

OUR FIRST MAJOR TRIP IN “TENNESSEE” OUR CRUISE TO CALOUNDRA

Dec 30. 2005 (Friday)

Friday the 30th Dec 2005 was a hot and humid day in Brisbane. My wife Olga and I arrived at Carrington Boat Club around 10:30 and I proceeded to strip the bird netting and covers off Tennessee then row our gear out and prepare to leave before twelve o'clock so as to catch most of the outgoing tide. As far as Tennessee was concerned 'she' was ready for this trip as much as I could make her. (I'm a bit of a 'belt & braces' man when it comes to safety.)

Travelling sedately down the Brisbane river is quite pleasant - dodging the ferries' wash along the Sth. Brisbane Reach was the only 'tense' moment we had until we neared the Gateway bridge where we had spray flying back into the cabin from the surprisingly big waves that came at us. We reached the Pelican Banks at 4:30 and I practiced setting my anchor and seeing the tide was just on the turn I knew I would have enough water under the boat when low tide came next morning.

This first night proved to be somewhat unsettling. The dinghy wanted to keep bumping into the sides of Tennessee. The gas fridge was heating the bulkhead where Olga was sleeping. And you just can't have too much ventilation on a hot summer's night (even close to the bay.)

Dec 31. 2005 (Saturday)

Saturday morning dawned fine. I was keen to leave as soon as we could. I did my usual checks of engine and transmission and then tidied up rear of boat seeing we had decided not to use the forward cabin for sleeping but mainly for stowing our plastic boxes of cloths, books, & other "essential" gear. This arrangement worked extremely well over the whole course of our cruise. At 6:47am we up anchored and left our fellow companion "Kidnapped" who had silently appeared during the night and headed for the old bar cutting. This area around the northern approaches to the mouth of the Brisbane River is quite shallow and I had to make course correction, as the first lateral mark is not a very good shade of red! (I'm still not seeing the sign shapes as meaning anything!) After passing the compass adjusting buoy my engine box exhaust blower decided it had had enough (by the loud noise it was making I suspect my soft mounting of the ball races had failed due to the high temperatures of the air coming out of the clam type vent.) I finally had to disconnect its power and rely on the secondary solar powered fan to exhaust the hot air from the fully enclosed motor box.

The bay was kind to us - however my "first mate" was not feeling too well due to a following breeze blowing exhaust fumes into the back of the boat. My GPS said we were doing a good 5.4 knots and we passed the Scarborough mark at 9:00, Deception Bay 9:45, and Bribie (passage) at 10:40.

There was significant activity on this stretch of water at this time of morning. We travelled slowly under the Bribie Bridge noting the SCM small craft mooring areas where a number of sailing boats were moored because of the height of their masts.

I wanted to have a yarn with the volunteer marine rescue, "VMR" people and to obtain local knowledge about anchoring, using my 27 Meg radio and silting up of Pumicestone Passage. (ESP, "The Skids" section). We motored into the anchorage at Bellara and had a couple of goes at

anchoring — I wasn't happy with my plough anchor — it just didn't seem to want to bite in and besides this area was only 1.7 In and it was nearing high tide. We put the 4 HP. mercury onto the dinghy — locked up *Tennessee* and went ashore for toilets and to dump our garbage.

The lady at the VMR building was quite helpful but I didn't feel like displaying my ignorance regarding the use of Chan 88 on my 27 meg radio — she gave us advice about mooring and the skids should be OK. — So we decided to press on to Mission Point for New Years night. My Hummingbird depth sounder kept "going off" (depth alarm) and it was showing 0.4m. When it was actually 2.0m. My "Teleman" (original depth sounder) is so insensitive it just shows 2.0m with no false signals and it's good in a way to have both systems operating. Off white patch at 2pm (45min) then Olga put on some lunch (pink salmon, avocado and three bean mix). You tend not to eat very well when you're under way. Passing Gallagher Point 2:45, Poverty Point 3:05 anchoring up amongst twenty other boats at Mission Point at 3:45pm. This is a very acceptable place I feel (we didn't go ashore, but there is a nice feel to the place.) I was determined to set up my "Barbie" play pool (base) and shower curtains I'd made up so we both could have a shower tonight. The little "Primus" hand shower worked extremely well and we both felt so much more human! By 7 pm we watched a magnificent sunset — I took some video and the water was as flat as can be — no rocking and rolling to night. We 'turned in' early and other than a few firecrackers going off both Olga and I slept like "logs" — right through midnight!

Jan 1. 2006 (Sunday)

Up at 6:20 such a restful sleep — you wouldn't know you were on a boat! (I really am a calm / smooth water "sailor"). I did my usual checks seeing the engine had run for seven and a half hours yesterday — adjusted "fan belt". Then washed encrusted salt off the transom using a brush. (The salt attacks the chrome plated brass name). Olga is getting good at driving the boat — I give hand signals (you can't hear my voice inside from out at the bow rail). To come forward — stop — go "in reverse") we're away by 9:45. I am feeling a little apprehensive as we come around Lime Pocket — wondering if we're leaving too soon and we'll get stuck somewhere because of insufficient depth. I ignore the depth alarm sounding almost constantly and just keep an eye on the Teleman. I kept the engine at 1300 R.P.M. it was "fast" enough I felt. As you come to the northern end of Thooloor Island the channel goes in a big "U" and it is a most delightful spot. There were 5-6 boats — mostly "Tinnys" fishing ~ a couple of large cruisers seemed to be 'parked' in a deep gutter behind Thooloor as well (It's a place I wouldn't mind visiting again.).

As we came across the northern end of Long Island 1 got very excited to recognise "*Sirrocco*" coming out of the Skids. She is a most desirable wooden vessel (circa. 1035 I'd say) which I've photographed in Breakfast Creek.

What? It's not true! Surely "they" don't want us to go between that green mark and those mangroves! But that's where we had to go — it appeared to be 30' wide at the most. I "coasted" through in neutral — constantly watching the sounder but it was deep enough. The skids 10:40 actually turned out to be a non-event in reality, but the Narrows were the real challenge. (At 10:50) You have to be alert and keep to the left of the marks even though it seems ludicrous — that's where you have to place the boat. Then the passage opens up (and gets deeper) as you approach "Roys" and go through the W's. Time to relax - let Olga take the wheel while I'm out back taking videos of the scenery — Roys (Road) is a 'kind of special' hide-away place in my psyche. (Heart). It smacks

of yesteryear — a time when things moved at a slower pace where fishermen hung their nets to dry — but most of that (1979) is now gone. Coming north to Caloundra from Roys is a very easy section in the cruise — being new year's day there seemed to be lots of 'waving to strangers' to-day — boat people do seem to be extra friendly - I was beginning to think my First Mate was my "auto-helm".

Somehow when Olga is steering I'm more relaxed and can attend to little things like checking engine A gauges etc. and take in some of the scenery. Egg Island came alongside by 11:30, then Hall's Bay 11:40. Bells Creek 12:00. Coming right over to the military jetty as indicated by the "UBD of the sea" — a book called Beacon to Beacon. Then only some 15min. more and we turned tight (starboard) around the red mark and now to anchor in "The Blue Hole" We'd made it. It really felt good.

Our Cruise to Caloundra Part 2

Jan 1. 2006 (Sunday).

After arriving at the Blue Hole near the northern tip of Bribie Island in the Pumicestone Passage we anchored behind a large vessel named "*Stardust*". I was not very happy with the security of my 20lb plough anchor and thought they call it a 'Hole' it was showing only 2 meters on the depth sounder. I checked later using my line with knots at every meter — it was down to 1.8 m. Night was drawing on and I suspected my anchor had dragged — we decided to attempt to re-anchor (my dinghy still had its little sand anchor out ~ "we're not going far, I said".) But the current took *Tennessee* close to "*Stardust*" with me out the front and Olga steering we went between the two closest boats!! —I finally got back inside and we got to a safe distance — let our anchor go and by then the dinghy (anchor and 30' rope still out) was hard up against the side of *Tennessee* with the outboard hitting against the hull — I cut away the rope and we lost the anchor: what not to do.

The owner of "*Stardust*" (a Halvorsen 40 R) came over in his 'rubber ducky' to see if he could help — no doubt wondering what was going on.) His name was Kevin Foster ~ seemed a decent chap and didn't go for the blow on us, seeing we narrowly avoided hitting his immaculate boat, which was built in 1947.

Jan 2. 2006 (Monday).

Kevin and his son-in-law came over mid-morning in their snorkelling gear looking for our lost anchor and rope but weren't able to locate it. However they checked and found no rope around our propeller. During this day we did very little. I wasn't inclined to leave the boat unattended ~ I did my usual checks on the engine etc. and found a loose stud lying in the bilge. **It** had fallen out of the flexible propeller coupling! — Most of the studs were loose — so I proceeded to drill holes through their heads and wired them so this problem should not happen again. We mostly relaxed and enjoyed the beauty of this place for the rest of the day.

By the tide chart and the "offset" times for the skids I thought it would be best to leave at 11 a.m to return, possibly overnight at Donnybrook. (One of my 'special places'.)

Jan 3. 2006 (Tuesday).

6:35am a 'magic' moment occurred. There must have been 1000+ terns wheeling and swooping all around *Tennessee* — the sound and sight was truly inspiring — an unforgettable sight. Today would be almost as high a tide as yesterday (2.6m) and the water was simply rushing out from under our boat — so clear and blue when the sun is high. Our 'neighbours' and "*Kingfisher*" left around 9:30 — It's a true family boat— only 20' I'd say, but it's loaded with people — and with towels hanging over the rails it looked anything but shipshape! We left the Blue Hole at 10:03 meeting lots of activity from there till past Bell's Creek. Boats "Whizzing" past in all directions and some towing floats with children hanging on yet obviously enjoying every moment.

We were not in a hurry so we 'sat' at 1250 RPM till Halls Bay (By 10:37). **It** was around then I noticed the engine labouring and losing about 50 revs per minute so I opened the throttle to 1400 RPM — the fluctuations persisted — Olga took over and I removed the engine covers to check what

was happening - all seemed OK. I began to blame the transmission — as it was overheating and causing a dragging effect on the reverse cone inside the transmission. We arrived at Roys by 11 am and following the first marks I wanted to go back the way we had come and so I took the right (starboard) hand 'channel' around this island. Just as we entered this wider section we saw *Kingfisher* take the left-hand (port) channel. I felt that was the way we were being directed to go by the marks so we did a u-turn but as I came around the not-them end of this island I failed to see a green mark hard over to port — next to the mangroves. Suddenly we were broadside on and aground — the water was fairly gushing past us and we were being held fast to the sandy bottom that seemed to have built a mound up against the keel. The problem was compounded by the force of the incoming tide. To cut a long story short we got off using the anchor but then Olga couldn't hold her, again she swung back to starboard and we went aground again only this time 20ft away from the green mark. I reversed hard which threw some water under the boat — the front let go and I gunned her forward and to port. Suddenly I could tell we were off and heading back into deep water. This episode had left us both shaken somewhat and it was good to just relax as we made our way slowly back through to the Skids by 12:00.

Then coming around the area north of Tripcony Bight the engine started its 'labouring' again so I decided to 'open her up' to 2000 revs and held it there for 20 minutes thinking that if it was a fuel problem that would show it up. But no problems.

We slowed after Mission Point to navigate our way into Donnybrook — a nice place I've been photographing since the mid 1970's to document the spread of mangroves in this location. By 1:30 we anchored after 3 to 4 attempts next to a moored boat named "*Rum Runner*". (This chap had passed us on the Long Island stretch). I had observed the transmission was making a lot of "rattly" noises and would not go into neutral as if there was binding causing the propeller shaft to keep turning.

It looks like I'll need to dismantle the transmission and build in greater clearances. Throughout our trip my dear wife had been nursing a torn rib muscle which had caused much pain at times but she's so uncomplaining. After lunch we came ashore to do some shopping — offload some garbage and take photographs to prove *Tennessee* has visited Donnybrook. Sitting on the park bench looking out at boats is still a very pleasant scene.

Memories of June 1984 came flooding back when the children were young and we camped here. Now with the afternoon sun lighting up *Tennessee* lying anchor made a dream come true.

This idyllic scene was to be transformed in a few hours to a veritable nightmare.

After all the drama of the day we both turned in at 9:30. Around 1am it began to blow — I commenced closing up the boat and storing all the insect screens then I turned on the depth sounder it showed 0.2m ~ in other words we were aground! Our anchor had dragged. Olga said to put on my life jacket and deck shoes. We restarted the engine and somehow got back into the channel. Thankfully the lightning which was spectacularly going across the clouds and not down lit the scene. Olga got her "baptism of fire" as we tried and tried to get my 20lb plough anchor to bite in. Thankfully the search light helped us to avoid hitting the moored boats — but oh how close we came to that "Goldstar" jetty. We were motoring until I realised we were dragging our dinghy with

4hp outboard which was almost submerged telling Olga to try to hold station I lashed the back of the dinghy to a bollard then had to unlock the security chain — stepping into “*Titanic*” is what it felt like — to rescue my Mercury. That done I then bucketed the water out of the dinghy then the rain started to bucket down but thankfully the search light enabled us to see the ramp and “*Rum Runner*” — once the rain eased I realised I needed to try my Danforth sand anchor so with Olga again keeping us steady I went forward and shackled this anchor on to my second anchor rope. This done I signalled to Olga to come forward and laid out this anchor close to the green mark — then backing up I could tell this anchor was gripping even though it had no chain on it. At last I just dropped the plough anchor straight down — we seemed to be out of trouble at last. It was now 3:30am and we were both exhausted from this ordeal. But felt secure enough to go back to sleep for a couple hours.

Jan 4. 2006 (Wednesday)

Most of my gear in the dinghy was gone — including the flooring; thankfully the outboard motor started and was none the worse for its dunking. I did some cleaning of windows — swapped the Danforth over onto the anchor rope with the chain and let it shank first down into the chain pipe as we travelled. We were thankful to God we were still in one piece. After a late breakfast we up anchored and headed back to the special (yellow) mark and turned to starboard heading for Toorbul just on midday. It was the place where my “love affair” with boats began when I was only 11 years old. We anchored behind a boat named “*Penny Lane*” about 200m offshore in approximately 3m. — even though Toorbul has a sandy bottom I didn’t feel confident enough to go ashore to take photographs. So we both relaxed and read a little. Olga felt we ought to tie up to some yellow buoys that appeared to be moorings — I felt it unwise to use moorings belonging to other people. As it turned out two chaps in a tinny came later in the day and lifted up the crab pots attached to these buoys! So much for moorings. I was using my GPS as well as objects on shore to determine if our anchor was holding — everything seemed OK. I then decided to fit the outboard motor bracket to the duckboard just in case we broke down crossing Moreton Bay tomorrow. The weather forecast was for 15-20km in the afternoon with waves to 1m. So it was decided we’d leave as early as possible. I gave the engine and transmission a thorough check before nightfall. There were storms hanging around and we didn’t want a repeat of last night. Thankfully there was no strong wind only gusts from time to time and when the rain came I was pleased there were no leaks in the forward cabin but, bah! Three little dribbles coming in on starboard aft bunk. Didn’t please me too much. Again with closing boat and removing the screens (due to rain blowing in) the mossies came in as well. (Even way out here on the water! What noses!) So it was somewhat a disrupted night.

Jan 5. 2006 (Thursday).

We were up at 4:30 ~ almost daylight. The water was like a millpond. We set about having breakfast and preparing the boat for the trip. Seacocks off, gas off, fridge to electric, anchor up and away by 6:15. I was going to “nurse” everything so we pottered along at 1200 revs. Down to the Bribie Bridge, out to the special mark at the entrance to Pumicestone Passage by 7:45. — it was now nearing low tide. Using both depth sounders as this area is quite shallow and numerous boats were out fishing on these banks. On the way to the red buoy in Deception Bay the Humminbird picked up some unusual patterns in the sea floor just like waves. By 8:10 we were nearing Scarborough Green mark when suddenly all went quiet. For a moment I thought the engine had stopped!! But no, it was

still sitting on 1200 RPM. Olga also commented how quiet and smooth the boat was running. — I was relieved — the waves were choppy but not rough and *Tennessee* was handling the conditions quite easily. By 9am Clontarf was on our starboard beam and I set the compass on our next beacon as shown by my GPS This was what's called the compass adjusting beacon. Thankfully we came to this mark which starts the entrance to the "old bar channel" with no more dramas. As we entered the Brisbane River Olga took some video of a large boat just leaving port. As there was a few hours of incoming tide left we made the decision to come home a day early rather than overnight in boat passage as originally planned.

Motoring back past "River Gate" all too expensive for my liking — one large luxury cruiser with a helicopter on its aft deck! — Not at all like what the water rat said... "Nothing — absolutely nothing — half so much won't do as simply messing about in boats". Something has been lost in our desire for comfort. As we came past Teneriffe I increased revs to 1500 and *Tennessee* was doing 7+ knots with the aid of the tide. Everything seemed to be going sweetly with only more plastic bottles - thongs! etc ruining an idyllic scene.

Then it happened just as we came to the end of Long Pocket Reach. (The very same place we broke down coming from Samson marina in 2001.) The engine stopped — I tried restarting but it ran for 5 seconds then quit. (Not again I thought) But this time the tide was coming in. You bet I moved quickly to let the duckboard down and extract the 4hp. Mercury from under the port bunk and mount it onto the bracket on the duckboard. After stalling a few times the outboard finally "warmed" up and we were under way— slowly, but moving in the right direction! The GPS showed 4.1 knots with the help of the tide. We reached the Indooroopilly Bridge by 2:35. Now came the job of mooring up. There was a stiff south west breeze but the tide was stronger and the first attempt was too wide — around we came — this time I got the mooring line but too far forward and slowly the tide brought the stem around — I had to get to the starboard side but thankfully she weather vaned two foot away from "*Calypso*" — I thought — "maybe I can put the outboard in reverse and pull the stern back downstream". Slowly but surely that little motor pulled her around into the mooring line — onto the bollard and we were home!! The relief was immense — what a trip! What adventures and memories and tales for years to come.

P.S. I couldn't believe it!! It was my fault!!! A year ago I had fitted a tapered piece of cork on the fuel tank breather (saying, I'll remove it later.") Because my tank can hold 96 litres but when ski boats go by the fuel was being forced out of the breather pipe and spilt into the river. When I checked to see how much fuel I'd used the rush of air into the tank told me the breather was blocked!