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Cruise of the "Windward" *Sailing the Girl Who Dances the Most* November 10, 2010

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Visiting sailor Jeff Arnfield's recent voyage was impressive. In just over 2 weeks, he logged over 500 miles aboard his 26-foot sailboat "Windward". Then he departed from the script that most sailors follow. Instead of returning to a marina, he lowered his vessel's mast, loaded her onto a trailer and drove back to his home port of Elizabethton, Tennessee. "Windward isn't the prettiest boat at the ball" he says "but she dances the most".



Windward near Oriental's Town Dock

First the recent voyage.

This year, as he has for the past 4, Jeff loaded Windward onto a trailer, hauled her from Tennessee to Oriental and relaunched her at the state Wildlife Ramp. Then, over the next 2 weeks, he took 3 cruises.

The first outing took him to waters not often visited by cruising sailors. Leaving Oriental, he followed the Pamlico Sound North, overnighting in little-visited anchorages such as Long



Jeff Arnfield

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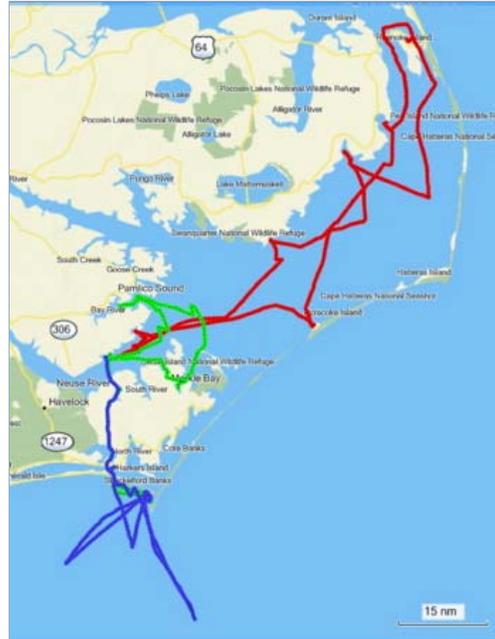
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Dogs in Oriental agree...



Shoal River and Stumpy Point Bay. Traversing Croatan Sound, he rounded Manteo on Roanoke Island then headed back to Oriental. Then went back out on 2 more cruises – one with his family, the other with his friend Sam Shafer.



Windward's 2010 Voyage: Jeff keeps detailed accounts of his voyages under sail, including this map of his latest outing. Each leg is defined by a color which represents what crew, if any, he sailed with:

Red: Solo trip

Green: With his wife Laura and son Duncan

Blue: With his friend Sam Shafer

So what drives a sailor with an otherwise conventional life to such lengths?

"I need to sail once a week or bad things happen." Jeff jokes. "I have a prescription to go sailing once a week".

Jeff's not kidding.



Bracelet and ship's log

On his wrist, Jeff wears a yellow rubber bracelet. A few years back, he was diagnosed with cancer. The treatment was successful. Since then, as a cancer survivor, he's had to go in for periodic monitoring. During one of his checkups, he says his "cancer markers came back elevated". He and his health care provider discussed healthy changes he could add to his life, including, among others, stress reduction.

So, in addition to conventional treatments, his caregiver wrote him a scrip to go sailing "at least once per week". It's an order he's followed with medical precision.

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It helps that sailing meshes with Jeff's personality. A gregarious man, he enjoys sharing cruising stories with new friends. On his latest trip, while visiting Turnagain Bay with his wife Laura and son Duncan, Windward was swarmed by mosquitoes. They invaded the cabin and the three sailors smashed so many of the blood-engorged mosquitoes that the boat's interior "looked like a blood bath".

Even with the hatches closed, the mosquitoes kept finding their way in. The mystery was solved when the flying bloodsuckers were spotted flying up from the sink. Seems the creatures were entering the vessel from the only remaining opening – the sink drain. Plugging the entry won Jeff's family a marginally bite-free night's rest.



Fishing tackle: Off Cape Lookout, Jeff and friend Sam Shafer caught a 3-pound Spanish mackerel, a 6-pound king mackerel, and a few bonita. Most exciting was "foul hooking a shark while flying the spinnaker".

But just much as he enjoys social time, Jeff says he needs alone time. By nature, he considers himself "an introvert".

Jeff disagrees with the common perception that introverts are just people who want to be left alone. In his opinion, introversion is more about how a person, quite possibly a very outgoing one, regroupes between social encounters. In his case, being an introvert is defined by "how I recharge – and I like to recharge alone".

For some folks that means reading. For others, it means hiking alone. For Jeff, that means sailing – a lot.

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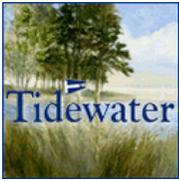
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Jeff works with the National Climatic Data Center, a branch of NOAA. His specialty is working with metadata – data about data. In keeping with his job as a numbers person, he's kept detailed records of his outings in his shipboard log. One year, he sailed Windward 108 days. Some days he sailed alone. Many, he sailed with his wife, son or friends. In one five-year span, from 2002 to 2007, he logged 405 days on the water. That's in addition to the days he visited Windward but never left the dock.



Triple reefed: Jeff keeps Windward on Lake Watauga, Tennessee, half an hour away from his home. That way "if I have 3 free hours, I can be on her 2 of them." (Jeff Arnfield photo)

So what type of boat does Jeff, family and career man, sail?

It's one he paid \$500 dollars for. One that, when it showed up in his life, was colored "Mary Kay pink".

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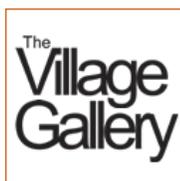
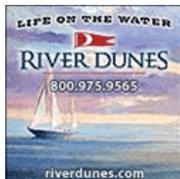


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In the late 1970s, the same company that produced the Cordoba and the LeBaron got into the boat building business. For a few years, Chrysler produced a line of small sailboats with model names like the Privateer, Buccanner, Mutineer and Man o War. What Jeff ended up with was one of Chrysler's biggest designs – the Chrysler 26.

A boat intended for trailer-sailing, it displaced 5,000 pounds, 2,000 of which took the form of internal ballast and a steel swing keel. Keel retracted, the vessel drew just over 2 feet. Lowered, it needed 6 feet of water.

"She was designed by Halsey Herschoff" Jeff notes, alluding to the naval designer whose grandfather was Nathaniel "Capt Nat" Herreschoff, was known for designing a string of America's Cup winners. He credits Halsey Herschoff with drawing the vessel's fair underbody and wineglass-shaped aftersection.

When he bought Windward in 2004, she was in no condition to win any races. In fact, when first took possession of her, she was filled with "ruptured cans of generic soda and boxes of Stove Top stuffing". Also, the centerboard case, which houses the steel plate that can be lowered to improve the vessel's windward ability, was broken. Then there was the roller furler. The extrusion around which the jib sail were furled were held together with a drill bit.



Early days: Windward on a launch ramp in the early days of Jeff's ownership (Jeff Arnfield photo)

Over time he rebuilt the boat. Once the major faults were repaired, he tackled the secondary improvements. To improve the cockpit's rigidity, he expoxied a large piece of plywood to the underside of the footwell. He also bought new sails, replaced the motor, motor mount, standing rigging and added a mainsheet traveller that allows

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fine tuning of the mainsail. The once faded hull was painted bright red making the vessel "colorful as a Cheap Trick album".



Looking forward: Windward's deckhouse extends almost to the bow, making for a roomy interior. The centerboard trunk, which Jeff has reinforced with Kevlar, supports the drop leaf table.



Looking aft is the galley. Under the cockpit, where the inboard would normally be found, is a large storage area. When not using sails, Jeff uses an outboard to push Windward.

These days, after hundreds of days of use, Windward shows the effects of thousands of miles of fresh and saltwater sailing. Her hull sports a few scratches. The interior, at the end of her latest trip, sports what Jeff calls a "delightfully lived-in look". Regarding her long distance voyager look, he notes "there are better looking boats that never leave the dock".



Heading back to Tennessee

Following Jeff's cruise, he motored Windward back to the state Wildlife Ramp, lowered her rig and loaded her onto a trailer. From there, he drove home. Back in Tennessee, he plans to relaunch Windward on Lake Watauga, where he plans to sail all winter. While the thought of keeping a boat on the North Carolina coast has crossed his mind, the long commute bothers him as much as he "hates the idea of only being able to sail a few weeks per year".

Which, for a man who manages to sail almost 52 weeks out of the year, is a pretty good reason to keep his boat close to home – and still cruise hundreds of miles annually out of Oriental.

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