**The 2021 CCBA LONG Cruise**

**To St. Clements Island in the Potomac and back to the Eastern Shore’s Choptank River.**

The CCBA has taken their recent 7-day long cruises in the upper Chesapeake Bay and featuring the east and west shores for rafting out, as well as stopping at critical marinas for fuel, ice, and a nice restaurant meal. Last year we journeyed up the C&D Canal to Delaware City on the Delaware River. The year before that we did the western shore, venturing as far south as Herring Bay.

We thought in planning this year’s trip we should try going south and seeing what the Bay is like in the bigger waters. The islands where Maryland’s earlier settlers arrived offered some destination motivations. The three islands with this history are St. Georges, St. Clements and Cobb Islands. So, with this backdrop, it offered an area where we could put a trip together.

Marc Cruder, the clubs long time cruise planner and former commodore asked if he could step away and would someone take over the planning of the 2021 Long Cruise. Phil Livingston, Butch Miller and Fred Sherriff said they would take it on.

In late July, Butch and Fred spent a day by car traveling to the lower Potomac to check out the three historic islands and potential marinas with restaurants for putting the trip together. Commodore Steve Flesner, lives on St. Leonard Creek off the Patuxent and offered a stop on the way to the Potomac. After doing their reconnaissance the only island worth making was St. Clements, which is about 25 miles from the Potomac’s beginning at Point Lookout. The other Islands didn’t work out as either too commercial or not much to see.

St. Clements Island has a 40-foot white memorial cross and a historic refurbished lighthouse. Today it is about 40 acres, one tenth the size of its 400 acres at its founding by European settlers in 1634. It was named for the fourth Pope, Saint Clements, the patron saint of fishermen. The cross was put up in 1934 to memorialize the first mass there in 1864.

We also wanted to visit the Potomac’s western shore of Virginia. With these destinations and the Choptank’s Dunn Cove as the trip meeting location - convenient for both western and eastern shore CCBA members - a 7-day long cruise plan came together. In planning, this was a long cruise at 174nm, with three overnight anchorages and four nights at a marina or pier.

**The 2021 Long Cruise Plan (174nm) was as follows**:

Day 1 Saturday Dunn Cove off the Choptank, Cruise Meeting Anchorage

Day 2 Sunday 37nm Flesners, St Leonard Creek, off the Patuxent

Day 3 Monday 37nm Smith Creek, just inside the Potomac, Point Lookout Marina

Day 4 Tuesday 22nm St. Clement Island, Colton’s Point Marina, St. Patrick’s Creek

Day 5 Wednesday 23nm Coan River, VA anchorage in Kingscote Creek

Day 6 Thursday 30nm Solomons, Spring Cove Marina, Patuxent River

Day 7 Friday 25nm Hudson Creek, North Side of the Little Choptank River

As we all know this was a tough year for decent weather and this trip turned out to have its fair share of tough stuff. On Saturday the 18th, three of the CCBA members showed up at Dunn Cove off the Choptank’s Harris Creek. Butch Miller in LARK, his Americat 22, Phil Livingston in PATRIOT, his Marshall Sanderling and Fred Sherriff in PRIDE, his Marshall 22. In previous years we would have 8-10 members make this event, but this year there seemed to be a lot going on in member’s lives that just didn’t make it work for many. Marc Cruder’s boat is on the hard, but he did join Fred in PRIDE for sailing with the group Day 3-6.

The following is the day-by-day narrative of an 8 day, 189nm wonderful trip had by a few of your CCBA members.

**Day 1** The three of us got to Dunn Cove in the late afternoon, rafted up to LARK and enjoyed our usual snacks and liquid favorites and did our planning for the next day’s weather down the Bay to the Patuxent and up to Flesner’s off St. Leonard Creek. The winds for day 2 were reported to be 18 knots or greater. We all took the time to put a reef in that night while it was still daylight and agreed we would leave early (sunrise) 0700. We broke up the raftup and each anchored in Dunn Cove.

**Day 2** We were all up and organized with anchors up and underway at 0700 as the sun was just peaking over the trees. All three of us had sails up quickly, with the wind out of the northeast at our backs and what a ride we had to the Patuxent. We stuck to the eastern shore of the Bay and out of the shipping channels as we got clear of Tilghman Point and down the shore. We were traveling with the waves which were building to 3-4 feet. The winds were gusting to 20 knots plus (PRIDE had an anemometer). We enjoyed the surfing and the wind in our favor, pulling up to Steve’s pier around 1500. **Travel time of about 8 hours covering 44+ nm and great sailing.**

That evening Lois and Steve hosted us to a great crab cake dinner, along with all the trimmings, as well as our favorite drinks…. and, I can’t forget the hot showers. As planned, Marc Cruder joined us and loaded his gear onto PRIDE for the next three nights. We agreed on an early morning start – to heading down the Patuxent and the Bay to the mouth of the Potomac.

**Day 3** We left Steve and Lois after a nice breakfast and away from the pier at 0800, kept the reefs in with reports calling for 18kts plus wind out of the South - right on the nose once out on the Bay. Stopped for ice at the Solomons marina and then headed out of the Patuxent to round Cedar Point for the Potomac. Once on the Bay and headed south, it was obvious we needed the motor on to help us make Point Lookout without tacking.

The wind did drop so we all took our reefs out at 1330. The sun was out for a nice day however the flies were terrible and biting. We all had that issue. We rounded into the Potomac around 1600 and made the Point Lookout Marina around 1730 and moored along the pier head. **Travel time 9+ hours covering 42 miles.**

Did our usual get together for the days recap, tomorrows planning and enjoying the company. We all did put in a reef for Day 4.

**Day 4** We all needed to fuel up at the marina which got us underway around 0900 for the visit to St. Clement’s Island and our overnight stay at nearby St. Patrick Creek’s Colton Point Marina. The wind was at our back out from the East, initially around 12 kts but built to 20+ kts by mid-afternoon. PATRIOT hugged the north shore. LARK headed for mid-channel to the buoy that marked the BLACK PANTHER (Sunken German Sub) and PRIDE was in the lead for St. Clement’s Island. As PRIDE got close to St. Clement’s, you could see the huge white cross on the island as you dropped in and out of 3-4 foot waves and a sea state that was getting tougher by the minute. You could also see the waves breaking over the Island’s only pier, with the winds building rapidly - so it was easy to pass on the island visit and head for St. Patrick Creek. Marc and I got the sail down and secured. Butch and Phil were headed for PRIDE and doing the same with their sails. The creek entry was to our starboard side, well-marked once in it and the marina was tucked back in behind several sharp bends in the creek. **Travel time 4 hours and covering 22 miles.**

We checked in the marina, fueled up, got our showers, scoped out the weather for the next several days. Didn’t look good, high winds, tides, and thunderstorms for Day 5 and could be the same for day 6. So over dinner and a few Dark and Stormys, we decided to lay over Wednesday, stay safe, relax and see what Day 6 would bring. We might have to also spend Day 6 at Colton’s and then rethink our trip back to the Solomons versus a long-long day heading up the eastern shore. We had the wind direction, the Potomac’s tide and the status of the thunderstorm hanging around to deal with. We had a nice evening with no pressures planned for the next day. Marc made the call to Steve to come pick him up Wednesday morning, given the uncertainty of what we could do next. It was great having him aboard and he is a wonderful teacher/friend, even for an old duffer like Fred.

**DAY 5** As planned we relaxed at Colton’s Point Marina. We took it easy and kept our eye on the developing weather for the next day. The winds were forecast to be out of the west and reduced in velocity but calling for thunderstorms. We would just have to wait and see if we could make the Coan River on the Virginia side of the Potomac. It was 23 miles and one of our shorter legs. We did our usual meet, snack and drink for the evening and did our weather planning. By this time, we had a better read on the storm and it looked like it would move through by mid-morning of Day 6. We would be ready and make a break for the Coan in the morning, heading back along the north shore where there were places to duck in if the storm became a problem.

**Day 6** Started off with rain and thundershowers at daybreak, the wind was not howling in the marina’s sailboat rigging, the water level was exceptionally high at the pier’s decking, but our weather watch sources indicated the storms were passing quickly. By this point were itching to move on, so were prepared. We were ready to move out after the storm had passed and there were no following cells showing on our iPhone weather apps. It did clear up and we were able to leave the marina at 1100 and motor out of St. Patrick Creek and into the Potomac by 1140. We were heading east with calm seas along the north shore under motor and with no sails up . The river was friendly for a change, and we made good time. We had the north shore’s Piney Point on our port side at 1400 and at this point we took a heading to the southeast and the Coan River approach which we reached at 1600. The wind, tide and no storm worked in our favor reaching our anchorage spot in Kingscote Creek. This put us in the lee of the forecasted north wind for that evening. We were rafted and settled in for another evening of fellowship by 1720. **The days travel logged us 23nm in 7+ hours.** Based on the weather forecast for Day 7 of north winds of 18-30 we all kept the reef in for tomorrow’s sail. PRIDE moved off the raft to be by herself with LARK and PATRIOT staying rafted together. Around midnight Butch realized he was dragging anchor, so LARK and PATRIOT motored to a better spot and Phil in PATRIOT slept through the entire move.

**DAY 7** Had us underway out of the Coan River and heading due east for Point Lookout at the Potomac entry, about 8nm away. Wind was out of the north with gusts to 25kts and with the river current ebbing at this point. LARK led the parade out and as we left the river, put our sails up and headed for Point Lookout. The sea state was beginning to get very rough as we got closer to the mouth of the river and the Bay, the ebb tide meeting the fetch of the north wind coming down the Bay created a very confused and rough situation and I’ll never forget it. PRIDE was able to negotiate the waves and was more comfortable sailing out into the Bay and then tacking back to the western shore versus pounding into each wave. PRIDE also has a dodger to break the waves coming over the bow. PATROIT and LARK were taking every wave in their face. At Point Lookout, they took their sails down and motored (slowly) with their bows into each wave as they tried to make headway up to Point No Point. PRIDE tacking out and then in to shore at first was keeping up with the straight liners coming up the shore. For PRIDE this was not pretty, she clocked gusts close to 40kts with waves at 4’ plus and the sail up and no one else to help onboard. The two boats coming up the shore were making the same progress. PRIDE dropped her sail and headed for the slow parade up the shore. We had set up our cruise rules on using our VHF radios and with them in use, we were in constant communication as we all made the journey to the Patuxent. At this point it was obvious to the three of us that at 2kts we were never going to make the Solomons in daylight if at all. We were fortunate with our timing, we had just passed the entry of St. Jerome Creek as we were heading for Point No Point. By radio, we quickly agreed to call it a day and turn around and head for St. Jerome Creek. On the charts it shows as very shallow (2’) but we are catboaters and this group uses their centerboard as their depth finder. PATRIOT led us in the entry and would signal to us when aground and led us to the marked channel to the port side of the entry. As we moved through the channel, it opened up into a large open lake. It was dead calm in there and 4ft of water. At 1130 we dropped anchor and rafted, as usual. **Travel time was 4.5 hours covering 15nm**. Of course, we had many personal war stories of the grueling trip up from Point Lookout. We were thankful for this option of refuge and a good contingency plan well executed. That afternoon we tuned into the weather and it looked like Saturday, Day 8, was going to have calm winds for a change. That afternoon at our daily planning session, we all agreed we should modify our trip up the eastern shore to get us all closer to home. We decided to scrap the Little Choptank’s Hudson Creek anchorage and return to Dunn’s Cove off the Choptank’s Harris Creek for our last evening together. For PRIDE and LARK this would put them 20 miles closer to home for their next day’s travel. We all needed fuel and there is a marina at the west end of the open body of water that makes up St. Jerome Creek. They opened at 0630. The Plan for Day 8 was to be on our way at 0630, fuel up and then head up the eastern shore to Dunn Cove.

**Day 8** Saw the band of three off at 0630, travel around without running aground, take on our fuel, ice and get on with our last leg of the cruise. We were out of the creek at 0750 and into the Bay. It was flat and the motoring over to the eastern shore and then straight north was mild given the last 7 days and all the crazy weather and difficult sea state. LARK was in the lead, followed by PRIDE and then PATRIOT. We turned into the Choptank River at 1330 and moored at anchor at 1600. **Day 8 travel time was 9.5 hours covering 43nm.** This last evening together we rafted did our normal gamming, talked about what we would want to do for next year trip and all agreed it doesn’t get any better than this. We made a special effort to recap the ups and downs of our 8 days together. We shared these below in the **Highlights** and **Lowlights** of the CCBA 2021 Long Cruise.

**Trip Highlights**

* Great sailing with heavy winds
* Surfing off the waves down wind
* St Jerome Creek-best anchorage
* Marc Cruder’s company
* Dinner with Lois and Steve Flesner
* More than enough to eat and drink
* Heavy weather experience
* Boat engines that got us through
* Great cocktail hour every night
* Very good marina facilities, all nights
* Good trip and contingency planning
* Boats that were in good condition
* Flexibility of the three captains to deal with change
* The company and fellowship of Butch, Phil and Fred
* We all made the trip safely

**Trip LowLights**

* Sea state off mouth of the Potomac
* Dragging anchor in Coan River
* Phil in high seas with no dodger
* Wanting for more CCBA boats participating in this cruise
* Not making St. Clements Island