

## InBox Winter/Spring 2007-2008

Fun racing in Florida and a fast offshore delivery to Maine with two single-handed legs are two more chapters of InBox's life story.

Winter quarters were the mooring field of the Coconut Grove Sailing Club at the head of Biscayne Bay and a fifteen-minute drive from the Miami Airport. The protected waters, moderate winds, and warm temperatures of Biscayne Bay, make it any sailor's dream of paradise. The welcoming clubs make the Bay and immediate off-shore waters a favorite site for national and international championships from one designs to Farr 40s and Optimists. Biscayne Bay is also an ideal place to day sail or cast off for a weekend cruise. A two-hour reach takes you to Sands Key, part of the Biscayne Bay National Park, a tranquil tropical anchorage with the lights of Miami on the horizon.

We know InBox is a fast cruiser, but fast enough to race? The only way to find out was to try. We made some minor modifications and additions, adjustable back stay, spinnaker, pole and rigging. The highlight of our brief racing season was the traditional [Fort Lauderdale/Key West Race](http://www.keywestrace.org/index.html) (www.keywestrace.org/index.html), which starts off in Lauderdale and keeps Florida and the Keys to starboard. The twenty-five marks are a string of fixed lights starting with Fowey Rocks, protecting sailors or the coral reefs, depending on your point of view. Boats ran the full range from the hot new Samba Pa Ti, a TP 52, to Munequita, 48 ft. Cherubini schooner, among the thirty-three starters.



Total distance is 160 NM: a morning start, an overnight race and a morning finish. This year's race started as a one-legged beat, went to a close reach, and finished as a broad reach and a short spinnaker run to the finish line. Apparent winds were around 25 making it a fast, wet, and bumpy ride, and resulting in three DNFs. InBox finished seventh overall and was a strong contender for the driest happiest crew prize. Lots of rum at the awards party offset the previous long night of smashing through waves.

While designed and equipped for cruising, InBox proved an impressive race performer.

With a mooring in Rockland beckoning, early May was the proposed start of 1700 NM delivery. The intention was Miami/Norfolk non-stop, taking full advantage of the Gulf Stream, but requiring a course of up to 120 NM off shore.

Snow birds and weather lows track north in the spring, but this year they were both reluctant travelers, so no good windows and a no go. My schedule was flexible, as was Klas Juter's, a Swedish marine photographer/journalist who accepted my invitation to crew. A less than ideal window opened, but short-term future prospects were worse, so we decided to go. This window traded a less than ideal start for a good middle, and a problematic end.

Our start was a moderate norther going to the east in the first thirty-six hours. The forecast was accurate, so we had a bumpy, but fast ride north to Palm Beach. Then the wind went against forecast staying in the northeast. To keep sailing, we were pushed west of our target track, the axis of the Gulf Stream, until late the second day. Once on track, we got our Stream speed boost, continuing warm water, dolphins (great photo-op for KJ), and Sargasso weed. By the evening of Day 3, the wind picked up as expected, but then continued to build with a new short-term forecast of gusts to thirty.



Prudence, and a dislike for extended hardship, fostered the decision to gybe and head for Wilmington (NC). Winds dead astern of twenty to twenty-five knots, seas to nine feet, double-reefed main, and a jury rigged preventer added up to an in-control, but moderately scary night. Nine-foot seas mean that you look up at the waves breaking. Surfs of over 11 knots added to the excitement. Our Wilmington arrival was mistimed perfectly to meet the outgoing tidal flow. A new pod of dolphins enjoyed the resulting confused sea even more than we did.

Klas got to sample the ICW as we entered the Cape Fear River at Wilmington and then rode the markers to Wrightsville and the Masonboro inlet. Our berth was at the Bridge Tender Marina, which featured traffic whirring by on the bridge and a well-played siren warning traffic that the bridge was going to open. The other feature was a first-class restaurant with the local fancy people and a nice chat with the owner about Wilmington's second life as the movie making capital of eastern North Carolina. That was also a change for Klas after his introduction to the delights of Dinty Moore's beef stew.

Saturday night en route to Cape Hatteras was a more moderate replay of Thursday night with seas maxing out at six feet and a timely gybe to Diamond Shoals light and the Frying Pan red nun.

The next leg's strategy was to take a minor beating sailing downwind in heavy seas, then keep the wind, but drop the seas as we turned north along the Outer Banks. The strategy worked giving us a very fast

power reach to Norfolk on Sunday. We rode the beach to keep flat seas and to get a better view. The beach looked great, but a seventy mile (literally) row of McMansions was a big spoiler.

The high-rise hotels of Virginia Beach were framed by ominous clouds, which encouraged a sail drop, allowing us to shelter comfortably in the pilot house when the squall hit. Docking at Little River in the dark was the usual game of Blind Man's Bluff.

The Little River Marina is directly across a narrow channel from a Marine amphibious training base; so no alarm clock necessary, as you can hear the recorded reveille.

We saw more dolphins than other boats on this trip. It may have been the weather or the economy. There were only two at-sea chats. We crossed a catamaran off the Florida Coast coming from Green Turtle Cay with New Jersey intentions, but had opted instead for St. Simons to wait out the weather we enjoyed. At the other end of the scale was an 80-foot Trumpy look-alike that was running non-stop from Lauderdale to Sag Harbor. His speed was about one knot faster than ours.

We carried sail and ran the engine for the entire trip. Sails and engine are complementary. The engine moves apparent wind forward, improving sail efficiency. During the heavy air downwind trip, we found that higher RPMs helped the boat's big wave performance. Power from the sails dramatically reduced fuel consumption. At the selected RPMs, sound levels were low. As a side benefit, "no worries" about power management.

This 800 NM trip was beyond our nominal fuel range. So, we ran the first leg in economy mode, burning less than one-half gallon per hour. That works out to seven miles to the gallon and a fuel tank range of over 1000 NM. The second leg was run at a faster pace and we averaged over eight knots\* for the 80 NM reach from behind Hatteras to drop sail at Norfolk and 6.74\* for the 280 NM run from Masonboro to Norfolk.

Other stats are:

NM-Knotmeter \* 742

NM-GPS 856

Fuel Gal. 7

Eng. Hrs. 123.6

Gal/EH 6

Avg. Speed\* 6.0

NM/Day\* 144

NM/Gal\* 9.6

\*Through the water, not over the bottom.

A rental Iridium phone allowed us to monitor weather off shore, supplemented with high speed Broadband and VHF in shore.

Typically, the same trip on the inland waterway requires a minimum of three weeks.

Bette, my wife, came aboard for the trip from Norfolk to Annapolis. Stopping at [Yorktown](http://www.yorkcounty.gov/tourism) (www.yorkcounty.gov/tourism), the [Tides Inn](http://www.tidesinn.com) (www.tidesinn.com), and [St. Mary's City](http://www.stmaryscity.org) (www.stmaryscity.org), gave us an additional sample of the Chesapeake Bay's delightful cruising.

Yorktown, the site of England's Revolutionary War surrender, has dockage within walking distance of two restored sites – the English fort which fell to Washington's army and a colonial village. While Yorktown is part of the Williamsburg and Jamestown historic area, it has a quieter charm. Yorktown's 17th and 18th century prosperity rested on tobacco export fostered by, unusual for the Chesapeake, deep water close to shore. Our way from the Fort back to the dock was via "The Tobacco Road," a pleasant wooded downhill path, where hogsheads of tobacco were rolled down to the dock for loading. The Kalmar Nyckel [link to: [www.kalmarnyckel.org](http://www.kalmarnyckel.org)], the State of Delaware's re-creation of the ship that brought their first settlers, arrived at sunset to the sound of cannon.



The Tides Inn, a getaway place for the Washington elite during the 1930s and 40s, now caters to conferences. Regrettably, we were witnesses to the last cruise of the Lady Ann, a 127-ft. motor yacht, which was the last word in luxury when launched in 1924 and has been a feature of the resort.

St. Mary's City, like Yorktown, was financed by tobacco shipping. Founded at the beginning of the 17th century, it became the capitol of Maryland, but disappeared when the tobacco trade collapsed at the beginning of the 18th century. Because the town site was untouched for 300 years, it is a fertile field for

archeologists. Their recoveries underlie a re-creation of the original primitive settlement.



Adjacent to this site is [St. Mary's College of Maryland](http://www.smcm.edu) (www.smcm.edu). The College offers dockage and a delightful walk through campus gardens framed by Georgian brick buildings. Checking the weather radio as we left the dock, we heard a severe weather warning. Prudently, we went to anchor and watched the worst of the storm pass just to the north.

The close to solstice seventeen hours of daylight gave us a comfortable 74 NM run to Annapolis, Eastport Yacht Center, and J. Gordon, the yard and contractor that have been our base for the Annapolis Boat Shows. Here, we took advantage of the opportunity to haul the boat and perform the 1000 Hr. engine service.

The right weather window is a vital part of passage making. Scheduling crew to make those windows is difficult. While confident that InBox could be single-handed, my only previous runs were in-shore and done in one day. So this time, I decided to do the Annapolis/New York City trip by myself.



The first leg was a light air motor to the head of Chesapeake Bay and then a late afternoon transit of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal. Turning south into Delaware Bay was a rude change: 20 knots on the nose, a foul tidal current, the Bay's notorious short chop, narrow channels, and an abundance of barges and ships.

Tacking under jib and engine was an effective solution. InBox's forty-five feet of air draft made it possible to go under the bridge in the Cape May Canal. It's a welcome shortcut. Dawn and the start of the New Jersey coast run arrived together. The morning calm built during the day to 20 kts., dead astern. Arrival off Sandy Hook was just after sunset, forcing a dead slow run through the maze of channels and fishing boats to an anchorage. Anchor went down just before midnight, bringing a 234 NM, 44-hour passage to a successful conclusion.



Encouraged by that passage, I opted to do the LI Sound/Maine sail solo. The keys to that passage are the tidal currents up to and through the Cape Cod Canal.

Start was at Guilford (CT), ideally placed to ride the ebb down Long Island Sound and through The Race. Current was relatively neutral across Rhode Island Sound and up through Buzzards Bay. Arrival at the west end of the Cape Cod Canal was within minutes of the current change, especially critical as the direction changes and speed increases dramatically in a matter of minutes. The trip through the canal was uneventful and seeing nothing to be gained, I took advantage of a secure anchorage at the east end of the canal to pick up five hours of sleep before the twenty-four run across the Gulf of Maine.

At pre-dawn first light on the second day, Monhegan appeared and then quickly disappeared as a thick Maine fog settled in. Having done this passage and with the support of radar and GPS cartography, I just chugged on, arriving at Rockland at 0700H, pausing briefly to untangle a lobster pot warp with a judicious use of reverse.

InBox's design and equipment make single-handing a very workable option. Coastal single handing adds constant navigation to the watch keeping and boat handling that are required for ocean passages. The single handling was all coastal with the exception of the 120 NM trip across the Gulf of Maine. Radar watch zones, a one-quarter mile, twenty degree sector ahead inshore and 360 degree sector offshore, give useful warning of buoys, small fishing boats, and ships. Occasional false alarms are a reasonable price to pay. The single-reefed main stabilized the boat and gave a good push when the wind picked up. InBox's seventy-five gallons of fuel made the continuous use of the engine a no-brainer. The comforting shelter of the pilot house supplemented by a newly installed heater, took "hardship" out of the vocabulary. The result was over five hundred NM of single-handed delivery and a great option for the future.



### **Total Trip Numbers: Miami to Rockland**

NM-Log 1571

NM-GPS 1671

Fuel 208  
Eng Hrs. 258  
Gal/EH 0.8  
Kts/EH\* 6.1  
NM/Gal 7.5  
NM/Day 146  
Transit Days 11  
\*Over the bottom.

### **Web Sites of Interest**

[Fort Lauderdale to Key West Race](http://www.keywestrace.org/index.html) [www.keywestrace.org/index.html] [York County Tourism](http://www.yorkcounty.gov/tourism)  
[www.yorkcounty.gov/tourism] [Kalmar Nyckel](http://kalmarnyckel.org) [kalmarnyckel.org] [The Tides Inn](http://www.tidesinn.com) [www.tidesinn.com]  
[St. Mary's City](http://www.stmaryscity.org) [www.stmaryscity.org] [St. Mary's College of Maryland](http://www.smcm.edu) [www.smcm.edu]