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GOOD OLD BOAT

Inspiring hands-on sailors

Issue 148: January/February 2023

GoodOldBoat.com

\$10.00 US \$10.00 CAN



0 62825 97035 7

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Wind in the Pillows

Rest and relaxation on a Chesapeake Bay cruise.

BY LISA LIVEZEY

I noticed the colorful accent pillow on a side shelf at the marine thrift shop last spring. For only five bucks, it would perk up the interior of our recently purchased 1999 Beneteau 411. Stitched upon the pillow were the words “*There is nothing half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats.*” K. Grahame.

The quote, practically cliché among boaters, comes from British children’s classic *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame (1859-1932).

Would messing about in our boat prove true the pillow’s promising words? It had been 30 years since our last cruise. Then in my 20s, malleable and resilient, I had pitter-pattered about in bare feet and sunbathed on the foredeck in my bikini.

Now years later, would I enjoy life aboard again? Maybe I’d feel claustrophobic; and what about my propensity for seasickness?

Our new-to-us boat’s name is *Hwyl* /hoil/, the Welsh word for “passion,” with a secondary meaning of “sail.” Day trips so far had been fun, but would I be passionate about living aboard for a week or more?

My husband mapped out our 10-day trip from Chesapeake City, Maryland, south to St. Michaels, across to Annapolis, and back. After a stressful spring, I found myself anticipating the short voyage. “There is only one way to test the waters,” I thought. “We need to get out sailing.” The





Would a boater's cliché stitched on a pillow ring true for the author during a family cruise?

choppy waters to Haven Harbour Marina and what turned out to be a happening Saturday night, with friendly mariners enjoying cocktails on the lawn. After a tasty dinner overlooking the harbor and tired from a full day, we headed

crew aboard *Hwyl* for the trip included me, my husband, David, and our youngest son, Trevor, age 13.

I imbibed some Dramamine while departing the Bohemia River late in the afternoon on Friday, June 25. We motored into the sun on the Elk River, with storm fronts to port and starboard as a massive barge slid northward. Dusk closed in as we entered the Sassafras River. Trevor and David manned our first real-time anchorage, while I maneuvered *Hwyl* forward and back at their command. Two sailboats were already settled in this picturesque cove. I heated up soup and we sat silently, surveying the stunning sunset.

Nothing prepared me for the breathtaking view from the cockpit the next morning. Tranquility and quiet beauty offered a deep sense of peace. While the guys slept, I contemplated the day while gazing out upon blue-gray water that lay still as glass. Eastward, the sky glowed orange below purple clouds and a fiery yellow ball gradually appeared above the tree line.

After breakfast with a side of Dramamine for me, we set sail. The Chesapeake Bay is a busy industrial channel, with

ships accessing Delaware Bay via the C&D Canal. Tankers and barges, seeming small on the horizon, loomed larger and larger before passing us by. Far off appeared a strangely shaped barge with stick-up pipes. Peering through binoculars, we discovered half of a military submarine atop the platform.

It was a hot day with 18- to 25-knot winds that drove us south on a beam reach. Amidst 4-foot waves, I was prepping lunch down below when the familiar headache and waves of nausea hit. Despite a Dramamine booster, the rest of that seven-hour sail was spent above board sipping Pepsi and nibbling on extra-salty pretzels.

By late afternoon, we were anchored in Rock Hall's Swan Creek. Ravenous, we dinghied through

back to *Hwyl*. Thirty-knot gusts overnight kept David checking the anchor every hour, but by morning, the wind calmed and the water beckoned. Donning my suit, fins, and kickboard, I eased into the creek and kicked steadily along, turning back before the final bend. It turned out to be a thoroughly enjoyable swim.

St. Michaels was up next on the itinerary and required another full day's sail. I upped

my Dramamine dose before heading out into steady wind and hot temperatures. The day's highlight was cruising beneath the Bay Bridge, which offers a fascinating vantage point from below. Winds reached 25 knots south of the bridge and had us scooting along right into St. Michaels. Sweaty and exhausted from the eight-hour sail, we dinghied to town in search of something frozen to eat and enjoyed delightful ice cream while perusing artisan shop windows.

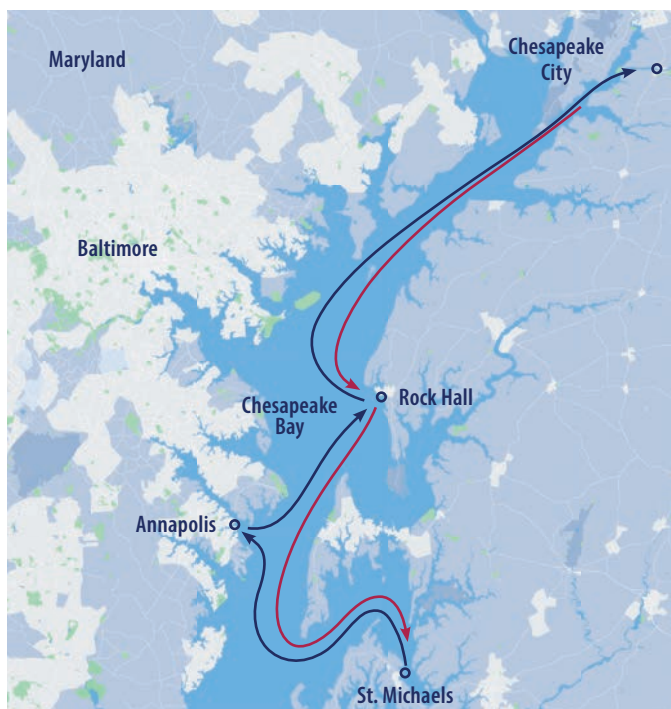
It was dark when we returned to *Hwyl* and hundreds of nettles—small, pulsing jellyfish—filled the water. They held a ghostly beauty, but there would be no morning swim for me. Despite sweltering heat, we enjoyed another day in St. Michaels. David went on a mission to find a marine supply store for a new shackle, and Trevor and I toured the fascinating Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum—a cluster of waterfront buildings celebrating the history, industry, and culture of the bay.



The author's husband at the helm during a spirited daysail to their next destination.

There, we observed a boatbuilding workshop constructing a full-scale replica of *Dove*, the ship that brought colonists to these shores in 1634. We ascended the 1878 Hooper Strait Lighthouse, relocated from the Chesapeake Bay to display photos, actual contents, and stories of its resident lighthouse keepers. Other buildings showed the history of the crab and oyster industries; the largest of them provided an absorbing timeline of boating on the bay, beginning with turn-of-the-century wooden rowboats accompanied by ladies and gents picnicking gaily along the shore. Admittedly, for us, one of the most-appreciated museum features was the air conditioning.

We rendezvoused with David, learning that no marine hardware store existed in St. Michaels. Fortunately, he ended up shooting the breeze with an old salt at a boat repair yard in town and walked away with a vintage but sound bronze shackle.



Visiting Annapolis is a must for sailors, so we crossed the bay the next day on a light, steady wind. Midway along, I retrieved the K. Grahame pillow and lounged in the cockpit watching puffy clouds sail through the blue sky. This was a good place to be.

The sailing mecca of Annapolis saluted us within the Severn River. A school of sailing dinghies traveled in tandem to port; to starboard lay the stately buildings of the United States Naval Academy. Sailboats were everywhere—on mooring balls and lined up along docks peppered with touristy offerings for would-be sailors.

We watched the Spa Creek drawbridge open, which let us into our anchorage for the night. Waiting as two boats emerged from Spa Creek, we then took our turn, and though space in the creek was tight, we squeezed in amidst other anchored boats. Upscale condos overlooked us along with comfortable, chic waterfront homes, as paddleboards and kayaks milled about. Later,



The Livezey family happily at anchor aboard their 1999 Beneteau 411, *Hwyl*.

we dinghied to the foot of Taney Avenue, ascended steep wooden steps, and walked the historic cobblestone streets to downtown Annapolis. Amongst a surprisingly dense crowd for a Tuesday, we ate ice cream and kicked about the docks looking at boats, eventually meandering back to sleep on the hook in Spa Creek.

As simply as we had the evening prior, we headed into town for breakfast on day six to eat at an Annapolis institution—Chick & Ruth's Delly. Established in 1965, this local diner is well-known for its crabcakes, 6-pound milkshakes, homemade baked goods, and signed snapshots of famous visitors that cover the walls.

Back upon *Hwyl*, Trevor alerted the bridge master of our approach for the 9:30 a.m. opening. Then, as we started towards the bridge, we looked back to see our dinghy floating off behind us. With five minutes until opening, David maneuvered *Hwyl* between anchored boats while Trevor and I frantically extended boat hooks, snagging our delinquent dinghy just in time. Two minutes later we motored

through the drawn Spa Creek Bridge. Whew, that was close!

Another 90-degree day paired with 20-knot winds propelled us northward underneath the Bay Bridge. I lounged about using the pillow, but desiring something a tad larger. We eventually dropped sail and motored past the tip of Rock Hall into Swan Creek. Dreaming of food and frozen mudslides, we whizzed to Haven Harbour Marina, disappointed to find the restaurant closed. Continuing on, we headed for Osprey Point Marina's historic home, which boasted a stately bar and open restaurant with exceptional food.

Messing with my camera the next morning, I captured an extraordinary sunrise when the calm creek mirrored the emerging sun. We left shortly after, rounding the point to Rock Hall Landing Marina to wait out forecasted thunderstorms and high winds that were due to arrive later that evening. After replenishing supplies, Trevor and I lounged by the



The first of several stunning Chesapeake Bay sunsets over the Sassafras River on day one.

companionship. Darkness loomed on the horizon as we dinghied back to *Hwyl* and seconds later the squall hit, pouring rain in sheets over the bimini as we donned jackets.

It was a happy feeling to arrive at our home marina that evening.

David and I chatted about the week, not feeling ready to stop traveling under sail. We joked about hiring someone to sell our house and its contents, signing the papers, and sailing off into a liveaboard sunset.

Boats, boats, and more boats motored from our marina on day 10, which fell on July 4. In a steady stream, they joined the boat parade heading upriver to watch fireworks at dusk set off at the Chateau

Bu-De Winery. Hundreds of boats in all shapes and sizes were lined up, rafted together in long caterpillar rows. Our eldest son joined us for the festivities—his first time on *Hwyl*. Climbing down below, he noticed and complimented my accent pillow, and I confirmed to him that truly, “There is nothing half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats.”

We anchored at a distance, enjoying beverages while booming fireworks showered down their brilliant colors. Leaning back, I rested my head on one of the newly acquired thrift shop pillows David had found. It, too, was printed with words to which I now could wholeheartedly aspire: “Home is Where the Anchor Drops.” 🍓

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for entertainment. Darkness set in and David was anxious to start for Worton Creek. Wind and waves whipped about, drenching us in the dinghy as we rounded the bend toward *Hwyl*. A red light flashed ahead. “Hmm,” I thought, “I don’t remember a buoy in that spot.” Alas, TowBoatUS was rescuing our neighbor boat from a nearby shoal. We heaved a sigh of relief that *Hwyl* had held fast.

As we motored north in the dark Trevor manned the bow, sweeping a powerful flashlight back and forth while calling out warnings for crab pots. Soon we were anchored securely in the shelter of Worton Creek.

In *Hwyl*’s cabin early the following day, I realized amidst heavy rocking that I was without Dramamine but was not seasick. My head and stomach had finally found rest amongst the waves and swells. We sailed back to the Sassafras River to meet friends from 30 years prior, clambering into their cockpit for lunch seasoned with epic

Fourth of July festivities and fireworks were the reward after a successful Chesapeake Bay cruise.

pool while David walked to a marine thrift shop. My phone buzzed—a text and picture from David. “Do you like these pillows?” he wondered. They were large and plain, with a printed phrase, and I gave the thumbs-up in anticipation of enhanced afternoon sky-watching. That evening, the storm arrived with heavy rain and high winds. Docked snugly, David slept soundly through it all.

About halfway along on our eighth day, the wind died and we lolled about mid-bay under a strong sun. I donned a life jacket with a tether line and jumped into the warm, welcoming water. Trevor joined me, splashing about, and with the shorelines so far off, it felt like swimming in a non-salty ocean.

From there we motored northward in search of food for our hungry boy. Attempting Fairlee Creek’s narrow channel, we ran aground, quickly reversed course to the creek’s mouth, and anchored near another sailboat.

Fairlee Creek Inn was gearing up for a rockin’ Fourth of July weekend and we enjoyed delicious pizza, with live music and people-watching