mott as we had done. Most of the fleet was there, although some boats were missing and presumed to have dropped out. We found out later a few had dropped out, a few were over on the ICW and did not make it to camp, but would continue on. We also had our first cell phone/4G coverage of the trip.

One of the landmarks for Pauls Mott is an old trawler mast on the beach that with its' spreaders make it look like a cross. I've heard that it was originally put up as a memorial to someone. When we arrived, someone had torn it down and it was half buried in the sand. Shortly after the "Duckers" arrived; they went over and set the mast back up. Everything was now right again at Pauls Mott. They did a great job.

Once the tarp was up, Mark got out his stove and I crawled up into the cabin to get out of the way of his cooking. There wasn't as much room in the cockpit after Mark and Michaels gear was out of the cabin. Mark cooked up some vegetables and some hamburger he had in the big cooler. He gave me two hamburger patties, but I told him the he and Michael should eat the second one as that would be too much food for me.

After eating, and before the sun went down completely, Mark took a flashlight and went over to look for his watch. The water had cleared up and the waves were less with lighter winds. He was in luck, the flashlight reflected off the watch and he was able to retrieve it. He then headed back to the boat a happy camper.

Thursday morning we got up to about 15 knot winds, maybe a little more. NOAA weather radio said we should expect gusts in the afternoon of about 28. We were going to be sailing through a series of oyster reefs today and some of the channels can be twisty and narrow. We decided to sail with a reefed main so we



wouldn't move as fast going through tight areas. My Day Sailer made it through the area last year despite having problems with my GPS, this year I had a new GPS so that wouldn't be a problem. Going through this area requires everyone to keep a sharp

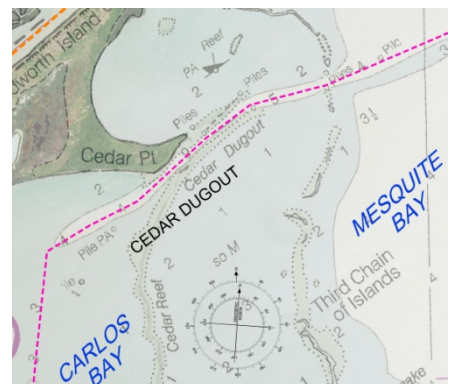
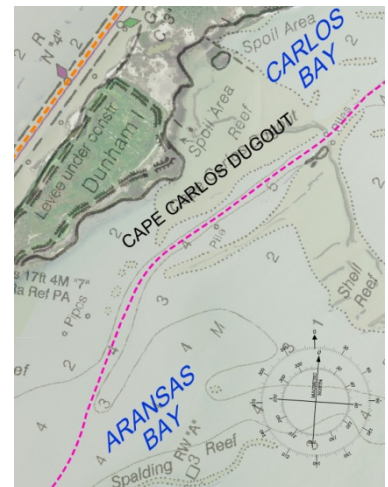
lookout for markers, and for reefs sticking barely above or just below the water. Formations do change and aren't always noted on charts.

Since last year, I modified my waypoints in the GPS based on data collected as we passed through the area last year. Since I was more familiar with the area, I stayed at the helm until we got through the most difficult reefs. Since we were under only the mainsail, we lowered the centerboard a little less than half way down, leaving the rudder blade running the deepest. When the rudder blade bumped bottom, the auto release cleat for the rudder downhaul line, allowed the blade to pop up. We sailed with the rudder blade partially up after that to reduce draft. I could feel the increased pressure on the rudder, but the replacement tiller was solid. The shorter length of the replacement tiller was noticeable however.

The first reef we came to was Cape Carlos Dugout. As we came to this reef we needed to turn a little to port to follow the channel, while looking for the poles that roughly marked the channel. We then needed to make a turn back to starboard at the right time. I followed the GPS while Mark and Michael kept a sharp lookout. We made our course corrections and sailed through the first reef without a problem and into Carlos Bay. Our next reef was Cedar Dugout. It was

similar to the last one, except a little more twisty. We found our channel and made it through. We were now in Mesquite Bay with a little deeper water and we put the rudder blade all the way back down. We kept the centerboard where it was. We had to go through a minor reef called Belden Dugout which wasn't a problem.

The next reef was Ayers Dugout. Ayers Dugout has a history of problems for boats on the Texas 200. In 2009 a boat was lost there and there was damage to others. It is the reef I wanted to be the most careful with. In 2013, we saw the opening to the dugout and headed straight for it. When we were just about there we saw a reef just on the surface and had to tack to starboard to avoid it. Then we sailed east to get

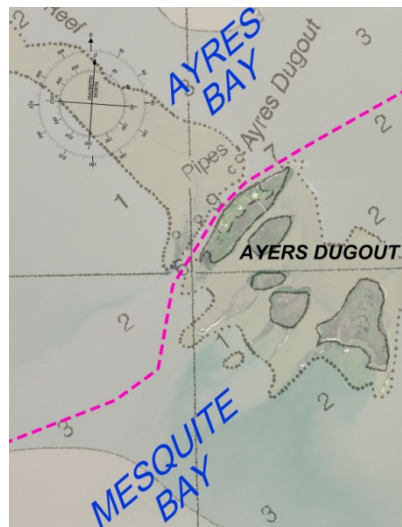


around the reef before turning back to port to get to the opening of the dugout. This year I was better prepared for Ayers Dugout. From my tracks the previous year I re-charted my route to the opening of the dugout. From Belden Dugout we sailed an easterly course until I knew we could get around the reef and into the opening for Ayers. A few boats that were catching up to us were sailing the same route. One or two passed us and we followed them into the channel for the dugout. Along the east shore of the dugout the Duck fleet was beached along with several other boats. The boats just ahead of us beached, we decided to just sail on past and enter Ayers Bay which then goes into San Antonio Bay after passing through some shallow areas with some small reefs.

The wind seemed to be a little stronger in San Antonio Bay than it had been before Ayers Dugout so we decided to take it easy and not put up the jib, although we thought about it. Mark relieved me at the helm. We could see behind us that the boats that beached were leaving Ayers Dugout. Some of the faster boats caught up to us and passed us. Several were sailing further out in the bay than we were.

We encountered a large shrimper fishing fleet. As we approached one boat we had to decide if we were going to try to get around their front to avoid the nets or go off course and give their stern a wide berth to avoid their nets. We decided to go astern.

We continued on, going past oil platforms that were out in the bay heading for South Pass which would lead us into Espiritu Santo Bay. South Pass is a channel through a series of small islands. The water around the series of islands is only a foot or two deep. The pass is four to six feet deep down the center. Since I had the fun of navigating through the previous channels and reefs, Mark wanted to navigate through South Pass since he plans to sail his Santana 21 next year. We bumped bottom near



the beginning of the channel, but moved more into the center and went through easily.

Once through South Pass, we were now in Espiritu Santo Bay on the final stretch to camp 4 at Army Hole. We could see three boats to our east that had sailed closer to the shore of the barrier island (Matagorda Island). We recognized two of the boats and knew they were more familiar with the area than we were. We were still sailing under the reefed main, but were thinking about putting up the jib. The boats to our east that were parallel to our course were definitely getting ahead of us. Behind us in the distance we saw another boat come through South Pass. The boat behind us was gaining on us and we recognized it as Sean Mulligan on the Paradox "Scout".



We watched as he gained on us and eventually passed us. When he passed us we decided it was definitely time to raise the jib and stop taking it easy. With the jib up, our speed increased dramatically. Soon we were alongside the Paradox. We asked how he was doing. He answered "I'm ready to get out of this coffin". It had been a long day. We soon left him far behind us as we headed for Army Hole.



As we approached Army Hole the wind was coming straight at us from the docks. We decided to power up the propane motor and power in to the docks. We started the motor and turned into the wind to bring down the sails. We then headed for the docks. The opening was a hard turn to starboard, so we made a circle in the small harbor area so we could get a straight run through the opening for the open slip. Mark was at the helm. We approached the dock a little fast; I forgot to tell him that reverse was accomplished by turning the motor head 180 degrees. Fortunately, there were sailors on the dock to catch us and of course we had Michael's great leaping ability to move about the boat and catch the dock. There were about a dozen of the larger boats tied up

at the docks. Many of the smaller boats were beached across the way.

Michael got the bow and stern lines cleated off and we got the fenders in place. Mark and Michael went ashore to look around. Army Hole is an old Army Air Corps bomber training base from WWII that was closed in 1946. Texas Parks & Wildlife maintains it, but there are no facilities other than the docks, picnic tables, and fire pits. Army Hole is only accessible by water. After a short while Michael came back to the boat to get his camera. He and a few others were going to walk down to the lighthouse to the north; about a three mile walk each way. I decided to crawl into the cabin and get out of the wind to make a phone call. I made my call and the next thing I knew it was over an hour later, I had fallen sound asleep. Mark getting into the boat to get his stove and some sausage to cook for dinner woke me.



While I had been asleep, Mark told me that the Coast Guard brought a boat in under tow. They were curious as to what was going on and were taken over to let them see the Duck fleet. Mark said they were in awe at these little boats sailing so far. They stayed for a while looking at the variety of boats in the fleet.

Several people had gathered at one of the covered picnic tables and several grills were cooking up several types of meat and other things. I decided to go on up to socialize with the group. I got up on the dock okay and made it down to steps at the end of the dock. The steps were tall going up with no rail to hold on to. I tripped and fell trying to get up the tall step at the end of the dock. Several people came over to help me get up; it was embarrassing to say the least. I then headed over to the table where I was offered something to eat.

There was a group at the table and another group around a nearby fire pit. Mark was playing someone's guitar and singing. He sings and plays well. Myself, I'm tone deaf and don't attempt

such things (for the good of others). I talked with some of those at the table for a while including the guys from the Day Sailer. I didn't recognize them at first as they looked different in their very relaxed mode.

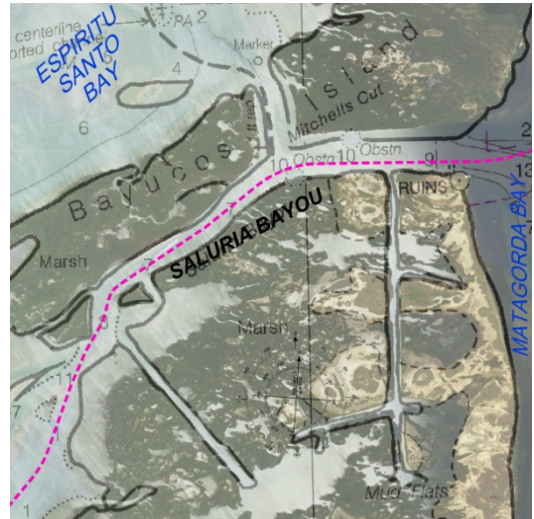
When I started to get tired, I headed back for the boat. I was careful negotiating the step, didn't want to fall in the water; I knew alligators have been spotted in this area in the past. No falls, I got down to the boat and crawled in the cabin.

Mark and Michael stayed longer than I did. I don't know what time they came back to the boat. Their gear was already in the cockpit for the night. Sometime early in the morning I awoke to Mark and Michel frantically trying to set up their tarp over the cockpit. Mark told me that Michael had noticed a storm moving in around 2:00 to 2:30am. He tried to be quiet so as not to disturb anyone, but he alerted Mark. Mark told him this is one of those things you want to alert people camping about. They got the tarp up before the storm hit. Wait a minute; we never have storms on the Texas 200. The storm didn't care; when it hit, it hit hard. Strong winds; lightning and thunder and of course rain. Here we were, in a boat with an aluminum lightning rod sticking up in the air. Oh, wait a minute; we were also surrounded by several other aluminum lightning rods to make us a bigger target. I told myself, "don't worry, I'm safe, after all I have this aluminum mast compression post less than a foot away from me, I don't need to worry". I don't remember how long the storm lasted, it wasn't too long before it passed over us and things became quiet again. Mark and Michael got a little wet, but not drenched. I was able to find a few minor leaks in the cabin top where hardware was attached so that I could enjoy water dripping on me also.

Friday morning the skies were clear of the storm with a light wind. The forecast was for light winds out of the southeast; becoming very light in the mid afternoon and then picking up again. It was a good prediction for our final days' sail to Magnolia Beach less than 25 miles away.

We had a choice of two routes we could take. I had charts and GPS waypoints for both. One route was to go through Saluria Bayou and out into Matagorda Bay, then turn to the northwest and on to the finish. The other route, which was suppose to be the shortest was to follow the channel from Army Hole to the ICW and

go through Port O'Conner, past the jetties and out into Matagorda Bay, then make our turn to the northwest and on to Magnolia Beach. At the gathering the previous evening, the subject of routes to take came up. When Saluria Bayou was mentioned there was talk of the approach to it. I realized my planned route might get us grounded. Having never sailed this route; I was unfamiliar with how best to approach the bayou. I talked with Mark and Michael in the morning telling them I was uncertain about the Saluria Bayou route. We decided to take the faster, more direct ICW route rather than taking a chance of running aground. The Duck fleet had also decided to take the ICW route as had many other boats. A few who were familiar with Saluria Bayou were going to go that route.



We used the motor to get away from the docks and got out into the bay where we turned into the wind to raise the sails. We then headed up the channel towards Port O'Conner. We offered the helm to Michael to let him get some experience navigating a channel using the maps, compass, and GPS while holding the boat on course. We sailed across the bay at a descent speed for about three quarters of the way when the wind started to drop off. One by one we started seeing the boats with motors around us start motoring. Soon we decided to motor also. Before we got to the ICW we thought the wind was starting to come back up and we tried to sail again. Still, not enough wind, we started the motor again.



We continued to motor through the cut from the bay into the ICW where we made our turn to starboard and headed up the ICW towards Port O'Conner. We could see most of the fleet ahead of us including all the yellow sails of the Duck fleet. As we motored up the channel we felt the wind start to freshen. We shut the motor off only to find we had a head wind coming straight down the channel. Also, the tide was coming in so we had a small current against us as well. Ahead of us we could see boats tacking in the ICW trying to sail up the channel. The wind

was coming out of the north to northeast; this isn't supposed to happen on the Texas 200; it never has before.

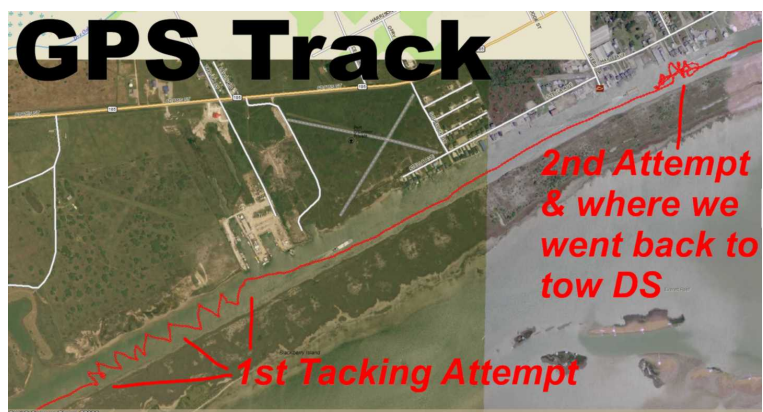
We tried tacking for a while, making about a dozen tacks in the narrow channel. The channel also has a lot of boat traffic including commercial vessels



running up and down its' length. Boats tacking back and forth does not make a safe passage especially when some of the traffic don't know (or care about) right of way rules. We were making very little progress, although better than some of the boats in the fleet. Some of the small boats were walking their boats along the shoreline. After we had done about a dozen tacks, we decided we should motor again as a safety measure. Several other boats were motoring and some of the bigger boats had boats without motors under tow. We started up the motor and continued on up the channel. We passed boats that were still tacking since they didn't have a motor. For several sailors; it was tack or walk their boats up the channel. Ahead of us up the channel, we could see the Day Sailer tacking; they appeared to making the best forward progress.



We continued on for a way past the Day Sailer until the propane cylinder ran out of fuel. We then tried to sail again. Our tacks this time were getting worse results than our previous attempt. We decided to put a new propane cylinder in the motor. Michael got one out of the cockpit hatch and proceeded to change it. The most entertaining thing was watching power boats go off course while they stared at us putting a propane cylinder in a motor. Propane outboards not being that common seemed to surprise them. The swap out went fairly quick and smoothly. We now started the motor again. With a new cylinder, I told Mark and Michael we needed to go back and offer the Day Sailer a tow.



Having sailed my Day Sailer for many years, I couldn't leave a Day Sailer behind.

We turned around and headed back down the channel. We got alongside the Day Sailer and asked them if they wanted a tow. Noel Nicholls' in his Cortez 16 "BlueByU" had already offered them a tow, but had some bad gas in the motor and had to pull off at a gas dock to get fresh gas. We told them we could get them now and Noel might take a while to get his motor fixed. He could then help someone else (which he did).

We got a tow line ready while the Day Sailer made another tack. We match their course and threw them the tow line which they wrapped around their bow cleat, holding the end of the line in case we had to let them loose. We headed back up the channel. According to my GPS logs, the motor was still pushing us along at two miles per hour. While we were motoring, we realized that we may have put the cylinder in that had been running the stove all week. We were hoping we were wrong.



As we neared the end of the channel, a dredge barge was coming from the other direction straight in front of us causing us to go to starboard to avoid them. We were close to the rock jetty when the cylinder ran out of fuel; yup we had grabbed a partial cylinder. We released our tow and the boat headed toward the rocks, the Day Sailer was able to release and tack away from us. Michael quickly jumped over the side to keep the boat off the rocks. Mark grabbed another cylinder out of the storage locker and put it in the motor. The bulk of the Duck fleet was here also, half on the west side of the jetty trying to walk their boats to the end and open water, the other half on the east side doing the same thing trying to get to open water. Any boats that were between the jetties were tacking in an attempt to get to open water.



Michael kept us off the rocks, Mark got the motor started, and I was tending to the centerboard. The motor was going again and we

pulled Michael back on board as the water was deeper here. We headed for open water, then turned to port heading west, shut down the motor and got back under sail.

Something had jammed on the motor mount and we were unable to raise the motor out of the water. We hadn't used the tilt all week, as I had never looked in the manual where the unlocking lever was. Both Mark and Michael each tried to figure it out how to un-jam the mount, but with no luck. So, we just resigned ourselves to having some drag on the stern.



A few Ducks had made it to open water already. We soon passed them. We could see more boats finally getting past the jetties and into open water. We watched the Day Sailer get past the jetties and soon they were closing on us. They were sailing further out from shore than we were. They were making good speed and soon passed us. We could have gone a little faster if my whisker pole was not damaged.



I think the longest part of the trip is the last day's sail to the end, even though it is the shortest leg of any day. The beach was finally in sight. The day seemed a little hotter than the previous days. From the jetties to the finish was not a stressful sail. As we got near the beach we saw other boats making their turns to port and head for the beach. We turned and looked for a spot to beach. We were waved off our first spot and those on the beach pointed for us to beach a couple hundred feet farther to the west (original spot was reserved for the Ducks). We sailed right up to the beach and actually hit it rather hard. We set the anchor on shore and got the sails down and secured. We also found what was jammed on the motor mount and fixed it.



I got a ride from Hamilton Cowie, of the Day Sailer to my Jeep and trailer. Mark and Michael headed up to get a cold beer from the coolers waiting for the finishing boats. Shiner Brewery is

an event sponsor and provided an assortment of beer. There were also water and soft drinks iced down.

When I got the Jeep and trailer back to the beach; I found Michael and asked him and Mark to motor the boat over to where I would have the trailer on the beach to retrieve the boat. Soon after the trailer was in position, the boat was motoring up. The water was fairly deep along the shore, but it was a good place to retrieve the boat. Several other boats were retrieving boats off the beach; others used the ramp further down the beach. With the boat on the trailer; we began to de-rig. We got the mast down without difficulty and unloaded what we needed for the motel room we were going to get for the night.

Once the boat was secure and ready for trailering, we headed over to the shrimp boil. By now most of the boats had made it in. A few that got stuck the longest in Port O'Conner were still on their final run to the beach. The shrimp dinners for the late finishers were set aside waiting their arrival. One by one they made it in.

As in the past, the shrimp dinner at the end of the event was very good. There was a lot of talking going on about the week's sail. There were a lot of comments about Port O'Conner and some comments from those who had wisely chosen to not go through Port O'Conner. It had been a very good week.

Before leaving I found Chuck Pierce, one of the Texas 200 organizers and the man who organized the Duck cancer fundraiser, to see about adding some names to his boat. The boats sailing the fundraiser had names written on their boats of cancer survivors on one side and on the other side, those who passed away from cancer. I added a few names to his boat. On the side for those who passed away was one of my dad's brothers and on the survivor side I added my mother's name and a friend of hers. I also added the name of a friend of mine. I know there were many others I could have added. Chuck's little boat was getting pretty full of names, but there was still room.

After saying a farewell to many of those we sailed with during the week, we headed for Port Lavaca about 20 minutes away to find a motel for the night. We really needed hot showers and a good night's sleep.

Saturday morning we ate breakfast at the motel and talked to a few of the other sailors that were at the same motel. A group of the "Duckers" headed back to Magnolia Beach for the Puddle Duck Racer World Championship races being held there that weekend. The Ducks were holding their races there because of the Ducks that participated in the Texas 200. We headed for home.

It was an uneventful trip back to my house in Dripping Springs. As soon as we got to the house we parked the trailer and unloaded all the gear that Mark and Michael had brought so they could get it loaded and drive home to Plano, Texas; about four hours away. The 2014 Texas 200 was finished.

For information on the Texas 200 which is held the second week of June each year the website is <http://www.texas200.com/> . Most discussion these days is done on Facebook. Group name is the "Texas 200 Sailing Club". There are many pictures loaded on the Facebook group page.

John Alesch

1973 O'Day Mariner "Ancient Mariner"; Sail Number 2607

1976 O'Day Day Sailer II "Ranger"; Sail Number 8075