

The Voyage of the Dingleberry

Thursday came early at Paul's Mott. Meridith and I had opted to sleep in the boat rather than try to hold our little tent down in the high wind through the night. She slept pretty well, covered by the blanket; I, on the other hand, shivered under my two damp towels.

The sail that day was pretty uneventful at first. I had noticed the previous day that the screws holding our rudder gudgeon in place kept backing out and had worked out a routine of sail for a while, repair the boat, sail for a while, repair the boat -- something I'm sure many others were doing. This was working so I wasn't too concerned. Our plan was to go up the ICW to Marker 15, hang a right, and proceed from there. However, when we got to Marker 15, we had difficulty making the turn to windward and, after narrowly escaping collision with the embankment, retraced our path to the other side of the ICW, where we beached the boat and rested a bit. We then decided to proceed up the ICW to San Antonio Bay and then skirt the east edge of the bay, much as we had done in Corpus Christi Bay.



It was about this time we realized we had beached the boat in the middle of an abandoned pipe yard, the entire area was a mess of submerged, rusted pipe and Dingleberry had luckily missed colliding with any of it. To get safely past the

pipe before we started sailing again, we dragged the boat about half a mile through knee deep mud and rusted pipe -- talk about a thigh burner!! (I think it was at this point that I promised Meredith a shopping trip when we got home -- something she held me to that following Sunday.) We sailed on through the ICW to San Antonio Bay. Checking the rudder gudgeon, I was a little concerned to note that it was hanging on by a thread and after we got to San Antonio Bay, we decided that the party was over and it was time to look for a convenient boat ramp. This is where the fun part starts.

Following the western shoreline, we beached the boat at "Hoppers Landing" which consisted of three deserted houses and a stray dog. We got the boat settled and started walking. A car driven by an elderly fisherman stopped; he told us the nearest town was Austwell and the town after that was Tivoli. Since it was only 5-6 miles to Austwell, we bade him farewell and continued walking, thinking we would eventually get to Tivoli where we could possibly rent a car. About an hour later, another car stopped and the woman driving said she would come back for us later that day when she had to go into Austwell.

I remembered that Phil and Andrea and a few others had left Paul's Mott that morning for Rockport and figured they would be driving to Magnolia Beach that afternoon. Since I didn't have their number with me, I called home and my son looked up their number from the Texas200 website. He gave me Phil Moffitt's number. Fortunately, Phil Moffitt was at work in Georgia, answered his phone, and gave me Chuck's number. This was a little tedious as we didn't have any paper to write on and we were scratching the number in the roadside gravel and it kept blowing away. Plus, we were in cell phone hell and the calls kept dropping. (Where was my Verizon network???) I called Chuck and he gave me Phil and Andrea's number. It turned out that Marty/Tom/Kim/Phil were on their way to Magnolia Beach from Rockport to get boat trailers and were presently about a half hour from Tivoli -- perfect timing!!

By now, the fisherman had fished, gotten drunk, and was driving home. He stopped and, after complimenting us on how far we had walked, offered to take us to the Shamrock station in Tivoli, where we had arranged to meet Marty and crew. Ignoring everything I have ever told my daughter about hitchhiking (or drunk drivers), we hopped in. After a wild ride to Tivoli, which included a shortcut around Austwell over a gravel road through a cornfield, we arrived at the Shamrock station in Tivoli, about one minute ahead of Marty and crew.

We drove to Magnolia Beach to retrieve our car/trailer and Marty invited us to join them at his bay house in Rockport. Then Meredith and I drove back to Hoppers Landing to get Dingleberry. We got the boat on the trailer, all strapped down and ready to go, and then I got my little vw stuck in the sand. About that time, the woman we met on the road earlier in the day, drove up with her

husband. She had driven down to the beach that afternoon and had seen our little boat. When she told her husband about how small it was and how far we had come, he couldn't believe it and had come to see for himself. He helped us get the car out of the sand and we reattached the trailer and headed for Rockport.

Traveling South on IH35, I looked in the rearview mirror to see Dingleberry levitating off the trailer. I immediately pulled over, but found all the tie down straps were still in place. I decided I must be hallucinating or something and we started down the highway again. As soon as I hit 55 mph, there was a big crash and I looked in the rearview to see Dingleberry bouncing off the back of the trailer. By then I'm doing my SpongeBob thing with my underwear pulled over my head and running around in little circles. Meridith, the eye of the storm, as always, noticed the trailer frame has some little hinge thing to it and can be straightened out and strapped down. We make this little adjustment, reload Dingleberry (who suffered minor road rash to her hind end) and head for Rockport. Arriving in Rockport about 9 pm, we joined Marty/Tom/Kim/Phil/Andrea/Peter for a delightful dinner at a great restaurant whose name escapes me now, I don't know why.

P.S. Meridith told me this morning she is ready for another Texas 200 -- WOO HOO!!

Cool Cool

Cathy and Meridith
"Dingleberry"