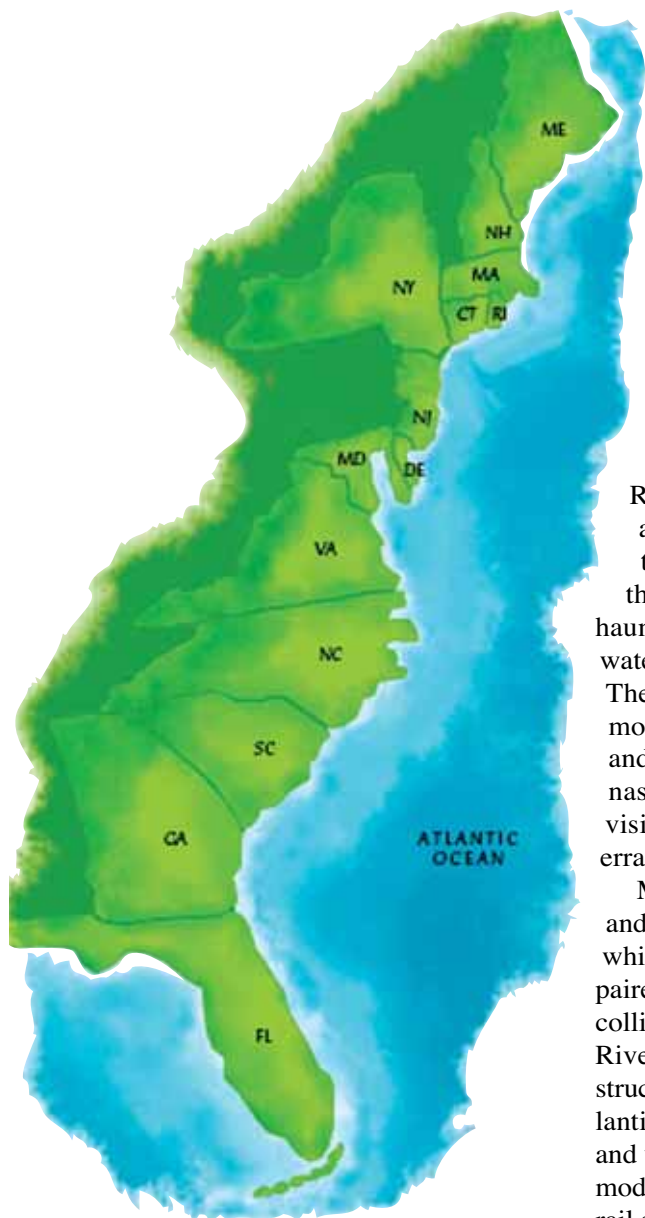


# A TRIP DOWN THE ICW FROM CANADA TO FLORIDA - CONCLUSION

by Gordon Butler



prodded us into joining the party. We were in the Deep South, where American hospitality was founded, on our way to bucolic Florida where we would ultimately end up making a home on *Joy IV* that would prove to last for 14 years.

So, heading down the ICW from Little River, we stopped next at Myrtle Beach where there was another of the fabled wrecks that haunt the marinas on the waterway. You need a car. The marina is a local mom-and-pop business, and some of those marinas lend old wrecks to visiting boaters for local errands about town.



*Ocean view at Myrtle Beach, SC*

Myrtle Beach was nice and we treated ourselves to a big steak dinner while *Joy IV* had that stanchion welded and repaired at the yard after our little current-fraught collision with the steel fishing/tour boat at Little River. I learned something about *Joy IV*'s construction during this repair. The toe-rail on an Atlantic 44 has a ¼-inch steel bar embedded in it and wrapped in fiberglass and gelcoat to accommodate the bolts, which tighten into it to hold the rail stanchions. This is a boat that's built like the proverbial brick house! The man assigned to do the fix had a huge time removing the screws for the stanchion bases! That rail survives today!

Myrtle Beach got us to Charleston, where we stayed at Wild Dunes, a gorgeous spot. On the dogs' walk that night, Sammy, our injured yellow lab, suddenly started crying and limping with his lone forefoot, and I discovered a sand spur in the foot. The crying stopped; Joe was most concerned and the offending burr was removed. Joe became much more attentive to his buddy – just for a few minutes – and we continued.

We progressed around the back of Charleston, past Fort Sumter, the site of the "shot heard 'round the world," and into the ICW again.

Florida, our goal, was getting closer with every revolution of those incredibly dependable diesels. After passing Hilton Head Island on the ICW side and Beaufort (BEW-fert) with its unique civil war setting, we stayed at the Beaufort city dock that evening.

Up bright and early the next morning, we wanted to call ahead for the best fuel deal we could find and a part for the unique raw water pump in our diesels. It all worked out, along with a deal to spend the night at Savannah Bend Marina, at that time a brand-new facility, not quite with the lore of the Palmer-Johnson yard, but

within sight of it. It all worked out: good fuel deal for a quantity, new facilities and a different sort of walk next door to a restaurant with the big sign in front that read "SHRIMP." Only they pronounce it "shry remp" in those parts. Crossing the Savannah River, which intersects at right angles with the ICW, we had to stop for a boat being towed. It was a tug pulling the stern of a huge oil tanker. There were men working in the ship, but she showed no source of motor power whatever. The tug pulled the ship up the river heading toward downtown Savannah and we never saw her again.

Now we were in familiar territory as the ICW meandered through the coastal swampland, sometimes curving around so we could see a boat that looked to be perhaps a few hundred yards ahead of us, but was, in fact, ahead of us by possibly several miles on the waterway! This was the area where we had spent the entire Memorial Day weekend two years before while waiting for Tuit Power in Fort Lauderdale to send us a new starboard transmission. The mechanic had had to paint it and install it before we could continue, but the wait was nothing like our eight days in Cape May.

Beginning to reflect on the whole trip, I thought of the great distance we had covered and



*Port of Fernandina, Fernandina Beach Florida*

how much we'd seen. This trip turns the pages of history before the casual traveler's eyes. I was starting to get reflective, recalling the "great adventure" we'd undertaken. Would we do it again? In a minute! As a matter of fact, because we had so much local knowledge, and so many charts, we managed to lend our paper charts to a lot of people who were going to undertake the Great Circle trip - up the ICW, through the Great Lakes and down the various routes through the center of the country: the Mississippi or the Ohio and the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterways. We even returned once, to our beloved Georgian Bay, for a trip that lasted about two weeks, guiding some friends and their 56-footer from Port Severn to

*continued on page 10*

This is an account of the end of our adventure, including the arrival, finally, at our destination, our changing it, surviving a case of shingles and finding a place that Joe, one of our dogs, thinks is home.

It was time to regroup. After all, we'd been having an idyllic life on the ICW, and we'd heard tales of people starting the trip and not making it. Too hot, too onerous, too much time, fraught with mechanical trouble and thus too expensive are all valid concerns when you're undertaking a voyage on the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway from north to south.

It's a big job, and this trip was interrupted by a broken transmission in Cape May that was unnecessarily expensive, and the repair, to say the least, incompetent. Now a *grounding* in South Carolina. What's next?

Well, we'd made the trip before. We'd gone from Pompano Beach to Toronto in three weeks just two years before! So, the job is certainly doable.

Mechanical problems are fixable, and grounding is survivable – as long as the hull's integrity is not compromised. *Joy IV*'s was not.

After that incredible impromptu party at the little fishing shack on the dock at Little River, SC, we regained a lot of our faith in human nature. It was as if those strangers got together and



*Sunrise over the North River, St. Mary's, Georgia*

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*continued  
from page 8*

Little Current. Sammy and Joe were becoming real sea dogs now. They'd relax through the day on deck and meet new dogs or other interesting animals to broaden their horizons.

St. Mary's and the submarine pens were the beginning of our final destination. Florida's border passed as we negotiated the sub base at St. Mary's. Fernandina Beach lay just ahead of us. We had made it! This was where we'd live for the foreseeable future. Our destination was Melbourne on the Space Coast, just south of Cape Canaveral.

In the meantime, we weren't there yet. We'd just touched the peninsula at the very north end, coming through Savannah and entering the state after Brunswick, Georgia. Our last marina was St. Simon's Island, where a Coast Guard rescue call had us transfixed as a sportfisherman with several people aboard was lost (before the days

of GPS). We listened to the conversations as the Coasties found the boat. The high surf inshore gave us fits all night. The boat was positioned so that the waves struck the transom at right angles! Fun!!

But our trip wouldn't be over without a small crisis. My wife noticed a tingling feeling in her cheek. We tossed it off as pretty much nothing. The next morning we set out for the wilds of Jacksonville. My wife's tingling cheek was intensifying and there was nothing to do but see a doctor in Jacksonville Beach when we got in.

He said, "I know what the problem is!" Diagnosis: shingles! So there were pills and treatment, and the birthday party for her mother would have to be avoided until she got the all-clear from the medical people.

But we were in Florida. We'd been some 1250 miles down the Intracoastal and we had a case of shingles, a rebuilt transmission, a grounding, a few scratches on *Joy IV's* bottom, and experiences to last a lifetime!

Next came Daytona and St. Augustine, and soon the massive Vehicle Assembly Building at the Kennedy Space Center loomed before us. Crosswinds in Titusville

prompted my retort to the dockmaster, "I'm going to put her in the slip right next door to you, if you don't mind!"

Down the Intracoastal, past Cocoa's distinctive water tower, and then on to Melbourne. The marina we'd planned to stay in was empty. There was no dockmaster, just a few people in the boats. "Dockmaster's not here," said one, not looking too hopeful. We'd heard calls on the radio to a nearby marina - Melbourne Harbor Marina. So we called and got the late Chuck Grimes, who said, "We'll try to accommodate you."

Those were sweet and memorable words from the marina that would be our home for the coming 14 years. The adventure had begun.



Melbourne Harbor Marina



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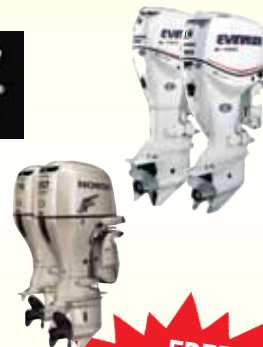


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