

Labor Day Cruise: Reviewed, Revised, Renewed!

Submitted by Linda and Larry Baker

The entire week leading up to the Labor Day Cruise was fraught with news of Hurrstorm Ernesto...those of us who were planning on attending this last-of-the-summer three day weekend cruises were questioning our safety, sanity, and survivability! Several of the participants were watching multiple weather reports per day; the email back and forth was voluminous, to say the least.

The original plan was to meet Saturday afternoon in Oxford for our traditional cocktail hour and then dinner on land; following a morning in Oxford on Sunday, we were to raft later in the afternoon at Bobby Owl Cove off Leadenham Creek. The Sunday plan was to cross Tilghman Island at Knapp Narrows and have a brunch at the Marina and Inn. Fair weather and winds prevailing, we were all expecting an incredible weekend.

The Man who made Ernesto must have enjoyed a good laugh when considering the plans of us poor mortals. Not to be daunted, however, we embarked upon a plan to meet at the West River Clubhouse on Saturday morning. The Cruisers met with several of the Regatta participants, who were assembling amidst the light drizzle that the morning presented. Armed with hot coffee and donuts (three of the five major food groups: fat, sugar, and caffeine), hearts buoyed by the forecast that the rain/drizzle would blow over by noon, and reassured by wind forecasts of only 10-15 from the SE, we assembled captains and mates agreed to make a later than average start across the bay to the Choptank. We all knew what a southeasterly wind meant, but agreed that a couple of hours hard on the nose would ultimately be a small price to pay if the outcome was an enjoyable weekend.

The Man had one last laugh: it was a bit blustery and overcast until the late afternoon, but we didn't care! That same southeasterly wind that pounded most of us on the Bay allowed us to scream right up the Choptank River. We arrived in Oxford to enjoy "membership" in the Oxford Yacht Club, which is extended to anyone who stays (permanently or transiently) at Mears Yacht Haven. The assembled group, including Kathy and Don Mueller (Atalanta), Paul, Connor, and Aaron Mettus with Paul Mettus, Sr (Spindrift), Nadine and Larry Schneider (Dragon 3), Sue and Monty Schumpert (Scandia), and cruise leaders Linda and Larry Baker with daughter Alison (Catharsis), enjoyed the use of the facilities at OYC. While no one felt like going swimming in the nearby pool, we enjoyed a beautiful waterfront view from their spacious deck and appreciated delicious appetizers to accompany our libations. The setting sun's light glowed in reflection from the beautiful homes built on Town Creek's opposite banks; that visual beauty and the warmth of the sunrays reaffirmed our courageous decision to go ahead with the cruise.

Following our cocktail hour, we walked the block and a half from Mears to one of Talbot County local's preferred restaurants: Martini's. Recently relocated from Easton to Oxford and now on Mill Street, this locally owned and managed establishment offers an American cuisine in a comfortable but gourmet fashion. We had originally requested a reservation for a party of 32; due to the hurrstorm, our numbers for that evening were diminished to 13, but we were received in such a fashion that we felt we were the most important, most courageous group of 13 that ever graced their door. The food was remarkable: savory, not salty; generously portioned without leaving one with the feeling of "super-size me"; and sufficiently varied in options to accommodate every taste. A particular hit that evening were the scallops. Among us, there was a sampling of the three different preparations, and an appropriate but good-natured competition for

who had the best scallops. (Truth be known, the pork tenderloin was TO DIE FOR, and this author makes a darn good stuffed pork tenderloin herself!) If this has peaked your interest, contact Michelle at 410-226-5770; she said she'd be happy to see anyone from West River Sailing Club.

Sunday morning dawned to some cloudy skies, but no real rain. Some of us rented bikes to tour the town while others walked about. Oxford doesn't have the bustle of St. Michael's, but a morning that included time in the park was wonderful and the history there is very interesting. Ice cream was available: what else was there to want? The Schneiders found enough to do in Oxford that they decided to stay there for the remainder of the weekend. As the sun broke through the last remaining clouds of Ernesto, the rest of us bid a fond farewell and sailed (or motored!) to Bobby Owl Cove.

This suggestion of Paul Mettus' was wonderful. A deep water cove, ours was the largest but far from the only raft-up there. The WRSC burgee flew above the Arkansas Razorback flag on Catharsis; we found out that Larry's alma mater is close to where Bruce Ogden's sister lives. The world gets smaller and smaller...but our group got larger and larger! By Sunday afternoon, the group as above (sans the Schneiders) was joined by Pokey and Pete Emens (Prim), friends Linda and Francis (surname and boat name unknown...sorry!), Bruce Ogden and Jill Seagraves (Joie de Vie), Jane and Erick Chiang (Lapin Agile), and Vicky and Al Lohman (Rhiannon). Bruce was kind enough to arrive first and served as anchor boat. All of us benefited from Pete and Pokey's hospitality as the cocktail hour party drifted to their new boat; many of us enjoyed a tour of her, as well. Middle school teacher Alison Baker spent some time with Connor and Aaron aboard Catharsis playing card games. Adult time must get a little old when you're not an adult, and these very good boys verbalized their appreciation of the time with Ali. The weather was perfect: sunny but not hot and little to no humidity. Into the evening, Vicky Lohman started tray after tray of fresh-baked chocolate chip cookies; the chocolate-fest was completed by brownies brought by Jill and Bruce. Some of us actually attempted to cook dinner that evening; others decided that yet another food group had been represented and was sufficient: CHOCOLATE.

Monday dawned and promised to be spectacular. We had our coffee, chatted, and relaxed while preparing our respective breakfasts. Paul took his dogs to shore and explored footpaths while others of us, still in the raft, marveled at another mariner who was vacuuming his deck. In the late morning, we broke off, knowing that the winds were light, and headed for Knapps Narrows. Spindrift set her spinnaker and put those of us who motored to shame. As we came into the narrows, most of us stopped at the Marina and Inn for lunch. Again, what a great place. We had arranged for an outdoor space if the weather was fine, and it was! The management had set up a long table for us in dappled shade, which was perfect for mid-day sun. Five vessels (Joie de Vie, Prim, Atalanta, Linda and Francis, and Catharsis) were easily accommodated dockside. Somehow, the Muellers got a shaded spot at the dock, but after all the help Don and Kathy gave in supporting this cruise, no one deserved it more. While enjoying our luncheon, Captain Paul Mettus and Spindrift came blasting through the narrows! We think the momentum from spinnaker sailing prevented their party from joining ours, and we all applauded them.

Farewells were made, both to the cruise events and the official end of summer. Promises have been made to continue the adventure and the fun of cruising with WRSC. We are all looking forward to the next cruise to Gibson Island. The lady, fat or skinny, hasn't yet sung on the cruising season!

