

## 2017 Texas 200 Weta Style

By: Peter Lange

I followed a couple of buddy boats through String Ray Hole into the Corpus ship channel and watched the water go from bumpy chop to almost flat calm. I was excited to make the turn up the channel because I knew it was going to be a close reach in flat water with 15+ knots of wind coming over the channel spoil hills. I was not disappointed. When I sheeted in and got on heading, I took off like a rocket! The one thing I didn't have was a knot-meter. So, I have no idea how fast I was going, but it felt like enough to pull a skier!

How did I get here? I set a goal in December 2016 to do the Texas 200 on a [Weta trimaran](#). This was a stretch goal because I didn't even own a Weta! I signed up for the Texas 200 the first week of January, and reserved a room at [Sunset House Motel](#). So, I was basically committed at this point. Now I needed a boat.

I had been shopping around, but used Weta's were hard to find in Texas. So, I searched the coasts and found a potential candidate boat in San Diego. I was travelling out to San Diego on business in early February. So, I set up an appointment to view the boat, made an offer, and signed a purchase agreement.

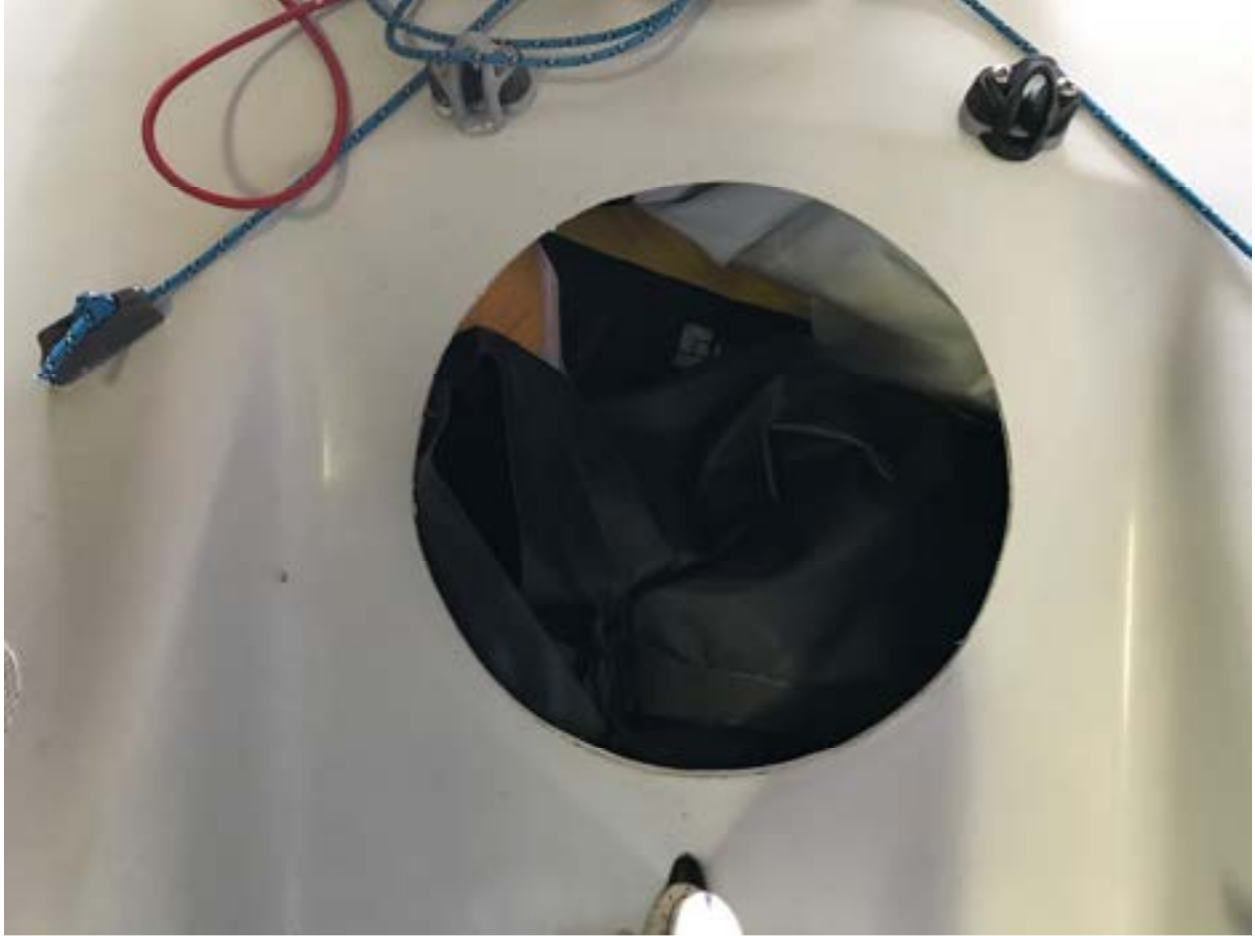
The next step was to get it to Austin, Texas. On my next trip out to San Diego several weeks later, I was able to coordinate with a [UShip](#) driver to meet me at the boat and get it ready to haul. I flew back to Austin after meeting the UShip driver, and he arrived in Austin the next day! That was easy!

I asked my son what he thought we should name the boat. Upon seeing her size, he did not hesitate, and said, "Puppy Dawg"! Sold!



Puppy Dawg was in fairly good shape for a 2010 model, but there were a few modifications that I wanted to make for the trip including a storm main since there is no way to reef the stock Weta main, a roller furling jib to make things a little easier for single handed sailing, and an increased opening to the only internal storage area on the boat.

Here's a picture of the opening to the storage area in the front of the cockpit fully loaded with gear! I increased the opening from 6" to 12" and purchased an [Armstrong watertight compression deck plate](#) to cover the new large opening.



Here's a picture of the boat set-up at the bottom of my driveway with full main, roller furling jib and yellow reacher. Fortunately, it was a mostly windless day when I took this picture!



The picture below shows the storm main on top of the stock main. In Port Mansfield, I made the decision to only take the storm main. I figured if it was light I would just be going slower, but when the wind picked up, I would be glad I had the smaller main up. The boat was relatively new to me as well, and I was still getting used to it. In retrospect, it was the right decision for 2017. However, there were a few stretches where I wished I had the stock main. Next time I will take both mains and just strap one down to the nets.



I wasn't really worried about the difficulties of the trip much, but that is because I [sailed a 19.5' open cockpit Tramp trimaran from Stewart Florida to Marsh Harbour, Abaco, Bahamas in 2015](#) where I learned A LOT about sailing small trimarans in all types of big water conditions. I also had sailed the Tramp offshore on the Texas coast and in the inter-coastal for over 300 miles in preparation for the Bahamas trip. So, how hard could this Texas 200 be compared to all that? More on that later ...

There were some distinct differences for the Texas 200 relative to my Tramp experiences including:

- A lot less storage! So, the need to really cut back on gear.
- No battery, and hence, no wired electronics or tiller auto-pilot.
- No bimini! How was I going to protect myself from the sun and stay cool?

Let's break these down one by one.

### **GEAR LIST**

On my Bahamas trip, I spent 9 days underway solo – 6 days to reach Marsh Harbour against the wind, and 3 days coming back downwind. During this time, I learned a lot about what was essential and what I could live without. I would not be cooking. So, that eliminated the need for cooking gear. Also, I would sleep on the net. So, I decided to not take a bulky air mattress. Here is my gear list along with trip notes:

### **BOAT GEAR**

- Boat, Sail, Center Board, Rudder, and Tiller Sticks
- Fenders – I ended up using these at Snoopy's, but next time I will get smaller or inflatable fenders that I can store below deck. As it was, these were barely used and always in the way.
- Drill with batteries in dry box – did not use, but good peace of mind if I needed to complete a repair that required the drill. Debatable as to whether I would take again.
- Stand-up paddle – use once
- Collapsible grapnel anchor and rode - this proved to be inadequate, and I purchased a 6 pound Fortress style anchor when I reached Snoopy's.
- Pole Anchor – only used at Camp 1 and 4. The sand at the other anchorages was too hard.
- Beach stakes – used at Camp 2 and these were barely holding given the wind speed. This was the primary reason I purchased an anchor on Day 3.
- Whisker pole – used several times to go wing-n-wing with the main and reacher when constrained by the channel to a downwind point of sail.
- Seat w/cushion back – only used in camp. Found it was not comfortable underway. A seat with a solid frame would have worked better.
- Tarp to protect hull on beach
- Assortment of repair equipment and tools – did not use anything, but would still keep on future trips.
  - Tools – multi-head screw driver, vice grip, hack saw
  - Nuts and Bolts

- Gorilla tape
- Lashing Line
- Sail repair kit
- Drill bits

### SAFETY and NAVIGATION GEAR

- Handheld VHF
- Life jacket with harness and tether
- Headlamp
- Solar power packs
- Iphone with LifeProof – lost this overboard coming out of Port Mansfield before I was even a mile out of the dock. My fault – did not have a lanyard! Amateur mistake!
- iPad with cell service and water proof case – was really glad I had this after the loss of the iPhone. I was able to call home at Snoopy's as well as Camp 3 and 4. NOTE – for future trips, I am going to rent a [Delorme InReach SE](#) mainly so that I can text my wife with status updates when cell service is not available.
- [Hook-n-Line](#) Paper Charts – these are fantastic, and I used them throughout the trip as a way to get oriented along the way. Given they're waterproof, I was able to have them next to me on the nets for quick reference. When I got home, I washed them all in fresh water to get the salt off, and they are ready for more adventures! However, a few may need to be updated after Harvey.
- Charging cables
- PLB
- Air horn and pump
- Flares
- Whistle
- Mirror
- First aid

### BATTERIES

- Flashlight - AA x 2
- VHF - AA x 6
- [2 x OUTXE 1600mAh Rugged Power Bank with Flashlight, Waterproof Solar Portable Charger with Dual USB](#) for electronics – I could have probably got by with only one, but redundancy is always good on these types of things.

### FOOD AND DRINK

- Food - hummus, carrots, chips, cheese, hard boiled eggs, bread, bananas, canned veges and fruit – I had more than this, but in the end, I had more food than I needed!
- Wine – I had enough room for six bottles wine packed in neoprene sleeves. I really enjoyed this at the end of the day and had enough to share!
- Frozen water containers – I started with 27 bottles and only used about 5 a day. So, these worked out beautifully to keep the Yeti cold.
- Cold Coffee double shot cans – love these!

- Yeti Cooler with straps and seat top – this worked out very well in the cockpit. It was awesome to have cold drinks throughout the day and cold coffee in the morning. See photo below of Yeti and dry box location in the cockpit.
- Salt to drop the water temperature in the cooler – another great trick to get your ice to last longer!



#### PERSONAL COMFORT

- Dry packs to keep clothes and everything else dry! Worked great!
- Bluetooth speaker – used several times for music in camp.
- Tent – worked out well on the net. See photo below.
- Pillow



- Toiletries
- Sunscreen
- Mosquito repellent
- Chapstick
- Latrine kit
- Toilet paper
- Hand wipes – these are awesome for many uses!
- Kleenex
- Fresh water shower – worth the weight! Really nice to clean off at the end of the day and feel partially civilized! On future trips, I plan to replace this with water bottle that can be stored below deck along with a [Mud Dog](#). Thanks for this idea, Eric Dahlkamp!
- Sun protection tent – I set this up at every camp, and I was very glad I had it so I could “de-cloak” after anchoring! See Camp 1 photo below.
- Vinegar for Jelly fish – did not need!
- Wind inflating lounge – only use once. I did not find this very comfortable. Fortunately, it was light and did not take up much room.

### CLOTHES

- Full finger sailing gloves – super glad I had these to keep my fingers from burning off!
- 5 x long sleeve dry fit – essential for sun protection!
- 2 x long dry fit pants – essential for sun protection!
- 2 x sun glasses with head strap – only need one, but good to have the spare.
- Neck Buff – essentially for sun protection!
- 2 x Sun hats – lost one on day one. Really glad I brought 2!
- [Frogg Togg](#) – Soaking this in icy cooler water and wrapping around my neck before I put on my life jacket was a morning ritual that was essential for staying cool throughout the day!
- Dry clothes for beach / evening
- Quick Dry Towel
- Swim trunks
- Scuba diving shoes – these were my primary shoes in camp.
- Socks – wore socks while underway to keep my feet from burning.

### OTHER

- Fishing gear – had intentions to fish, and it seemed like Camp 1 was the best spot, but I just didn’t have the motivation at the end of the day or in the morning.

### **LACK OF BATTERY AND ELECTRONICS**

I did not expect this to be an issue, and it wasn’t. For the Texas 200, a hand-held VHF and an electronic navigation device is really all that is needed. Of course, having a phone/iPad is a plus. On top of that, a Bluetooth speaker add a little entertainment.

In terms of navigation, I had iNavx set-up and ready to go on both the iPhone and iPad. After I lost my phone on day 1, I only pulled out the iPad underway on day 4 going across Panther reef.

The rest of the sailing was line of sight and following a couple buddy boats. If I wouldn't have had the buddy to follow, I definitely would have referred to the charts more often. Having an easy way to refer to electronic charts and a very wet, fast boat like a Weta is something I will need to figure out to allow more self-sufficient navigation underway. I have a couple of ideas brewing that I will need to test out.

In terms of boat speed, that is really a nice to know. That said, after I got back, I purchased a [Velocitek SpeedPuck](#). I really would have liked to have known how fast I was going. At one point on day 5, I pulled along side of a power boat and asked him how fast he was going. After he told me 10 knots, I sheeted in and pulled ahead of him!

The hardest part of sailing solo without a house battery and electronics is lack of self steering. That said, in a Weta, self-steering isn't really practical given the boat's speed and agility. It is definitely an athletic boat when the wind picks up. As a result, I was exhausted at day's end on the water.

### **NO BIMINI**

This was probably my biggest concern of the trip. I remembered how hot it was going to the Bahamas in June 2015, not to mention the incredible burning power of the sun. So, I did a little research and bought gear specifically to deal with this issue. The items purchased are in my gear list above under CLOTHES. In summary – hat, sun glasses with head strap, neck buff, Frogg Togg, long sleeve shirts, long pants, full fingered gloves, and socks. There was only a little skin on my face exposed. This I covered with sun screen and endeavored to keep my face away from the sun as much as possible. The clothes strategy along with my sun protection tent in camp worked out very well in terms of staying cool and not getting burned.

### **THE TRIP**

My basic plan was to drive to Port Mansfield on Saturday, find a place to safely launch and moor the boat, do the bus trip on Sunday, enjoy the sailing, and head home on Friday. Leading up to the trip, I was contacted by fellow trimaran sailor, Eric Dalhkamp (see photo below), and we struck up a virtual friendship. Eric was getting into Port Mansfield on Wednesday. So, I asked him if he could find us a place to moor which he took care of on his arrival.

#### Saturday (June 10) / Sunday (June 11)

With the mooring concern out of the way, I focused on packing up and hitting the road on Saturday. It was an easy trip down from Austin with fine weather in route, and I had the boat in the water and moored by 5pm on Saturday. Given that the Weta has no secure storage, I decided to keep the bulk of my gear in my hotel room since I was going to be gone most of Sunday dealing with finish line truck/trailer logistics. The picture below is the Sunday morning Skippers Meeting and sign-in. After this, it was off to Magnolia Beach to drop off our trucks / trailers and head back to Port Mansfield on a nice air-conditioned bus. For those not familiar with the Texas 200, this little bit of logistics set's you up for a one way down wind sail from Port Mansfield to Magnolia Beach.



### Monday – Day 1 – Port Mansfield to Land Cut – 23 Nautical Miles

In order to get all my gear to the boat on Monday morning, I hauled along a compact dolly. So, after rising and taking my last running water shower for 5 days, I placed my fully loaded and very heavy Yeti on the dolly and piled all of my other gear on top. It was a “fun” walk over to the dock, and for the first time, I was able to see all of the gear laid out on the boat (see picture below). Wow! Amazingly all of this fit below deck, except for the following:

- Yeti cooler (strapped to cockpit floor)
- Fresh water shower (strapped to cockpit floor)
- Anchor and road (see red bag near rudder in photo below)
- Standup paddle (bungeed to windward ama)
- Whisker pole (bungeed to windward ama)
- Fenders (lashed to nets)
- Dolly (lashed to nets and never used again – I don’t know of a better way to solve this need since I think I would need to wait a long time for an Uber ride in Port Mansfield!)
- Pole anchor (bungeed to foredeck)



It took me a while to get everything sorted and underway. I was one of the last boats to leave port, but I made sure I left before Eric's boat, Crosswins (see below), in case I needed assistance since I was motorless, and I didn't feel like paddling. As I approached the mouth of the harbor, the sailing became difficult as the wind was light and spinning in circles due to the wind shadow of the condos at the harbor entrance. I was starting to get frustrated with the situation, when I looked up and saw Eric powering down the channel. I hailed him and asked for a tow. I was grateful for the assistance, and that would be the first and last tow of what was to be five glorious days of sailing!



After the tow line was dropped, and I got sorted, that is when I realized I had lost my phone. I really don't know exactly when it happened, but it must have happened in all the jumping around the boat to grab the tow line. I was bummed for a minute, and then I chalked it up to the adventure and got underway in earnest.

This first day sail is one of those times I wish I would have had my stock main up. I was going slower than I wanted, but it was nice to be away from the stuffy harbor and out on the water. Navigation was easy as there were plenty of boats ahead of me. I just followed the sails and passed them one by one. Once in the flat water of the land cut, the wind picked up and I was treated to some fun planing. Camp one was upon me before I knew it, and I was ready for more! I relaxed in the afternoon and endeavored to stay out of the sun!



Tuesday – Day 2 – Land Cut to North Padre Island (south of Bird Island) – 31 Nautical Miles

Since I knew I was faster than most of the other boats, I took my time getting going in the morning. The wind was light, and I knew it would pick up later in the day. I had noticed that one of my side stay tangs was not sitting in the mast properly, and I would need to drop the mast to fix it. With a bunch of other sailors around to assist, we dropped it, seated the tang properly, and had the mast up within a few minutes. Thanks team!

After pushing away from the mud and getting underway, it was clear that it was going to be a light air, dead downwind sail for a while. So, I set up the whisker pole, pulled the reacher out to windward, and locked the sheet into the pole. After that, I was able to lay down on the nets and steer at an easy 5 knots or so. Fantastic!



As the day progressed, the wind started picking up and coming forward on the starboard beam. I shifted the reacher to leeward, locked my feet into the hiking straps, and took off. Again, I had no idea how fast I was going, I just knew that I was on a plane and was able to hold it for long stretches. Once into the relative open water at the mouth of Baffin Bay, the wind cranked up some more. I was now clearly over-powered as the leeward ama stuffed itself several times in the gusts. So, I rolled up the reacher and pulled out the jib. Even with this new sail configuration I was able to hold a plane, and it felt really comfortable for long periods of time. I had not had this experience on the boat yet due to the limiting size of the lakes I was sailing and the constant need to tack or jibe. There was a really big smile on my face as I cruised along at well over 10 knots. In the process, I had passed most of the fleet that had left before me in the morning, and Puppy Dawg was the 7<sup>th</sup> boat into the beach.

Camp 2 had beautiful shallow sand a good distance out from shore, and I pulled the boat up into about a foot of water. Dana Munkelt from “Joe Cool” came out to greet me as I pulled up. Once the boat was anchored, we just sat in the warm water and chatted as we watched the rest of the fleet tack into the anchorage.



When Crosswins arrived, I helped them anchor and hid from the sun in the shade of the boat. Again, another glorious day of sailing, afternoon on the beach, sunset, and a few tunes over dinner before calling it a night.

### Wednesday – Day 3 – North Padre Island to Mud Island – 36 Nautical Miles

Day three was the second longest leg, but there was a stop early in the leg at Snoopy's for lunch and ice. It was an easy sail down to Snoopy's from Camp 2. Puppy Dawg just glided up to the dock on the starboard side. After a nice meal, I went in search of a bag of ice to top off the Yeti, and a better anchor. I found both within walking distance, and was underway in short order. I was sailing large, broad reach legs down the channel from Snoopy's to Corpus Christi Bay in an effort to kill time while waiting for Crosswins and Quantrills Revenge (Capt. Dave Gilbert on a Prindle 18). Both boats were double handed with one crew on the tiller and one on the electronic nav to guide us through Shamrock Cove and Sting Ray Hole. The idea was to get as close as possible to the leeward shore of Mustang Island in hopes that the shorter fetch meant calmer waters, and this turned out to be a good plan.

Once out of the ship channel and into the Bay, it was a close reach up toward Shamrock Cove. The Weta just loves a close reach, and it was a blast out in the open Bay. I was going so fast, I could luff up and wait for the other boats or sail downwind past them and then spin around and shoot past them again. Anyway, I was just having an incredible time sailing across the Bay.





As I noted at the outset of this trip report, the sail up the ship channel was unbelievable, and crossing the ferry tracks at Port A was no problem given the speed I was able to hold. As I turned down Lydia Ann Channel and off the wind, Puppy Dawg slowed down a bit, but it was good to get a bit of a rest before entering Aransas Bay. Turning Northeast out of the channel up to Mud Island Camp 3, I was again on a fast, close reach. Awesome! I thought about sailing past the camp up along Mud Island just for the fun of it, but I “woke up” and realized I needed a break.



After three days of fast, athletic sailing, I was starting to feel the exhaustion, but the adrenalin of the sail helped balance it out. Another great day with no gear failures and no injuries! I fell asleep early.

#### Day 4 – Mud Island to Army Hole – 43 Nautical Miles

Up just before sunrise again, another slow start to the day, but this was the longest leg. So, I couldn't hang in camp too long. Given our need for at least two feet of water for center boards and rudders, Puppy Dawg, Crosswins and Quantrills Revenge decided to take the ICW at the Northeast end of Aransas Bay down to marker 37 before cutting into San Antonio Bay at the north end of Rattlesnake Island.

Quantrills Revenge got underway first, and I caught up with him at Rattlesnake Island several hours later but I was only about 10 minutes behind. We had no idea where Crosswins was. So, we applied more sunscreen, took a bio break, and cracked open lunch while we waited. As we were wrapping up lunch, Crosswins came around the bend in the ICW. It was time to go.

By this time around mid-day, the winds were up and so was the chop in San Antonio Bay. It was a rough ride across the open bay to the Panther Reef Cut. After threading that needle, it was a decent sail across the Northeast end of the bay to South Pass – the entrance to Espiritu Santo Bay.

Again, I followed the other boats through the cuts, but as the line through South Pass was clear, I sheeted in and pulled ahead. Looking back I thought to myself, "Crosswins seems to be too far to starboard." The thought came and went as the wind gusts accelerated Puppy Dawg forward.



Quantrills Revenge and Puppy Dawg duelled it out down San Antonio Bay until we were almost to Army Hole, and then the radio cracked. "Puppy Dawg, Puppy Dawg, Quantrills Revenge, do you see Crosswins?" I looked back. "No", I said as I spun around and headed back up my incoming track. Quantrills Revenge lead the way back to the Southwest as we scanned the horizon for Crosswins. After about ten minutes of sailing, we saw Crosswins big red jib on the horizon. Quantrills Revenge hailed Crosswins and discovered that their rudder was lost after running aground in South Pass. They had the rudder onboard, but it had been ripped out of the gudgeons. Crosswins was motor sailing with jib only, steering with the outboard, and making way to Army Hole. So, I swung around and headed that way to see how I could assist when Crosswins came into port.

As I neared Army Hole, my centerboard kept bumping the bottom. The direction I needed to head to shore was dead into the wind, and I was only about 100 yards out. So, I jumped overboard and waded into the marshy shoreline. Later I was told that there were alligators around there. Lovely!

After I tied off Puppy Dawg, I grabbed my VHF and ran up to the marina to see if there was a place to tie off Crosswins. All of the docks were already taken. I hailed Crosswins, and guided her into the main basin to tie off against the concrete quay wall. All's well that ends well.

There were lots of parties going on tonight as it was the last night out before the final day. I headed back to Puppy Dawg to get settled before the evening set in. I was anchored next to Graham Byrnes on his Core Sound 17, Carlita – a boat which he designed and built. We struck up a nice conversation about sailing in Australia, Graham's native country. I did my honeymoon there in 2002 on a 33' Seawind 1000 catamaran in the Whitsunday Islands – fantastic sailing!

After my conversation with Graham, I mustered a bit of energy to hang out for a while on the quay with a number of sailors as the sun went down. I headed back to Puppy Dawg completely exhausted and slept well that night.

#### Day 5 – Army Hole to Magnolia Beach – 20 Nautical Miles

The last day, I was up just before sunrise again. I was sitting on top of my cooler in my underwear sipping on a double shot, cold coffee as the sun was rising. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw a woman approaching with a camera taking pictures on this beautiful morning. She introduced herself as [Pam LeBlanc of the Austin Chronicle](#) and struck up a conversation. She was interested in how I was tent camping on my little trimaran. She asked permission to take my picture, and I said, “Let me put my pants on first.” ;- ) Here’s her pic:



Once I stowed everything, I was underway once again. I had mixed feelings inside. On one hand, I was tired and ready for a shower / air conditioning. On the other hand, I could sail on forever! Always the sailor's dilemma! 😊

It was a fun but short sail over to Magnolia Beach, and I headed over towards the boat ramp to anchor. As I hiked back to the parking lot to get my truck / trailer, I was offered a ride by a local – so welcoming! I decided to pull Puppy Dawg out on the sand because she is so light, and Dana Munkelt was there to assist. Thanks, Dana! I thought it would be easy to pull the boat out, but it was very difficult and I was kicking up a lot of sand with the tires. When I got up on level ground with the boat out of the water, I looked down and saw that I had my parking brake on the whole time. That was the moment that I decided I was too tired to drive back to Austin that night.

I caught the tail end of the beach party, visited a friend of mine in Port O'Conner for dinner, and headed back to my hotel in Port Lavaca to crash for the evening.

The next morning it seemed like I was up at dawn as usual and headed back to Austin. When I got home, my wife and son were gone. So, I just emptied all the gear on the driveway for cleaning and made myself a BIG margarita. It was a relaxing end to and incredible week. Next year, much, much more pictures and video!

