

# Heading South - Part III

by Capt. Douglas Malat

In Part II, we strolled the boardwalk in Beaufort, NC. Did you go to Blackbeard's Museum at the end of town? I left that for you to find. Some years ago (not too many), they found one of Blackbeard's ships by the nearby inlet. The objects found aboard and displayed at the museum will definitely surprise you. Available are all sorts of books and literature for those inquisitive minds young, old and in-between. Blackbeard did his prowling in these waters and shores. Maybe you are stepping in one of his foot steps!

We also were taking off to Charleston, SC. How was your trip? Did you take the ICW down or did you go offshore? I took the offshore route to get there sooner. Fort Sumter and all those period homes were alluring me. But I have to tell you, Charleston gives off its own mystique. It's like Beaufort, but on a grander scale. You get the



*Part of Charleston's historic shoreline.*

ports on the VHF radio and weather channels on TV ashore and find a time of settled weather. It usually follows a "front" that passes through and leaves you with 10-15 knot winds, sunny skies for 3-4 days and, of course, those prevailing N/W winds. The seas settle down and again you have a beam reach to Charleston, SC.

At night the seas become almost glass-like, with winds dropping at times to 5-8 knots. It's a wonderful camera shot at sunset off your starboard! The fishing is great being so close to the warm Gulf Stream. My fishing rod sitting off my stern rail bobs as the Green Bucktail lure does its thing underwater. I usually am lucky here catching fish. Another thing of interest is that a counter-current flow is created right next to the northbound Gulf Stream. This helps me as I sail

southward. It's great when you can catch this because it sure boosts your SOG (speed over ground). I think the big fish stay in the counter-current going south, using little effort to scan for bait fish to eat that are stuck in the northbound current. Excuse me.....my reel is buzzing. I think I got one!

Dolphins just about never leave you alone during the day.....playing, frolicking about. Now the question is how about at night? Do you see them? Hear them? The answer is yes! And you're in for a treat. First you hear them at night splashing as they play...jumping in and out of the water, or coming to the surface to breathe. Your hearing gets more acute when you cannot see; it just happens. Also, the calmer seas at night allow the splashing to be heard more distinctly. You also will realize the comforting effect it has when your friends, the dolphins, are out there.

Another amazing sight at night is the phosphorescence, not only off your stern wake as you cut thru the water, but next to you, coming at you, and going under your boat! You guessed it....dol-

phins! Their speed creates the phosphorescence as they zoom by you, leaving that bluish green trail. They make zigs and zags, circles, figure eights...you name it! If you are lucky (and here comes your treat), it's a whole family of them. You go up on the bow and gaze into the splendor of their antics and the trails they leave. I think it is art being created in its most natural form. (It's like Van Gogh is painting and the dolphins are the brushes.) It's also like fireworks underwater; the phosphorescence bursts out of the water as the dolphins launch themselves into the air and then descend to start a new beginning of that brush stroke. It could last 30 seconds to 20 minutes. Can you imagine! After their

symphony, you're blown away as the trails split in all directions and fade into the night. It's something special you take with you the rest of your life.

The glow of Charleston, SC is now off in the distance. The stars are out in abundance and you look at the clock to gauge your speed to arrive at Charleston Inlet by dawn. The inlet is straight forward, and I mean straight forward. There are jetties running way out to settle the waves, if any. Plus, running with the tide helps suck you through in no time. As you make your way in, Fort Sumter stands out to greet you. I turn to port and head up the Ashley River, anchoring off the city marina, where there is plenty of room. I wash down the boat, get things in order, and then relax in the cockpit taking in the scenery.



*Fort Sumter, Charleston, South Carolina*

sense to dress-up a little.

My run offshore is a S/W course, passing Cape Fear. Again, because it's fall, winds are generally from the N/W and you pick them that way. While in Beaufort, NC, you wait for that weather window. You notice this at home.....nasty unsettled weather for awhile and then those pleasant days appear, making you feel it isn't winter anymore. That's your weather window.

At port in Beaufort, you listen to weather re-



*Yvette within the walls of Fort Sumter*



*Town Market...the buildings behind went on forever, each designated for meats or grain... textiles in those days...now a Farmers' Market*

After being offshore, or on the ICW, it is still amazing when you come into a big city. I take a day or two to unwind....if you notice I didn't talk about crew. I did this one single-handedly. We'll get into that another time because I still don't know if I like it or not.

My wife is flying into Charleston; it's her first time here. We plan to stay here four days and then go by ICW (I promised her no offshore.)

*Continued on page 14*

