

## **Day Minus Two (5/15/2010): The Long Drive**

Once again, I can never depart as early as I think I can. After spending the entirety of the prior day packing and loading and going through my check list, I thought I could leave at first light. But it never works out that way. First, I don't think it is possible to get through one's check list with every single item checked off. There is always something that you forgot to buy, or didn't get around to doing. The best you can hope for is that you got most of it and that all the critical items and systems are covered. This was the case with me once again.

If there is one thing that I have learned, it is that nothing can ruin a trip quicker than a broken down trailer. So, in preparation for this trip I spent my entire budget (actually more than my entire budget) on rebuilding the wheels on my dual axle trailer. Although only ten years old, the surge breaks had completely disintegrated and needed replacing along with the wheel bearings. Not having the time or skill to do this work myself, our trusty local mechanic took care of the messy work. I also bought a new spare tire which I mounted on the trailer frame. And after replacing a couple of bunks and all of the carpet, the trailer was nearly new again. It is well worth the time and money to keep your trailer in good condition. It gave me great peace of mind knowing that the wheels and trailer were in top shape before embarking on a trip that would total well over 2,000 highway miles.

So finally, at 0845 I was on the road. Actually, it was more like 0930 because my air compressor had broken and I had to stop at three different gas stations before I found one with a working air hose to top off my tire pressure. Apparently, the brass air fittings are constantly stolen so many stations quit providing air.

It is always a strange feeling, the first few miles of a long journey. After all the rush of final preparations and packing, these first miles are occupied with the uneasy thoughts of what might have been forgotten. But after the initial anxiety wanes, one settles into the quiet concentration that eventually gives way to sort of a zen state which is interrupted every once in awhile by the dinging from the dashboard reminding you that you need to fill the tank again. And so it went. It was a long, boring, and uneventful day, but that is a good thing when you are pulling a trailer. The drive from Knoxville, TN to Miami, FL is actually quite easy as it is all interstate and a toll road called the Florida Turnpike.

Using the Florida Turnpike is a great convenience but expensive when pulling a dual axle trailer. It seems that they don't care that it is a recreational boat trailer. They charge by the number of axles so there is no differentiation between my little boat and a large commercial truck. My tolls were more than twice what they would be with just the car. In the end though, it is worth the extra cost to shave extra miles off the trip and not have to deal with all the eighteen wheelers. Having a SunPass sticker saves some money and allows you to whiz right through the toll booths.

Did I say that it was a looong drive? I finally pulled into the University of Miami at 2350; ten minutes before my goal of midnight. I was weary, but very excited to be in Miami, and more importantly getting reunited with my daughter. Since everyone had already moved out of the dorm two days prior, the place was empty so I was able to crash in Lindsay's dorm room and save on a hotel night. It was kind of strange though. Tired as I was from the 15 hour trip, Lindsay was still on college time so we spent some time

catching up on news from home and news from college. As Lindsay talked, her voice became softer, melodic, and more distant as I slipped into a deep sleep.

### **Day Minus One (5/16/2010): Chilling in Miami (actually Coral Gables)**

It was 0900 when I first stirred. This time Lindsay was sound asleep. Rubbing my eyes and looking around Lindsay's room I realized that there was still much packing to be done. We had until noon to get out of there. Don't ask me what Lindsay had been doing for the past two days. Finals had been over for almost a week and she should have had plenty of free time. But no worries. We threw her belongings into some boxes that I had brought, swept up the room and got out just before noon. Whew! Of course, packing it all into the back of the suburban took another 45 minutes of hot sweaty work.

The rest of the day was spent relocating to a nearby hotel, eating our first regular meal of the day, and sorting through everything in the hotel room. Actually, I was the one doing the sorting because Lindsay fell asleep at 1500 and didn't wake till 1730. Okay, maybe I took a little nap too. Matt's plane was delayed so we went to the grocery store to round out our food supplies with a plan to pick Matt up on the way back to the hotel.

Well, Miami traffic finally caught up to us. The freeway totally shut down on the way back to the hotel to drop off the groceries and we ended up delayed in getting Matt at the airport. By the time we were all united it was 2245. I had planned for a big welcome to Miami dinner, but the best laid plans are always subject to change. We ended up eating at a 24 hour IHop. Then off to bed.

Yes, it was another uneventful day, but it's funny how even the most mundane activities are made exciting when they are done on the eve of a great sailing adventure.