

Dry Tortugas – Keys Trip 2005

Sunday, May 15, 2005

Crew:

Tommy Ligan – Captain

Ralph Morgan

Kim O'Haver (me)

Will Archibald (Passenger to Key West only)

Vessel: Arcon – (40' Post Sports Fisher)



Note re web links: For some reason many of the map links below don't open to the proper location. Try right-clicking on the link and choose "Open Weblink in Browser". This seems to work. Also, read note at end of this Log about "Google Maps".

We leave the [Imperial Yacht Basin](#) * (Tampa) fuel dock at 9:00 am. Our destination today will be Boca Grand Pass and Pelion Bay... our first stop on this year's cruise to the Florida Keys and the Dry Tortugas. It is a beautiful day for being on the water with light winds, blue skies and the occasional cumulous cloud on the horizon; of no immediate threat to us. It is an uneventful trip and we tie up at Millers Marine in Boca Grande to top off the fuel a little after 4 pm. We find that it is no longer Miller's Marine... it is now called [Boca Grand Marina](#). No wonder we got no answer on the radio when we tried to contact them. Earlier we had called a friend (Howard Martinez) living in the area to let him know we would be over-nighting in his area and, as it happened, found him and friends in his boat fishing and playing near [Cayo Costa](#). He agrees to meet us in [Pelican Bay](#) where we plan to anchor for the night. Pelican Bay, located near the north end of Cayo Costa, is crowded but we enter anyway. A couple a dozen large boats are already in the bay. About an equal number

of sailing and motor vessels swing at anchor as we maneuver to find a free spot with enough water depth for the Arcon so we can anchor. May is the beginning of the Tarpon season at Boca Grande and it draws a crowd. We find a spot and set anchor in about 5 feet of water. Howard has followed us and comes along side and rafts to us for a visit. This is the first time we have seen Howard since the hurricanes of last year and find out one had completely destroyed his home in Punta Gorda. He tells us he is still in the throws of rebuilding. He had been luckier than many... his 32 foot Shamrock that was tied to his dock in back of the house had survived with only minor damage. After swapping war stories (he had just returned from a spear fishing trip to the Tortugas bearing appropriate photos of some very large grouper), Howard and crew depart for home and we settle back for a relaxed evening. A nice sea breeze had developed and we are very comfortable even without air-conditioning. It was great to get a break from the droning noise of the generator (gen-set) that's required if we want air conditioning while anchoring. As I am grilling hamburgers for supper, a small cabin cruiser approaches sporting a scantily clad young lady lounging on the foredeck. As the boat cuts its engines and drifts toward the stern of the Arcon, a man's voice announces; "She will dance for you... do you want to see?" What do we look like... a bunch of desperate old men? Not waiting to hear an answer from us, he anchors the boat a few feet off our stern and the young lady proceeds to stand and dance to the country music that is suddenly blasting from their boat. The first thing we notice is she has nothing on above the waist. I continue cooking the burgers and we start eating supper casually observing but otherwise ignoring the show in progress which continues for another 20 minutes or so. We still disagree among ourselves as to whether this was some form of exhibitionism or some enterprising marketing scheme from the duo. At any rate few words were exchanged and soon, loosing interest, they pull anchor and drift away leaving us once again to the quiet of the evening. When starting up the generator to facilitate freezer and icebox cooling for the night, Tommy smells diesel fuel. A quick check and he discovers a leak in the fuel filter and fixes same. It is a pleasant night for sleeping and while they use the air-conditioning below, I elect not to use the upper air unit and open the windows in the salon to the cool breezes of the evening. It made for very comfortable sleeping. It's really a shame we are unable to do without the noise of the generator when we anchor out like this at night.

Monday, 4/16

Another beautiful morning... We have coffee and a light breakfast before starting an all day trip directly from Boca Grande Pass to [Ft. Jefferson](#) in the Dry Tortugas. We pull anchor at 8:48am and pass a small fleet of boats fishing the Pass for Tarpon on our way south. The seas are glass calm and there is not a cloud in the sky... ideal conditions for the ensuing long, open sea crossing. We set our course, deploy 2 trolling rigs, and head south. Though we will be cursing faster than ideal for trolling, we will sometime have a hookup or two at this speed. Not to be though...we will find no hungry fish today. We do see several schools of feeding fish in route for which we slow, but they have little interest in what we are offering. Because of the calm seas, we are able to observe an unusual number of sea turtles of all sizes. At around 7 pm, the [lighthouse on Loggerhead Key](#) shows itself and we cruise to an anchorage near Ft. Jefferson at 7:40 pm. Although no longer glass-like, the seas are still calm. As we pass Loggerhead Key I notice that the tall Australian Pines previously covering the Key are completely gone and wonder if that is the result of the hurricane or the State of Florida's



attempt to remove them from State parks and other public areas. In any case, Loggerhead Key looks much smaller than I remember but you can see the lighthouse much better than you could with all the trees.

Tommy, Ralph and Will launch the dingy while I prepare supper. The spaghetti and

garlic bread are a big hit probably due much to Ralph's liberal application of [Bahama Mama's](#) to the crew while waiting for the food to be served.

Tuesday, 4/17

Ralph and Will take the raft over to visit the fort while Tommy and I service the engines and prepare for our departure for Key West. The thought is that we will head south a ways into the Straights of Florida and troll east looking for anything willing to take our offering. We depart around 10 am to a moderate chop which will remain constant for most of the day. Fishing is slow to say the least. No birds, no strikes, no other fishing vessels until around 5pm when we spot a sizable, well defined weed line and Tommy heads for it. Very soon, we have a strike but miss the fish. We did see that it was a decent sized dolphin (Mahi Mahi). Shortly thereafter, "Fish On..." Ralph is the first to grab the rod and 15 minutes later we boat a 40 pound class



Dolphin... a nice trophy for Ralph. A few minutes later, another strike and I grab the rod. It's another large dolphin but a little smaller than Ralph's. This will be our last fish of the day. We do have a couple more missed strikes, but it was getting late and we still had 20 or so miles to go to reach [Key West](#). We dock at A & B Marina at 7:30pm in the middle of a rain shower. In the distance, as we are tying up, we see a water spout just to the east of us on the bay side of the Keys. Rain will persist off and on till near midnight. Mostly rain with little wind or lightning. After I clean the fish we shower

and, donning rain gear, depart the Arcon to find something to eat. The restaurant we selected offered loud music and expensive food but it was enjoyable to be off the boat for a change. Even though the rain continues off and on, we walk the docks looking at some of the larger boats before retuning to the Arcon for the night. Will announces that he will be leaving us here, renting a car to continue his vacation on shore to be able to spend more time visiting Key West and the other Keys before returning to Tampa. He has had a good time so far, but decides he would rather be doing tourist things than fishing which is our primary goal. We plan a down day for tomorrow before heading back to sea.

Wednesday, 5/18/05



We spend the day in port. Will rides his bike to the airport to rent a car, returns to collect his gear and departs for his separate adventure around 10 am. We take care of a few odds and ends and also do some sightseeing. Tomorrow we will head up the Keys, following the Gulf Stream and fishing as we go.

Thursday - Friday, 5/18-19/05

We are up fairly early and Tommy and Ralph go ashore for breakfast. *Damn Good Food To-Go* is a little takeout restaurant at the docks that serves the boating community with packaged meals to go and they put on a pretty good feed. They also have a shaded patio with tables for those that just want a quick meal and this is where Tommy and Ralph go for breakfast. I am not a breakfast eater so I stay onboard to work on this log. When they return, we all prepare to depart. Not to be... While Ralph and I position ourselves to remove the lines, Tommy starts the engines. Engine (singular) that is ... the starboard engine fails to start. It doesn't even try to turn over. The starter solenoid is not engaging for some reason. Following some additional diagnosis, a defective solenoid is suspect. This coupled with deteriorating weather will keep us in port another day. While Tommy and Ralph head off in search of a replacement solenoid, I take the opportunity to put out a wash. A & B Marina has a small but very clean laundry room containing two washers and two dryers. Each takes 6 quarters per load... the dryer giving 45 minutes for this price. The solenoid fixes our problem but we decide it will be better to spend another night in Key West and head east tomorrow. The weather is still unsettled... no wind, but overcast with off-and-on rain. The remainder of the day is spent doing some additional sightseeing. Just before dusk, a large (60 + feet) sports fishing boat (Que Mas) backs into the slip next to the Arcon. We learn that the skipper and 2 mates have just brought this boat in nonstop from Mexico... nearing the end of a cruise from



Islamorada to Argentina and back. It is a new boat on its shakedown cruise before delivery to its owner in Islamorada. We are not sure what size engines it has but note that each of two exhaust ports have the diameter of a bushel basket. During a conversation with its captain he comments that it cruises at around 32 knots consuming some 130 gallons of diesel per hour in the process. It's a beautiful boat, but a little out of our league. For supper, we take the advice of another neighbor and try a place near the docks called *PT's*. They offer home cooked meals at a reasonable price. Ralph and I elect to

have the meatloaf with mashed potatoes while Tommy chooses the turkey and dressing. Food is plentiful, good and the prices are reasonable. Returning to the boat, we retire for the evening.

The next morning, Friday, we untie and pull around to A & B's fuel dock where we take on \$540 worth of fuel and several bags of ice. We depart at 8:40am and proceed south into the Gulf Stream for a days trolling east to Marathon where we plan to anchor out for the night. On the way, we boat several small dolphins keeping one of the larger ones for supper. We don't hook into anything near the size of the two we caught before Key West. We anchor in the [Boot Key Harbor](#) around 5pm. There are quite a few sailboats at anchor here, but we are one of only a couple of motor cruisers present. When trying to lower the anchor, we find there is no power to the windless. We find a disconnected wire that was missed when returning power to the starboard engine after solenoid replacement.

Not a big problem. I clean the one fish we kept and prepare to fix supper while Ralph concocts the Bahama Mamas. I decide to fry half the dolphin saving the remainder for another time. Fried Mahi Mahi with lemon and a side of potato salad complete the meal. As dusk approaches, we put on some music and migrate to the stern cockpit to watch the sunset. There is a light breeze and no sign of bugs. It is warm enough



though that we enjoy the air conditioning later when we retire. Another day in paradise...



Saturday, 5/21/05

During the night, the wind has become calm. We awake to a cloudless sky and glass-smooth water. Following a quick breakfast of cereal, we pull anchor and depart. On our way in yesterday, Ralph notices a fuel dock

[\(Burdines's\)](#) with diesel at \$2.09/gal. We decide to top-off and see if we can get any local fishing intel. We take on 74 galleons we had burned yesterday and hear that marlin are being caught at a place called the "Humps" offshore in the stream so this will be our destination today. The "Humps" are a series of relatively shallow mountains (?) in an otherwise deep area. Surrounding seas are over 1,000 feet deep and these "Humps" are only 400-600 feet deep. We spend better than an hour reaching them and then start trolling. We will see several schools of small dolphin and Tommy thinks he sees a bill fish jump, but we catch nothing. The seas remain calm and I suspect that, along with an almost full moon, has something to do with the poor fishing results. There are plenty of other boats fishing the "Humps" and we see no one boat a fish or even have a hook-up for that matter. I have heard tales before about the poor fishing in the Stream when it is calm and suspect we are experiencing that. I guess the fish need the occasional holiday too. We return to the same anchorage we used last night and I start supper around 7:30pm... The fish was such a big hit last night that I decide to do a repeat adding only some heated-up leftover spaghetti and a sliced

tomato to the menu for variation. We retire early and note that a nice sea breeze keeps the boat swinging on its anchor. Perhaps we will have some wind tomorrow and the fishing will improve.

Sunday, 5/22/05

Once again, we awake to totally calm seas... hardly a ripple on the water surrounding our anchorage. Since we are here, we decide to give the "Humps" another try before heading farther up the Keys. We take advantage of the relatively cheap fuel and top off with another 74 gallons. It looks like that is what we burn on an average days fishing if we mostly troll. Expensive fish but then again we know that... Had we wanted cheap fish, we would have visited the local fish market in Tampa. Filling up with Fuel at this dock has one advantage... you receive two, 50 pound baskets of ice "free". Not bad when you consider the going price for 10 pounds of ice here is \$1.50 or more. The Keys are definitely programmed to extract the maximum dues from visiting boaters and we take advantage of every "deal" we can. Reaching the fishing area, we note the seas are, if possible, calmer than they were yesterday. However, it being Sunday, there are many more boats fishing. Perhaps all these boats will attract the fish. We try all the ammunition we have and 3 hours into the hunt, we have yet to get a strike. We have seen several large bill-fish skittering across the surface but they don't seem to stay put... at any rate, they certainly are not interested in our offerings. Intercepted radio conversations indicate some fish are being caught but mostly they are "schoolies" (young dolphin - say under 24 inches). One captain claims a 10 pound Wahoo but no reported bill-fish hookups. We also have trouble staying out of the floating grass which seems worse than yesterday. Fishing the larger, more concentrated weed-lines produces nothing either. We hope this won't be a repeat of yesterday but, if so, the "being here" is still better then the "not being here". It is a beautiful day, with beautiful azure blue water beneath us and the occasional puffy white cloud above. Life is good.



Later... another day and still no fish; not even a strike. We do see numerous bill-fish jumping and obviously feeding but not on what we are offering... and others are having no luck either. It remains

very calm all day and we return to port about the same time as yesterday and I fix hotdogs and left-over spaghetti (again) for supper. We are starting to think the fishing would have been better in the Bahamas.

Monday, 5/23/05

The day starts as did our last two... Fuel and free ice at Burdines with a 8:30am departure. Our plan of attack today is to concentrate on the weed lines where we saw several feeding bill-fish yesterday. This will be in the stream, but only about half the distance out as we did yesterday and the day before. As we slow and deploy our lines to start trolling, we note the gen-set isn't running. It has shut down sometime during the trip out. Tommy goes below to investigate while we circle a large weed patch. I am at the helm. Shortly I hear the gen-set crank-up but it sounds strange. Tommy shuts it down and asks me to stop and shut down the main engines... he needs to spend more time in the engine room analyzing the problem and it's just too hot and noisy down there with the main engines running. We happen to stop next to a large weed bed... in the middle of a Sargasso Sea as it were. Everything appears fine with the gen-set... Oil full (we had topped it off with ¼ qt. before leaving port this morning. Water down only about a cup. Attempts to restart it are not successful... It makes an unusual sound when starting and dies soon after the start switch is released. Tommy contacts Duke, the Arcon's mechanic in Tampa by phone. He suggests several things which we try. At this time, Tommy notices some oil in the catch pan under the generator engine and re-checks the oil. It is showing down by almost 2 quarts. At this point, we know something major is wrong. Since this is the source of all our AC power for onboard refrigeration and freezers not to mention air-conditioning, this becomes a show-stopper... not only for today's fishing, but probably for the entire trip. In an attempt to get a better handle of just what has happened, Tommy removes the flywheel cover to get a better look at the engine block and notices a hairline crack in the block. There is no evidence of oil leaking from this crack but it's not a good sign. However, since the engine catch pan is now better than half full of oil we know this thing is dead. Later, back in port, Tommy notes that the pulley mounted to the crankshaft can be wiggled back and forth... a pretty good indication that the crankshaft is broken. The final reading on the generator's hour meter is 5,621 hours... a long life for that workhorse.

Tuesday, 5/24/05

We revise our plans and plot a return trip to Tampa. We will continue around the east coast and return by way of the Okeechobee Waterway through Lake Okeechobee. This route will give us more opportunities for overnight dockage with hook-ups than would a return by way of the Gulf. This is something we will need in order to get occasional power for the freezer and air-conditioning at night. This boat can be very uncomfortable to sleep in at night this time of the year when there is no air. Going by way of the East Coast will also provide us with some additional opportunity to fish-as-we-go along the Gulf Stream.

We find the fishing no better today than it has been the past few days. It has really been slim pickings since we departed the Key West area. We do get one hit closer inshore as we approach Miami seeking dockage for the evening but miss the fish. We have a stiff sea breeze today for the first time. Following 4 foot seas have been with us all day. We approach Crandon Park Marina near Miami around 6:30pm. Tommy had been trying to contact the marina by radio since before 5pm with no response. As we suspected, its office is closed for the day when we arrive. There are several empty slips so we decided to stay anyway and clear with the office in the morning. Power connections will be a problem though... This marina does not have 30 amp service. The Arcon requires 2, 30 amp connections and over the past couple of years we have had increasing trouble finding marinas that offer this. It is not a big deal if you have a working power generator as you can use ship power. With our system out, we are in kind of a bind. If we don't get power soon, we stand to lose the contents of our freezer. What we need is a "Y" splitter that splits 50 amp service into 2, 30 amp connections. They are expensive (~\$250) but we really should have bought one before now. Tommy finds a man that lives aboard one of the boats in the marina that agrees to drive him to the local West Marine Store where he purchases the splitter. He returns to the Arcon just as the sun is setting. We were still tied up at the fuel dock hoping the wind would die down before attempting to secure the boat into a slip for the night. No such luck. If anything, it is blowing harder than when we arrived. With help from the man that took Tommy to get the splitter and from a young lady washing down a sailboat, we successfully negotiate a safe dockage.

Wednesday, 5/25/05



The wind has decreased overnight... We depart the marina at 8:00am after settling with the office. Tommy decides to exit by way the scenic route through Miami's downtown waterfront. Ralph comments... "What an Ant Hill." It's an impressive skyline but unlike most large cities I have seen, most of these high-rises seem to be

residential. Condos and apartments far outnumber business establishments. Or at least that is my observation. There is little traffic and we have the harbor pretty much to ourselves. That is not true for the roads though. We exit by way of a [channel paralleling a causeway leading to Miami Beach](#) and it has bumper to bumper traffic in both directions. Soon we are back in the Atlantic and will try trolling in closer to shore today. We have had no luck offshore the past 3 days so perhaps this will work. Although we do see more boats trolling these waters, the daily catch is the same as it has been the past several days... zip. Around 3:30pm, with an approaching squall line, we enter the [pass at Palm Beach](#) and secure a slip at the [Sailfish Marina and Resort](#) in Palm Beach Sores. The first winds from the squall hit us as we clear the pass and make it tricky tying up to the fuel dock. Noting the price of diesel (\$2.76/gal) we decide to take on only 50 gallons hoping to find it cheaper down the road. This is more expensive than even what we paid in Key West (~\$2.35) not to mention the \$2.09/gal we had been paying in Marathon. We get the boat secured in our slip right before the full force of the squall hits us. I am able to get online here and obtain a weather report that has us located in the middle of a severe thunderstorm watch area. The storm lasts for the better part of an hour before abating. The marina has a nice restaurant and we decide we will eat out tonight. Guess the crew is getting tired of my cooking. Ralph and I get Cocanut Shrimp and Tommy orders Paella. Food is good and the restaurant has a nice atmosphere but the prices were on the high side... not surprising. We return to the Arcon and retire for the evening. On the walk back to the boat, I briefly talk with the captain of a 56 foot sports fisherman docked near us. He has just returned from the Bahamas where he says the fishing has been fantastic. According to him, May is the month to be fishing the Bahamas and fishing

won't pick up in the Keys or SE Florida until mid to late June. He says that is why we have not seen many boats fishing where we have been. If correct, this is something we need to take into consideration for future trips. So far, our fishing success has not been very good on this trip... nowhere near as good as what we have enjoyed the past several years during this same time period in the Bahamas. Perhaps by next year, fuel prices in the Bahamas will have become more reasonable and we can return.... Diesel prices there now average about \$3.80/gal.

Thursday, 5/26/05

The weather still looks unsettled early so we decide to delay our departure and do some laundry. Check out time is 11:00am. By that time, the weather has cleared enough that we decide to get underway. We troll north to Stuart where we enter the St. Lucy Canal for our trip across Florida by way of the [Okeechobee Waterway](#). Past experience has shown that fuel prices in the Stuart area are high so we will take a chance and hope to find cheaper options later. Tommy figures we have enough remaining fuel to reach Ft. Myers if necessary. About 10 miles into the St. Lucy Canal, we pass a large boat yard with a fuel dock... They are advertising diesel at \$2.03/gal... looks like we made a good decision. While fueling, we note a large sports fish boat up on shore for maintenance. Looking closer, we note it is the [Que Mas](#)... the



same boat that docked next to us in Key West. The dock attendant tells us that the boat was built at their facility... [American Custom Yachts](#). Although its home port is Islamorada, the crew had returned it yesterday for some fine tuning. It had just been launched 6 months ago and was returning from its shakedown cruise to Argentina

and back. We were told that it was powered by two 2,000 hp Cat diesels and the final cost to the owners was a little over \$6,000,000. Is it any wonder that back in Key West we thought it a nice boat ([More photos](#))? It is quite a coincidence seeing the boat again here.

When paying for the fuel, we are told that the advertised price of \$2.03/gal did not include sales tax... However, the \$2.16/gal is still a lot less than the \$2.76/gal they wanted at Sailfish Marina. Something else of interest we noted about the Que Mas; someone had painted a school of ballyhoo in contrasting color on the bottom of the boat. One wonders if that would help attract fish. We leave the boat yard and continue west toward Lake Okeechobee. We figure we can make it to Indiantown Yacht Basin before dark. [Indiantown is just east of Lake Okeechobee](#) and stopping here overnight will allow us an early morning crossing of the Lake when we are less likely to encounter thunder storms. We arrive at the marina just before today's thunderstorm hits and just as the marina is closing. We get docked and have our power hooked up before the storm hits. As we soon learn, dock power here is not very good. We keep tripping their on-shore circuit breaker each time we try running the AC or use the stove to cook. To make matters worse, as we discover this power problem, the storm hits full force with dramatic lightning strikes all around us. No one really wants to jump ashore and play with circuit breakers. In time the storm passes and leaves us with a cool breeze. We are finally able to find an arrangement of power connections that will allow me to use one burner on the stove to cook supper. We have fried dolphin and grits. I cook the grits first then fry the fish. The crew seems to enjoy it. We have power for the refrigerator and freezer, but can not start either AC's compressor without tripping the breaker and of course there was no one left at the marina to contact for help. For the first time this trip, everyone will be forced to sleep without AC. Tommy and Ralph do run the AC's fans below but I am able to open both salon windows and rear door for a nice breeze up top. We survive the night with no permanent damage.

Friday, 5/27/05

We awake early and pull out of the marina at 7:30am heading for the Lake. It is glass calm this morning and shortly we reach the last lock on the east side of the lake. At first we are told that due to maintenance on the Lock,



we would have to wait till 10:30 to be locked through. We prepare to anchor and wait when the lock operator changes his mind and says he will allow boats waiting to proceed before repairs start but caution

would be required because a work barge was partially blocking the lock. In a few minutes we clear the lock and enter Lake Okeechobee which is absolutely smooth. For the remainder of the day we have a beautiful cruise through the heartland of Florida. From the flatness of the lake through everglades of grass and into the lush tropical hammocks and forests of southwest Florida and passing through 4 more locks we arrive at Ft. Myers Yacht Basin a little after 5pm. We obtain dockage for the night at a good price... just one dollar a foot. After cleaning up, we walk to downtown Ft. Myers (just a couple of blocks from the marina) and find a restaurant for supper. It is a nice small café and we each choose the evening's special... rib roast, baked potato and salad. We return to the boat before dark find there is a good wi-fi connection here. I am able to get online, check email and converse with friends.

Saturday, 5/28/05

It is 8:00am when we pull out of the fuel dock and continue down the Caloosahatchee River to the Gulf. It is early enough so that the boat traffic is light as we cruise past Thomas Edison's Home site and neighborhood where I once lived near downtown Ft. Myers. It promises to be another bright, sunny and calm day. However, slowly as we get closer to mouth of the river and the sound around Punta Rassa, Pine Island and Sanibel, we become a



single element in a parade of boats heading west into the Gulf. As we slow for the last "idle speed" zone before entering the sound a large line of boats of every type and size can be seen both in front and behind us. It is a real madhouse with many boats jockeying for position and pushing the speed limit. We pass several marine patrol boats with flashing lights rafted to boats

(writing tickets?) I contrast this with trips I remember making with my dad down this same river back in the early 50's where we seldom saw more than 2 or 3 other boats on the entire trip. In those days we kept our boat in the same yacht basin in which we had just spent last night. It was also a much slower trip back then. As I recall, that boat (a 32 ft. Chris Craft) did

a whopping 5-6 knots and a trip down the river took the good part of a day. A trip to the Gulf was always an overnight trip.

Once we clear the Sanibel Bridge, we are able once again to return to cruising speed and head south around the shallow waters off Sanibel and back into the Gulf. In about 30 feet of water, we start to see pods of sardines and decide to troll for a while. I suspect Spanish Mackerel and break out my light rod and put on a small leaded, squid spoon. In very short order, I have a strike... Missed! As Ralph is letting out a second line, I get another strike and this one takes off "smoking" my reel (Shimano Calcutta 400 w/25lb test line). It is a nice fight on this light tackle and after retrieving the several hundred yards of line it ripped from the reel, Ralph lifts a small King into the boat. We were hoping the Kings would still be around but this wasn't exactly the big boys we were looking for. It was a school King probably 6-7 pounds but a keeper. It was at least something to put into the freezer that wasn't exactly full so far this trip. We get several more hits and almost caught a 2nd when he gets above the wire leader and strips the monofilament line taking the spoon with him. Later a 3rd King is lost when a split-ring holding the hook onto the spoon gives way when lifting the fish over the stern. These fish were of the size a little too small to gaff and a little too heavy for the spoons we were using which were intended for smaller Spanish Mackerel. A large net would have been appropriate for these school kings... something we did not have on board. As the day progressed, we caught a few small Spanish Mackerel but did not hook any more Kings. We fished until around 4pm when we took a vote as to weather to head directly to Tampa with an after midnight arrival, or find shelter for



the night and continue home tomorrow. We were off Boca Grande Pass and decided to try and find dockage somewhere in the area. This being the Saturday of Memorial weekend, this might be difficult. We contact Boca Grande Marina (Old Miller's Marina) and Cabbage Key by radio and find they are full for the evening. [Gasparilla Marina](#) is

not answering our radio call so I contact them by phone and find they can accommodate us for the evening but we would not have a slip but have to tie

up to a "facing" dock. They could, however, provide hookups. Entering the pass is like entering another madhouse. It is also the middle of the Tarpon season here and Tarpon are jumping and slashing the water everywhere while being pursued by hundreds of fisherman in their boats. It is quite a flotilla we must navigate through. We note several boats with fish on but don't stop to watch. We dock at Gasparilla Marina around 5:30pm and get cleaned up for dinner. The marina has offered to provide us a ride to a nearby restaurant; [The Fishery](#). It's a nice restaurant with a great view of the sound behind Gasparilla Island down to Boca Grande Pass. The food is excellent. Returning to the Arcon, we make it a early night. It had been a long day of fishing in the hot, windless Gulf and we were all feeling it.

Sunday, 5/29/05

We leave the docks early. Gasparilla Pass is still unmarked and we suspect it might be too shallow for the Arcon so we return south to Boca Grande Pass to reenter the Gulf and continue our trip home. This will be the last day of our trip but are prepared to spend some time fishing if we see anything exciting. As we proceed farther north we encounter larger schools of bait fish but nothing seems to be feeding on them. We slow several times and troll for awhile picking up a couple of very small Spanish Mackerel but no more Kings. We arrive back at [Imperial Yacht Basin](#) around 5pm and start cleaning the boat. It will be good to sleep in our own beds tonight. That is, all but Ralph who will be staying on the boat for another night or two before heading back to his home in Georgia.

* NOTE: Several places within this document, I have linked to a new mapping program under development at Google called "[Google Maps](#)". It provides not only maps, but satellite images of most of the US. You can toggle between map and satellite views by clicking on either map or satellite links at top right of web page. At the time of this writing Google Maps was still in Beta testing but appears to be completely functional. One improvement I have noted different with this map program that I have not seen in others, is the ability to easily move from the map/image in the view window to adjacent parts of the extended map by just click-and-dragging within the window. Google provides brief instructions here:

<http://www.google.com/help/maps/tour/>