Diary of Golden Sunset 10

Ooh what could have been!

The following events did not occur. The 2010 Golden Sunset trip had to be canceled due to lack of participants. The following is a fictitious account if Dave and Mike took the boat out anyays. Instead, Dave went camping in the middle of nowhere, and Mike just worked like any other week.

Wednesday 5/19:

Couldn't complete my last workday. Had to skip out early due to the excitement. Final pre-trip shopping. Looking for a real cool water-toy. Last year, this is the point I bought the floating green and blue lounge chairs we used. Considered the "Island Lounge" at Costco, but decided we could use Mike's pull along for that. In the end, I didn't get anything. Finished packing, and once again the car is overflowing. That zodiac sure takes up a lot of space. Fishing gear, Zodiac, Kayak, other toys and games, water lounge, net-book, food drinks, clothes, sunscreen, etc..... Considered hooking up the little guy for overflow, but squeezed it all in.

Thursday 5/20

Happy Birthday Marlene. 53???? I hope John is doing something special to justify the fact he ditched us!!! Got up leisurely this morning, had a casual breakfast, a last walk-thru for stuff, then hit the road. Stopped in Grants to play golf. This is still spring in New Mexico, so when the wind started picking up pretty heavy, I trudged on for a while then called it a Day, Leaving Grants about 1:30, giving me a Page ETA of around 6PM. Arrived at Page and grabbed a quick meal at Subway. Told Mike I would meet him in Walmart so started shopping. At about 7:15 I was done but knew it wouldn't fit in the car. Parked the cart in an out of the way spot, and left. Took the car to Laketime and quickly cleared out the back seat into the main living room of the boat. Went back to Walmart, got my cart, went back for the frozen goods (put them back when I ditched the cart) and got in line. Mike showed up while I was in line. After a weekend discussion, we had decided we'd rather have the Wave runners for scouting, rather than the boat. So after asking John, that's what Mike brought with him. Struggled to get the Wave Runners on the deck with only two of us, but with Dave driving the hoist up top, and Mike with the boat hook below to attach them and keep them straight, we were able to manage. The kayak went up top much easier.

So the boats were all secure, the outboard for the Zodiac was attached to the back, the food was all put away, and all the personal stuff was stored, I took the double bedroom on the bottom and the forward bedroom on the top. Mike took the forward bedroom on the bottom and the two back bedrooms up top. For some reason, we had to store VERY little in the hold underneath the living room. Finished settling in at about 10 and sat back to watch a DVD. Lasted about 20 minutes. I decided to sleep in the dungeon room tonight. Mike was in the Master Bedroom.

Friday 5/21 Launch Day!!!

Woke up at about 6am. We are scheduled for a 8am Launch. Made coffee, grabbed some rolls, and sat on the upper deck, watching the Yard slowly come to life. There was only one other boat in the yard being prepped for Launching. They had the early launch so we leisurely watched them pull away. We had everything pretty much ready, so a last trip to lockup the cars, then we were waiting for the crew. They were surprised there were only two of us. We said we could shuttle the pilot back on a waverunner if they didn't have another means. I started the Turkey in the brine pot. Yes, we are still having turkey. I bought it when I thought we still had a fully populated trip. If you think it might last a long time with two, imagine how long it would take me, by myself, to eat it. So turkey it shall be.

The shuttle bus seemed empty. New park rules kept them from launching our boat for us anyways (without a $100 fee) as a vehicle towing a boat can no longer act as the pilot car for the houseboat. If we had enough people, and would have brought the boat, they would wait for the boat to launch then follow the car back to the Marina parking lot, and give the driver a ride back down. But no people, no boat. Launch and piloting went same as last year, except Mike got to hear it all this year as he wasn't out in the seaswirl. The pilot turned it over to me, then Mike and the pilot went to launch the Wave runner. When Mike got back from dropping him off, we discussed that rather than try to hoist it with two people and a drifting houseboat, why don't we try towing it. We put it on a short leash (SAMI), it wanted to submarine at first, but once we got underway it planed out and was fine.

Worked our way thru the cut, thru the straits leading to Gunsite Canyon, across the Mouth of gunsite canyon and up Padre bay a bit. Dave called a halt to make sure the slide still worked. Also wanted to try jumping off the top, side of the boat. Also fun, but stung a little. Mike was already making a sandwhich so I joined him. As a final move I took Sami for a short spin, then allowed Mike his 10 minutes with Sami, while I got underway. When Mike returned,

we set SAMI a towing again, then I decided we should drive from the upper deck. This was something we forgot to do last summer. The switchover went smoothly, then I ran down and got one of the kites and started flying it.

The plan was to checkout west canyon, and if nothing good, go up last chance canyon. Hardly anyone was in west canyon and we had no trouble finding a spot. Mike beached the boat and kept it running, while I went out, dug the hole, set the anchor and had Mike throw me the rope. Once the outer anchor was set, Mike shutdown and the two of us went to work on the other side. About 1 1/2 hours later, we were done anchoring, including resetting my original anchor. Now I was beat. I started the BBQ, and sat back for a beer. 15 minutes later I mustered enough strength to put the Turkey on, and we lowered the other wave runner, and the Kayak. Swimming for a while, turn the bird, then went to work on the Zodiac. Gave it a testdrive, did some more general swimming, then decided it was time to start cooking for real. Meanwhile, Mike took the Zodiac fishing, and caught a couple walleye and a small striper. Dinner WAS GREAT!!!!. The bird was juicy, the potatoes and gravy were adequate. Made sure plenty of gravy for hot turkey sandwiches for a couple if days. After dinner, picked the carcass clean and put it in the fridge for Soup stock later. Mike did the rest of the cleanup. Put on a DVD and lasted 5 minutes. Decided to try out the upper deck futon tonight, while Mike slept in the lower forward Cubby.

Saturday 5/22 West Canyon

Today was playday!!! Can't sleep late at all on this boat, probably cause I'm knocked out early each night. Enjoyed the stars whenever I woke and thought to look last night. Well rested, and enjoyed a leisurely coffee and roll. Decided to cook a bacon and egg breakfast after the 2nd cup of coffee, then hit water in the zodiac for fishing. I couldn't go too far into West canyon as I only had a Utah license, but I did manage a couple of walleye. Came back and had a nice run on the waverunner. Then started boiling away the turkey carcass. I brought the makings for cream of turkey and green chile. So about 3 hours later, with swimming in between, I had about a gallon of delicious soup. Dinner tonight was hot turkey sandwiches and soup. It was GGGRRREEEAATTTTT!!!!!. The rest of the turkey can now be relegated to lunch. Mike did another evening fishing trip, while I prepared for a campfire. I bought "Spooky Campfire Tales", "Spooky tales of the Southwest", and "More stories for around the Campfire" for this and future trips. I found a story, and started to memorize it. I also brought some compressed sawdust logs with us so starting a fire would be easier. LAKTETIME no longer supplies firewood, as they lost their supplier, so we had to get our own before we left. The campfire was short but fun. No DVD tonight, its straight to bed. Tonight, the upper bedroom, forward bed. Mike tried the other futon on the upper deck.

Sunday 5/23 : West Canyon to Oak Canyon

It took about two hours to hoist everything, retrieve the anchors and launch the boat. For the launch, We started by securing all but the outer anchors. Then Mike started the engine, and I loosened the down-wind anchor, carried it back to the boat while Mike attended the rope and the boat. The up wind anchor was more challenging. We first stowed the gangway, I released it and handed it to Mike and he stowed it when he got a chance. The boat wanted to leave now. I went back for the rope and jumped onto the bow and we were off. I was able to pull the rope up to its stays from the front then coiled it up. First stop, in about an hour was dangling rope. We needed nothing here. Another hour and we were at rainbow bridge. Here was the plan, go into Forbidding canyon until the big fork off of the Rainbow Bridge branch. Mike takes the Zodiac in, while I tend the houseboat, then I take the Zodiac in while Mike tends the Houseboat. About 3 hours later, we had both visited the bridge. The walk this year was just under 1 mile. We were supposed to head farther upriver, but decided to see if we could stay at Oak Canyon since the days events took much longer with just two of us. The sand peninsula in oak canyon only had 1 other boat and was much bigger this year, so the docking went pretty smooth. Lowered just the waverunners, as we weren't seeing any striper boils to make it worth going after them in the Zodiac. Tomorrow, we'll continue upriver. This afternoon, we did three days worth of Waverunner Canyon exploration from last year, in one long 2-1/2 hour long ride. It was great. Soup and Hamburgers for dinner. Did another quick campfire since we had a nice sandy beach. Tonight, Mike's trying the pullout sofa as he wants to watch "Hunt for Red October". I'm going to try one of the sleeping mats on the Upper Deck.

Monday 5/24 : Beyond Oak Canyon

In real life, Dave had a Wonderful Lantern tour at Carlsbad Cavern. Also toured the big room, went back up top for a soda, then headed down the natural entrance trail. Did a second loop around the big room (this time without the groups of kids around), then headed back up the elevator. 5 hours was too much time to kill til the bat flight, as it was almost an hour drive to Carlsbad, an hour and a half to the campground, so went back to camp, put my lounge chair in the lake and spend about 2 hours half soaking, pretending to fish.

The wind made sleeping on the deck interesting. It kept up all night, and occasionally would knock something

over and cause straps to whip around. Did get a pretty good night sleep again. Got going a bit quicker this morning, more practice, easier beach, less mess to put back. Decided to work our way all the way to the Rincon*, and skip the Escalante and San Juan branches this trip. Started looking for a place around noon, found a nice beach area and spent another 2 hours docking the boat, and taking all the toys down. We'll be here two nights, so everything goes out. Spent the afternoon taking the Wave runners into these side canyons, and generally lounging. Dinner tonight is grilled chicken breasts and more soup, so since its quick, decided to take the zodiac out for some evening fishing. Saw a few small boils and was able to catch a few. Since the zodiac is much slower, this was more of : Spot a boil and begin moving towards it. When we get to the area, idle and wait. When we see it again, we should be close enough. Repeat the wait and go steps, until the boil no longer appears. It was fun. Dave caught both the biggest and the most (Mike was driving).

Got back while the sun was going down. Had a later supper, cooked on the top deck for once and had leisurely outdoor dinner with Sirius Radio music. No entertainment tonight, other than the long dinner. Mike decided to sleep up top (futon or Mat) while I went down to the forward bedroom on the main deck.

* The Rincon is a section of the river that used to be a goose-neck, switchback. The river eventually eroded away the neck to cut off the switchback. The water now wraps about 3/4 around whats left.

Tuesday 5/25 : Quest for Bullfrog

In real life, today was Guadalupe National Park, about 35 miles south of Carlsbad caverns. From the lake, it was about a 2 hour drive. Did a couple of hikes. High desert, but more vegetation and more scenic. The way the mountain range drops off, reminds me of the sandias. Unless you want to take a serious backpack trip, there's not much to do. Did all the reasonably short hikes, and toured the visitor center and small (Frijoles Ranch) museum. Since I'm only 45 miles from the caverns, I'm going to have sandwiches for dinner and catch the bat show. The view was smoggy on the drive down, so I'm also hoping I get a clear view on the drive to the caverns.

The trip was a mistake. The only cloud I've seen yet brought lightning too close for comfort, about 30 minutes into the show when the bats were probably about ready to leave. The rain started first, then their lightning detector recorded a close enough strike (< seven miles) to kick us out. I waited in my car in the parking lot and saw a few, but not the big swirl, after about 20 mins. Also listened to the suns game, the only good thing. I planned on topping off gas at the turnoff to the caves (whites city) but the gas station was already closed. I was so unsure of the gas situation (sign said last services, 130 mies) that I decided I better go back to carlsbad for gas. Longest 18 miles ever. I did get to hear the suns beat the lakers in game 4, so that almost made up for it.

Today was a long day on the Waverunners. Looking at the Map, we had about 17 or 18 miles to Hall's crossing and Bullfrog. We stayed together, and Mike strapped on a spare gas tank, just in case. We went hard for a while, then found a canyon to explore a bit, then back to the main channel. For the most part, traffic hadn't made it out here yet so the water was like glass. I was able to recognize Hall's from about a long mile out from my trip in 2007. We puttered across the front of halls crossing, then cut across the bay to bullfrog. We stopped at the marina to refuel (getting a bit low) then beached the Waverunners and walked on up to the Defiance House Hotel/Lodge and town center. Had lunch at the hotel restaurant, then decided to head back. Before we got going to far, I diverted Mike into the three fingers canyons (Lost Eden Canyon) where I had kayaked in 07. On the way back, the water was much choppier and the wind was kicking up. We stayed near the canyon walls, trying to catch some shelter. It was like a battle, but we finally saw the Houseboat on the horizon at about 3. We both napped afterward, then went out fishing a bit. Caught a few, but didn't stay at it for long. Had the last of the turkey soup tonight (last turkey sandwhich was yesterday) and steak. Watched 30 minutes of a DVD tonight. Covering the last of the unused beds, Mike slept in the middle bedroom on the main deck, and I slept directly below him on the bed just outside the dungeon bed.

Wednesday 5/26 Moving Day

In real life, drove to Big Bend National Park. The first 50 miles were fairly scenic. A large flat plains, but mountain ridges on all sides. I was driving thru the Delaware Basin of the Permian sea. The rest of the drive had spots where it was scenic, but a lot of high desert nothingness (which still beats most of Texas nothingness.

Approaching Big Bend, the last 30 miles, in which your actually inside the park, were more of this high desert. Wondering what I got into, and how I would spend two days here. Then I noticed this mountain range in the distance that I seemed to be headed for. Turns out this is the Main feature of the park, and the campground is in a section called the basin, in which you're surrounded by these mountain peaks. So it turns out its actually pretty cool. Did a couple hikes, a short one, and a 5 mile round tripper up one of the smaller side peaks.

A long day today. Its about 18 miles back to rainbow bridge, then 50 miles back to the dock. So we wanted to knock a good bit of that off. We were originally looking at Gunsite canyon, but since it takes a while to deanchor, we probably need to start a little closer, Got rolling about 9 am. Decided to tow SAMI and take it on some side excursions, When approaching a canyon of interest, one of us would go ahead into the canyon with SAMI, The other would take the houseboat past the canyon mouth a bit and wait. After a few tries, we got the timing down pretty good. Stopped a couple times for swimming too, drove mostly from topside, and flew the kite for about an hour. Also did some packing things, such as deflating the zodiac and boxing the food. Not as many piles with just two of us. About 3:30, we were coming into Logans cove area. The wind was starting to pick up a bit, so getting that first anchor set was an adventure. I took Sami to scout an area, waved Mike in, then grabbed the shovel off the front bow (where I had strategically left it) and started digging. Mike tried holding the boat on shore with the engines. I went back for the antenna and he handed it down, then we switched places while he fastened the rope. I stayed on board while he set the second one, then shutdown the engine and we both did the other four anchors. Didn't need to redo the first one this time. Sami was down, so we also brought down the Kayak and other waverunner, Both of us did a little Kayak trolling but didn't catch anything. Had a campfire that night to burn the rest of our wood. No DVD. We both decided to sleep on deck. I took my futon to the back of the deck, Mike went to the front. If it rains, we'll come back together.

Thursday 5/27 The Landing

In real life, Dave went to Mexico (almost), Twice!! I first took a drive around the west side of the Chisosa Mountains, to the Rio Grande, Border, and to Santa Elana canyon. The road ends at the exit of the canyon, and a trail goes about a mile up it to where it gets real narrow. This is similar to a Powell slot canyon, except the opposite wall is another country. Tried to throw sticks across the border, but they fell in the middle of the Rio. It was a very scenic drive down. Then, I drove to the Rio on the east side of the Chisosa mountains. These mountains are probably the reason the river takes a Big Bend here, to get around them. They are like a ring of peaks thrust up from the desert, and the basin (where I'm camping) is inside the ring. Anyway the drive down the East side wasn't as scenic. I drove out to where the river enters another canyon and hiked about a mile to the entrance. Pretty, but nothing like the other side. On the drive back I went down to the Hot Springs feature, I had it all to myself (maybe cause it was 103 out). I soaked a bit and got some pictures. Tomorrow, I think I'm heading all the way back, since I don't have working air conditioning (found out on Day 1, cause in ABQ, its not been hot enough to notice yet). Also, I drove in the area I was planning to spend night 6, and wasn't impressed (hot nothingness). So I'll take the more direct path thru El Paso, though the first part of the drive to Prsesidio is supposed to be scenic. It was, but the total drive ended up being almost 700 miles, 13 hours, which included about 1 ½ hours of breaks. Total trip mileage of 1600 with average gas around $2.90 gallon.

A bit windy again, but no rain, a few spits though. Set the alarm to make sure we got up, but no need for it. Put the waverunners up last night, so all we have left is the anchors, and to cleanup any breakfast. Had nice leisurely continental breakfast, then got to work on the anchors. Underway at 8:10. Radioed in and asked if they had another way to get the pilot out to us or would he help re-hoist the waverunner. They said if we hang out a bit, he'll have the next boat they launch take him over to our boat. That worked out fine. We were able to unload the boxes fairly quickly (to the ground) and got the waverunners, kayak and motor down all within our allowed hour. We then spend another half hour packing the cars. Hit Denny's for Brunch, and then bid adieu to each other. All in all, a very successfull trip *(which I wish would have actually happened).* Next trip, June 23-30, 2011. Plan early.