

Almost Arctic

Daily Log of the Ladyhawk Delivery from Maryland to Miami in the Dead of Winter

Day 0

Sunday, January 19, 2003

Captain James Franklin, Pete Giles, and new owner George Cathey meet Richard Suriani at Ladyhawk's slip in Solomons Island, Maryland around 9am. We are all pretty shocked to see 3 inches of snow blanketing the Dragonfly 1200. Richard leads the crew through boat's systems and we break for lunch around 1pm. After buying provisions, we fuel up and then attempt to open the swing wings, but iced up blocks give us a challenge. After about 30 minutes and thinking about using a blow torch, ample use of WD-40 does the trick. We leave the amas extended to ease the departure in the morning. Due to dock rules, the best place we find to dock up was 55' steel tug. We decide to wake up at 6am in order to depart by day break, around 7am.

Day 1

Monday, January 20, 2003

At 5:41am, the crew awakes to the sound of dual 1000hp diesel engines cranking up. After a few choice words, we scramble to put on layers of clothes to go out in 25 degree weather. The tug's crew is pretty surprised to see anyone else up at that time, and even more surprised to hear that a sailboat was tied up along side. After an hour, they tell us that they weren't leaving due to the weather – 25 kts SW with 2 foot waves. At 7:30 we cast off and beat our way all day to Fishing Bay in Deltaville, VA. With winds at 20, gusting to 30, we sail with two reefs in the main and a full jib. At 11:30, we shake out one reef as the wind dropped to 16 kts. We make 7-10 kts under sail. Near the harbor, the autopilot (Otto) heads Ladyhawk 100 degrees from the intended course. The magnetic compass shows the correct heading, but not the electronic systems. We later find out that GPS was malfunctioning in the area surrounding Fishing Bay due to "reasons unknown".



Day 2

Tuesday, January 21, 2003

Casting off at 7:00 am, we have following seas with NE winds blowing at 7-10 kts all day. It is a very comfortable day, until during Pete's watch at 11:30 it starts snowing. It was 26 degrees. We put de-icing salt out on the cockpit floor to keep ice from building up. James and George are very comfy down below. Pete is surprised twice by cargo ships hiding behind jib. At one point, the coast guard circle us, and we can only speculate what they said to each other about us. With the wind from the NE to N, we consider going out past Cape Hatteras, so we make for Little Creek Harbor, instead of Norfolk and the entrance to the ICW. A grey power vessel labeled "police" approaches us as we enter the harbor. Our confident captain James commanded Pete to maintain course. They rather insistently demand our yellow pass and our IDs. James yelled out, "We don't have a yellow pass." The police informed us that we should read the 1 foot by 1 foot "Warning, Do not enter military harbor" sign and gruffly pointed the way to the civilian marinas. Once docked, we fill up on diesel and are going to fill two more jerry cans, when we discover that two of them popped their caps and mixed with about 50 gallons of water in the port aft ama locker. We pumped most of the water out, as the diesel floated cleanly above. However, we had to get a hand bilge pump and James climbs into the ama for the last bit after dark.

Day 3

Wednesday, January 22, 2003

We haul four jerry cans of diesel soup to an industrial chemical recycling. In the light of the day, we ascertain that there was no structural damage to the ama and that the hatch must have been open in the vent position, filling up with water on day 1 as waves washed over the ama. We complete other maintenance tasks and obtain spare parts. George is considering renaming Ladyhawk and Pete suggests "Dancers Wanted" as an option, because we see signs with that everywhere in this military town. Around noon, James determines that it would be unwise to go around the cape, as a winter storm was developing and 50 kt winds with 8-13 foot waves were predicted for the Gulf Stream. We weren't planning on crossing the stream, but that and the -10 degree wind chill and white out conditions makes it very clear that even going down the ICW would be a bad idea, so we find the marina's bar, with happy hour starting at 4pm. George gets the opportunity to get better acquainted with his crew's colorful personalities.

Day 4

Thursday, January 23, 2003

The crew is sitting and waiting for the very cold air to pass. Richard suggests in a phone call renaming the boat to N-Ice-Tri, but James thought that N-Ice-Tray might be more accurate. We were planning to leave Friday around noon, as the clear, warm weather, that is, up to 32 degrees, is predicted.



