



“MOST MEMORABLE REGATTA 2022”

2022 has already offered many of the MOST MEMORABLE events imagined, including the Kentucky Derby. The horse “Rich Strike”, is the last horse to enter by chance of a cancellation, has 80-1 odds, starts from the end gate, comes from behind all others to weave his way to the front and wins the race.

The NSYC “MOST MEMORABLE REGATTA” is a similar story. Mark Smiley would like to participate in his 1st distance race with “SUNDANCER”, a 41’ Beneteau 411. Mark inquires about crew to learn that member PRO Rick Lillie is available, Susan Watkins, 2022 Ladies Day 1st place, is available and willing. Mark enters the regatta.

Starting at Friday 5/20 at 12:00 Noon from the SC light (Fort Myers Beach), the 104-mile race to Tampa Bay will be a 1st for Mark and “SUNDANCER”.

A brief tour of the boat by Mark for the crew reveals the basic plans.

We will meet at the Southpoint Marina with provisions and personal safety gear for a departure at 6:30 AM. Forecast winds are 10-12 from the East Southeast. We arrive at the starting line about 11:00 AM for time to practice a few tacks, check the currents, review the course planned, the crew scheduling, enjoy a delicious lunch (homemade and provisioned by Susan), and we are ready to race.

By 11:30 we are enjoying 20 MPH winds from the South with full sails. GREAT!!

12:00 and we are racing South of the Sanibel Shoals. SUNDANCER draft 5’ 6” forces a more Southerly (longer distance), route. Rounding Sanibel now headed North/Northwest at 340 degrees the boats are all perpendicular to the beach until the winds drop to 3 MPH and less. The boat is now moving at .4 knots. The situation prevails for a few hours allowing the lighter faster boats to proceed ahead and even so far that they are no longer visible.

Storms moving in from the South/Southwest and change everything. The winds accelerate from the 2-3 MPH to 10 – 15 – 20 – 25 (we reef the sails as the weather looks to be darker), until we are seeing a true wind speed of 30 and gusts are 32. The boat has now accelerated to 10 – 11 knots. Susan serves a delicious dinner from her collection of homemade meals which she reheats in the propane oven despite the weather conditions. These conditions prevail for the next 8 hours and finally drop back to about 25 at midnight. The seas are following seas at 6 feet keeping the helmsman on his high alert to prevent any potential to roundup broadside to a 6' series of waves. Rick Lillie checks his handheld GPS to confirm that we are on track and holding our 343 degree heading.

The winds clock to the Northwest causing us to head slightly east of our desired course to the Southwest channel eventually requiring a tack to reach the Southwest Channel Bell (a mark of the course which we must round to our starboard side). Safely clearing the bell allows another tack carrying us up the channel, around Egmont Key, under the center span of the brilliantly color lighted Skyway Bridge and into the Tampa Bay shipping channel.

20 – 25 knots of wind carry us to the end of the regatta course at the Big J Cut range mark.

Davis Island Race Committee boat had an engine problem, so they asked that we each take a picture of our GPS screen reflecting the TIME, LATITUDE & LONGITUDE, confirming the time of our completing the course. 5:56:21 AM. 1st to finish from that last position held from 3:00 PM until the unknown dark passing.

We head for Davis Island Yacht Club for a refreshing shower and shave. At 8:00 AM Susan breaks out another amazing ham and egg casserole for the team.

10:00 AM well fed, fresh showers, change of clothes we are off the dock for a return to Naples with the wind directly ahead and on the nose. We decide that in the best interest of time we will motor until the wind allows for sailing.

More food by Susan lunch, dinner, fruit and vegetable snacks, another breakfast, frequent bottles of water and by 6:00AM we are safely salted by the constant sea spray showering the crew arriving back at the South Point Marina where the cosmetic refreshment of the yacht takes place with all hands-on deck manning the scrub brushes and freshwater rinse to keep the boat looking as fresh as we again feel following another rock and roll shower. The earth continues to reflect our last 3 days at sea by rolling around in our minds. Dis-embarkment vertigo has influenced our bodily stability for the next 24 hours.

We shared the MOST MEMORABLE MEALS and MOMENTS as a team thanks to Mark Smiley and the 41' Beneteau 411 "SUNDANCER"!



From Mark Smiley:

Whenever I receive an email from Jonnie I quickly open it to find out if there is a new adventure. It is better than looking at a Viking River Cruise catalog! The "Most Memorable Regatta" trip sounded very exciting. Leading up to registration I debated going. I decided not to go for many sound reasons. Then Jerry calls me. "HEY, HEY, HEY!!!"

Jerry: Mark, are you going on the Most Memorable sailing trip?

Me: I would love to go but I have to be back early in the week for a commitment and then off on a trip.

Jerry: You and Karen can sail up. I will be up there, then I can sail Sun Dancer back with a crew I have organized.

Me: That sounds great, but can you and your crew sail up with me, and then come back Saturday?

Jerry: Yes confirmed.

At this point, I thought to myself "oh boy what have I done?." I was now committed. We met on the boat a couple times to make sure we were prepared. I think I was very well prepared except for my lack of familiarity with the B&G chart plotter. (A bit of an understatement. In my defense, I did have Navionics on my Ipad which I used when I came over from Ft Lauderdale 18 months ago.)

Our illustrious crew was Jerry and Susan, Rick Lillie (PRO), with great Mackinaw racing experience with Jerry (to be known in this story as the senior crew members), and Tom Hull and me (not senior crew members).

Friday 6:00AM SouthPointe Marina

We loaded Susan's provisions and began our trek. As we departed the marina, we could see the dark clouds and lightning strikes to the north.

We motor sailed most of the way up to Ft Myers. We did see a sailboat behind us that would be joining us in the race. A short time later, I was a little troubled to see they had turned back. At the Ft Myers starting line

the wind had gone away. As we bobbed around waiting for the start, I began to feel sea sick. Second time in my life this has happened to me. Jerry rescued me with ½ a BONNINE pill and dried ginger.

Ft Myers Starting line 12:00

We were off in very heavy wind from the start. Under 20 knots of wind we were flying West parallel to the Sanibel shore. Closer to shore was Vagabond, Wicked, and Eroica. We were doing very well, and it was a very exciting beginning. I was comfortable and confident as I did not think the winds would be more than 20 knots during the trip. Things were going very well.

After a short time, the wind died down to a few knots and we were bobbing again. I do not like bobbing in the water. While we were bobbing along, Pathfinder, Wicked and Eroica disappeared in the shadow of the trees to the northeast in along the beach.

At this point I must insert one of my favorite quotes. In Lee Iacocca's book on turning around Chrysler, he says "there is a good reason why God only lets us see one day at a time." In our case it was only seeing 30 minutes at a time.

I think it was around 16:00 when the wind began to pick up. We were running with the wind with the gennaker and whisker pole. Great fun. A short time later, our experienced crew said let's get the gennaker down and get everything below. Seemed like a good call, but maybe a little premature. Everyone put on their life jackets with strobes, whistles, harnesses. The experienced crew were looking at a weather radar and the dark cloud behind us. It was a good and timely call.

In short order we were reaching 9-10 knots with the main and head sails out all the way. The winds were in the 18-22 knot range. This was proper sailing. Then the winds began to build further. The experienced crew were studying the weather again, and then said, let's reef the sails. I said which one, the head sail or the main. Jerry said both. Hmmm.?? Oh boy. OKAY!

We began to increase our speed to 9-11 knots in 28 - 32 knots of wind. This was thrilling. Again, I thought we were doing well. At this time, I forgot about the other three boats in the race. I assumed they were miles and miles ahead of us. We were flying! Jerry and Rick seemed to be a bit more intense and became less interested in idle chatter. This was the beginning of an eight hour sail with 6' following seas and consistent winds of 28 - 30 with a 31 and 32 thrown in. This was amazing.

It was during this leg I was hit in the chest by a fish. I was sitting in the starboard helm seat when I felt a THUD hitting me in the chest. It was not water, a wave and certainly not a tennis ball, even though that is how it felt. I looked about the deck cockpit to see if the fish was there. Not to be found in the dark. The fish attack gave me something else to contemplate. YES, A fish came flying into the cockpit striking me on the chest! How could something have hit me in the chest? Where did it come from?

Shortly, I turned our attention to sailing to the Southwest Channel Marker with the senior crew members.

Now is a good time to highlight one not senior crew member, Tom Hall. Tom is a computer wiz and most recently is working on using Artificial Intelligence to help streamline and improve the accuracy of order entry and logistics at a large Chicago-based distributor. Tom was intent on cracking the B&G Plotter code. He started out asking me if I could do certain things on the plotter. I said Nope. "How do you set up a way point." No Idea. This is when the true sign of a good IT guy comes through. He took my seat and using trial and error began the tedious process of trying each combination of options to see if he could find the desired objective. I was amazed at how he could focus on the plotter when I thought all hell's breaking loose around us in these conditions.

Senior Crew Member Rick had his Garmin GPS handheld, and I had my Navionics iPad. The B&G showed us the path we were taking which also pointed to the marker. To my amazement, it was around 2am off our bow. Others were not as surprised, but I was impressed. After rounding the SW Marker, my amazement of

the Sun Dancer crew only increased. We found the channel and saw the Sunshine Bridget and we were still racing a quick 7-8 knots to the bridge. All of a sudden, we see the silhouette of a sailing ship ahead of us. (My daughter would say it was Captain Jack Sparrow.) And we were gaining on her. Low and behold, the ship was Eroica. Our energy levels picked up. We thought that members of the other three boats were already at Davis Island Yacht club on their second cup of coffee and slurping down bacon and scramble eggs. But in fact one boat was still out in the bay with us. We pressed hard to increase our margin.

We reached the finish line marker, again using our three navigation tools to constantly check one another. It was 5:56:21. As Susan, our communications officer, reported our racing result she determined that we were the first to report. Had we finished first? As we motored to Davis Island it became clear that we finished before the other three boats. When did we pass them? How was this possible?

Davis Island Yacht Club - departure 10:30AM Saturday

After a quick shower while hanging on to the grab bars, and talking to a couple boat captains about how we managed to pass them without seeing us, and **washing away the remains of a dead fish in the cockpit**, (YES, A fish really did come flying into the cockpit striking me on the chest!), we were on our way back to Naples. We motored the entire way since the wind was from the South East. As we passed under the SunShine bridge, the gray clouds gave way to clear sunny skies. Jerry had gone below when we departed Davis Isle and was able to get some sleep. He woke around 13:00 as we passed Anna Maria Island. I have never seen Jerry after a thrilling day and a good nap albeit a short one. He was doing really good standup comedy in the cockpit for what seemed like hours. A few of the crew managed a bit of a nap but soon the winds began to build and we found ourselves ploughing through heavy seas under motor. The salt water spent the rest of the trip splashing into our faces, burning our eyes and covering every square inch of our clothing. The bow was convulsing up and down with Susan in the V berth having a ride that would put any amusement park to shame.

I had gone below to rest and returned to deck shortly to be faced with Rick having a very, very, very concerned look on his face. I thought I had drawn the short straw and I was about to be eaten. He was concerned about the weather and a front moving toward us. I tried to follow the information that he was imparting, but quite frankly was so tired I was willing to accept anything. (BTW big kudos to Rick). I told the crew that my main objective was to learn and gain experience. Rick was great at explaining things to me without any solicitation. I really appreciated his initiative and effort!)

SouthPointe Marina - arrival 6:00 AM SUNDAY

We all went our own way home. By Sunday evening certain of the crew were able to muster up energy and express their feelings about our Memorial trip. I was still having a difficult time focusing. On Monday morning I awoke eight pound lighter than before the trip. I had a reasonably good case of vertigo. It was the "Disembarkment Syndrome" variety as revealed by my in house nurse "Karen".

At home - Wednesday

I am writing this now three days following the "Most Memorable" sailing race. It was great fun! I now have a couple new great friends! I was able to spend wonderful time with two of my favorite people, Jerry and Susan! And I believe my experience and understanding of sailing is much bigger, still with a long way to go. I have added to my list of needed sailing education and experience.

Thanks to all of the Sun Dancer crew for the Most Memorable Sailing Race! - Mark Smiley



A Most Memorable 2022 Most Memorable

Crewman's Report

By Rick Lillie

I never take a first time overnight for granted, especially with that mistress called Lady Gulf. However, with Jerry and Susan Watkins on board and a good pre-race boat orientation meeting with new-to-me Captain Mark Smiley, any trepidation I may have had was greatly reduced. It also turned out that Mark Smiley's Beneteau Oceanis 41.1 *Sun Dancer* was a sister ship to my 2021 Chicago to Mackinac ride. Its great to have "boat geography" somewhat in hand when it gets dark.

The wind decided to kick up as we were in sequence which gave us good speed and maneuverability at the start and a nice windward position. Boat speed was looking good with 15 kts of breeze but the breeze was not to last and a 41.1 needs wind. As the wind declined, we watched our competition head for the horizon. They were all lighter with more sail to weight. Were we simply in afternoon doldrums? Where was the 15 to 20 predicted by NOAA? The wind stayed low and each of us was privately doing the speed needed to make the time limit calculation. The prognosis was not good. Then a cloud line formed and grew. The leading edge became more defined, and the water below darkened. Barely time to close the hatches and we were off! First the wind was 15 to 20 then it climbed to 20 to 25. Little did we know that our competition now had too much wind. They were long gone and darkness had settled in. We were doing 8's then 9's, then 10's steadily with bursts to 11 kts. Nice ride! I went below for a bit of rest preparation for the third shift. Remaining crew watched the wind hit 31 and had to reef for stability. Hours later we rounded Southwest Passage Buoy 1, the rail went down and the boat was close hauled. We saw one then two sail silhouettes in the dark. We had caught up. Wind slacked, we shook out the reefs and aimed for J-Cut light. The Tampa Bay swirlies were in full operation so we were headed at the finish and needed a second pass to cross the line.

The night was punctuated by bright lightning that was mercifully ahead or behind. Could not believe we stayed dry. Had a flying fish make the jump into the cockpit after bounding off our surprised captain.

With that much great wind, Captain Mark heard more stuff rattle in his rigging than parts he could count and as crew the slow spots became fuzzy memories. Sail racing is done for the shared experience and the friendships that follow. Mission accomplished.

Rick Lillie



From Susan Watkins:

The excitement the early morning moistness of the air. We leave the dock at 0630 and make our way to the channel. All the personal gear and provisions for the trip have been stowed-we are READY for this trip! Too many hours at the desk-too many hours spent preparing for this time away from life as we are accustomed. We have earned this break and deserve it. As we leave the pass and enter the gulf there is a collective sigh-ahhhhh!

Headed north to Fort Myers, the team gets better acquainted and learns the nuances of the boat. Sun Dancer is pristine, beautifully equipped, and screaming to be exercised. We feel her glide through the water, and we become one with her-she is ready, and so are we. Preparation, safety, planning, and execution-that is our motto.

At the start line, there is a storm on the horizon, which quickly overcomes us. Jerry quickly takes the helm, and we are readying for the start with quick jibes to stay behind the start line. Corinthian start-we are off. Kudos to Dan on Vagabond (fun meter is set at 7)! Due to the wind velocity, he has stalled on the start line and will head up once we start-great maneuver! We are headed there like a freight train and will blow through at just the right time. Wicked is way back from the start line, with Eroica further back.

The wind blew for quite some time, and we are all smiles as the feel of the breeze creates a tempo as we anticipate a quick finish-if the winds just keep up. Dan is north of us and has his spinnaker set-he is pulling ahead of us quickly. Wicked and Eroica have chosen to go in towards shore. We are humming along and enjoying our food bounty.

Towards afternoon, the wind dies down and we are at 2-3 kts. Bummer! This leads to part of the crew napping, texting, taking pictures, telling jokes, more munching (we do have an abundance of provisioning.....), and using all available avenues to get more wind in the sails.

We are watching a developing storm line to the south of us-the skies darkening and increasing in size. The seas are gentle, and we are noticing many crab traps afloat (season is over-what gives??). so, we are only going 2-3 knots, how about a man overboard exercise and rescue a crab pot? Hmmmmm...what a feast we could partake of while we wait for the winds to pick up.....

Mark is deep in thought when BAM! Something hit him in the chest. It is too dark to readily identify what it was, so he uses his gloved hand to wipe his PFD and dismisses it. (after we finish the race and dock the boat, we find fish parts all over the area where he was seated behind the helm area-he had been attacked by a flying fish)

Little by little, the winds build. Increasing white caps and the wave size. We decide that we need to take in the gennaker and deploy the jib. All hands on deck! Adjustments made. Winds continue to increase, so we reef the main and jib-hey hey hey! Here we go! We are zoned on trim and heading-nothing else matters. We are racing to the finish line with smiles from ear to ear with the wind howling, lightening around us but not too near, and following seas pushing us towards our destination. Through the night we charge on with no evidence of any other boat within sight. Due to the hours we spent with no wind, we are sure that we will finish last. But the feel of 31+ knots of wind on a boat that was built for speed is mesmerizing-we hum with the excitement of speed.

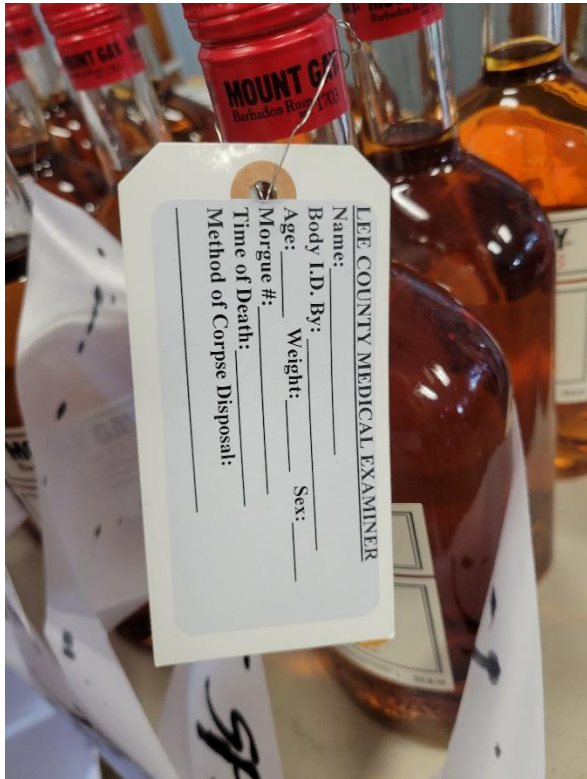
As we near the Tampa Bay bridge our excitement elevates-and we spot Eroica! Maybe we won't be last!

6 miles out, we hail race committee-not reply after second hail, so we call Brent Bacon. We are the first to contact him-could it be that we will be first to finish? He calls us back-boat will not start. Our crew PRO, Rick Lillie, radios the competitors to take a picture of their GPS and mark at their finish and send to Brent Bacon. Brent texts me that he will call Wicked and Vagabond as they are out of wavelength.

We finish @ 05:56:21. Line honors and 3rd place finish. Beautiful time on the water with a wonderful mix of interesting and fun crew. Would I do it again? In a heartbeat!!

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Watkins



Most Memorable Regatta 2022 - From Tom Hay:

Organizer: GCSC

Boat: Sun Dancer, Beneteau 41 Owner: Mark Smiley

Other characters in this story:

- Jerry and Susan “Boom Boom” Watkins – GCSC, experienced sailors/racers and chefs
- Rick Lillie – GCSC, and Mackinac racer/Old Goat
- Tom Hay – cruiser, small boat sailor, rookie racer

Event summary from the perspective of a Great Lakes cruising sailor, Pelican Bay Hobie Wave 14 hack, rookie racer, crew member, honored to join real sailors on Sun Dancer... (The original question posed to me was, “What was it like to experience the regatta for the first time?”)

In the Beginning – I received a text 5/12 from Rick about a possible spot on a sailboat for an overnight sailing trip. (Rick is my brother-in-law. He has undoubtedly forgotten more about sailing than I have ever learned. I trust him implicitly for anything on the water.) Upon gathering details, I learned that somebody needed an extra set of hands. Quick check with the home boss, and “I’m in”. This will be fun.

Orientation – The crew gathered 5/14 at the Southpointe Marina for a meet & greet and orientation on Sun Dancer. Nice boat and even nicer people. Weather Channel that day showed forecast for 5/20 to be sunny with winds 10-15 S to SSE. Perfect.

Day of the Race – I set an alarm for 4:30 a.m. Didn’t need it. Thunder *cracked* before 4:00 a.m. and I was up. Checked the Weather Channel. Much of the intended race course from Sanibel to Tampa was covered with large, bright red blobs on the radar accompanied by a very clear message: “*Mariners can expect gusty winds to around 30 knots, locally higher waves, lightning strikes, and heavy downpours. Boaters should seek safe harbor immediately until these storms pass.*” Surely the race is called off. No? We’re going? OK.

Rick and I drive south to the marina, and we are on Sun Dancer at 6:00 a.m. Provisions are loaded, and we’re ready to go. The weather is actually clear down at Gordon Pass. Nice peaceful start. The storm must have cleared to the north, and it’s logical to assume that we are back to the original forecast of 10-15 knot winds from the south. Sounds pretty good.

The Start – We’re at San Carlos Light early. We bob around for a while and position ourselves for the start. Just before the noon start, the wind goes crazy. The experienced sailors get control of the boat and hold steady for the countdown from 10 – and we’re off. Looks as though it will be a quick sail. We just need to get around Sanibel. We head west-to-SW to stay clear of the shallows. What’s this? The wind speed dropped to 2, then 0.7? More bobbing. It is beginning to look like a *long* day/night ahead. With a new little puff of wind, we try wing-on-wing. Still not much. We complete the turn and head north at a snail’s pace.

After the Turn – After rounding Sanibel, we see that the other boats in the regatta have pulled far, far ahead. Light air, lighter boats. They are specs on the water ahead of us. We take in a beautiful sunset. Then, the skies darken and heavy clouds rush up behind us. Dark and a bit menacing with visible curtains of rain. The surface of the water has changed from the associated wind rushing over it. Hang on. Within minutes, we see wind speeds go to 20, 25, 31.5, and they hold! We’re flying! I’m comforted to believe that this 20,000 lb. vessel is up to the task. I also know that the years of experience from the others will prevail.

Day turns into night. Mark is at the helm. I hear, “We are ‘down’ to 25 knots of wind.” Not something I ever expected to hear about the context for 25 knot winds while sailing. Of course, we’re still flying. It’s hard to believe how our fortune has changed. Dark clouds follow behind us with frequent lightning to remind us what is creating the wind. By the light of a bright moon, we are sailing and surfing large rollers from following seas. I learn that all of these elements – wind, current, waves - are contributing to VMG (Velocity Made Good). Jerry takes the helm and just keeps going, and

going, and going on adrenalin. Or, maybe he was recalling the story he told us of the race when he drank can after can of Red Bull thinking it was soda in a small container. At any rate, he was clearly in his element on this night.

At some point around 1:30 a.m., we estimate that we are 2 hours from the channel and another 2 hours to the finish line. We find the channel and head to the Sunshine Skyway Bridge. I am impressed that Mark and the experienced sailors can find any specific red, green, or white light when there are dozens of them that mix in from the shore and the markers don't exactly stand out. The bridge looks small from a distance. Have to trust the math at this point and realize that a 60 ft. mast *will* get under. Here, I learn that the clearance on the bridge is 180 ft. at the center. No worries. We just enjoy the alternating blue and green lights on the pilings as we approach.

What's that? Against the lights of the bridge as we approach, we see the pitch black outline of a sail. The triangular shape of the sail stands out because the boat is heeling in the wind. It is clearly at an angle relative to the pilings. We realize for the first time that our wild ride up the coast has allowed us to catch at least one other boat in the regatta. The gennaker was Mark's secret weapon. More smiles and more adrenaline. Everyone is on deck. Somebody references Rich Strike's come-from-behind performance at the Kentucky Derby. We get closer and eventually pass. On to the finish line.

Finding the Finish - Not a small task finding a marker in the bay in the middle of the night with the equivalent of a 60W light bulb, but we did it, thanks to the navigating expertise of the veteran sailors onboard. It's 5:56 a.m., and we made it.

Couple more hours to get to the Davis Island Yacht Club and to meet Brent. We arrive. Hot showers. Several of us had our first experience, at least of this trip, of "disembarkment syndrome" (thank you Mark for the correct term!). Had to hold onto the shower wall to stop the rocking sensation.

We wait to learn of the race results once all boats are in. Turns out that after the slow part around Sanibel, Sun Dancer made up the ground with its gennaker and full-speed sailing through the night. Sun Dancer is the first boat to cross the finish line, so we have a line honors victory. We unanimously agree, at least from our perspective, that winning line honors is all that ever really matters! (With all due respect and congratulations to the other sailors in the regatta with whatever that "handicap" thing is.)

Feeling refreshed, we are back on the boat by 10:00 a.m. to start the trip home.

The Return - Skies are gray and it's hazy – all the way. We motor as the wind is straight on our nose. We play with the electronics and figure out the autopilot. We assign "Otto" to helm duty. Otto does well except when the humans interfere. Rick keeps us on track with alternate navigation and out of any shallow spots. Experience and tried-and-true methods enable course corrections along the way. Rick reminds us all that "there are no soft rocks". Otto and the other humans on the boat take note.

With the haze and no moon, it is pitch black most of the way back to Gordon Pass. I head to a berth and close my eyes. Before long, we're back at Gordon Pass heading to the marina.

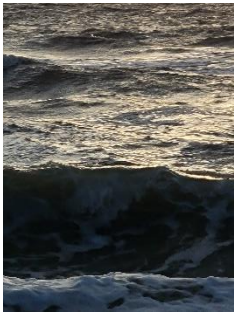
It is just short of 6:00 a.m. The boat is secured, and gear is unloaded. The deck is swabbed and the salt from the Gulf is washed off. We say our goodbyes, mostly from a safe distance because nobody has had a shower for days.

I'm pretty sure each member of the crew took a nap after a hot shower at home. Most of us had another bout of "disembarkment syndrome". For reference, my Fitbit showed that the "recorded sleep" events stopped 5/20 at 4:30 a.m., and the next recorded event started at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, 5/22 (nap).

It's a "good" tired. Learned a lot. Got to know the fine crew members. They all made the trip fun. Created new memories.

The regatta certainly held true to the name – Most Memorable.

Many thanks to Mark, Jerry, Susan, and Rick for the experience.



MOST MEMORABLE REGATTA

Lives up to its name 2022!!

By Captain Dan Spence "VAGABOND"

The 2022 Most Memorable Regatta lived up to its name yet again!

Vagabond left Naples City Dock bright and early and headed north for a rendezvous at Fort Myers Beach for the start.

We started in a squall with the other yachts, Wicked Ways, Sundancer and Eroica and in what seemed like no time at all we were clear of the southern tip of Sanibel and sailing north! The wind died and shifted and built and died and shifted again before finally filling in from the Southeast and building to a sporty 20 kts or so. The overnight hours were fun sailing with strong winds and some high speeds that were definitely surf assisted! (11.6 knots on a 30-footer woohoo!)

We sailed around the number 1 buoy and it was a close reach under a lit up Sunshine Skyway Bridge and to the finish just after sunrise. We were greeted at the Davis Island Yacht Club by the incredibly hospitable Brent Bacon and the rest of the amazing folks at DIYC including one of the best bartenders you'll EVER have!

Unfortunately, the Vagabond crew were the only ones who stayed in Tampa on Saturday night, but we made the most of it with an amazing steak dinner downtown followed by a (few) adult beverages at a bar near our hotel. If you didn't stick around, you definitely missed out on a good time!

The race back was amazing, and even though we broke the boat on the start line, (pulled the genoa track off the deck) we were able to recover and have a great night of sailing before being greeted at the finish by the friendliest race committee you'll ever find! "Sea Suite" with Jeff Gage, Shelly Russo, Susan & Jerry Watkins dutifully monitored the finish line recording the official times for all competitors.

I know the logistics of doing a race to Tampa and coming back a week later can be intimidating but I believe we have cracked the code! We were able to book rooms in a pretty nice hotel downtown a short Uber ride to DIYC for only \$160 per night! and with a rental van that seats 8 we had plenty of room to help shuttle folks back on Sunday morning (had there been any people left to shuttle they could have ridden with us)!

This is the best regatta venue ever!!

Thank You

Dan

