

Panama Canal Transit

10/21/2007

Around 0630 Junior and his guys showed up, hung the 9 tires they had prepared as additional fenders and then we all waited for the Advisor.

About 0745 we got a call on Channel 10 to standby at buoy 16, the Advisor was on his way. We dropped the mooring, headed out, picked up the Advisor and the transit had begun.

The Advisor said we were scheduled, as requested, to tie along tugs in the first 2 locks without any other vessels. In the 3rd lock we were to be ahead of a max size cargo ship and might have to side tie. Also, to meet our scheduled time at lock 3 we had to maintain 8 knots through out the transit. I expected the starboard genset could provide the power needed for 8 knots without having to call on the port genset. However, I was concerned that the port motor could not maintain that speed - it overheats. I guess I had better restate that - running at 8 knots in calm conditions the port motor does not reach a stable temperature. Glacier Bay says it doesn't overheat because when it reaches about 165C it is programmed to cut back, i.e. no longer do the 8 knots. To me that means it is overheating and has a problem, but has been programmed to back off so a catastrophic failure does not occur. Glacier Bay and I will be having more discussions about this. Anyway, with a little current behind me and both gensets on, the port more or less just on standby, Asanagi maintained 8 knots for the 4nm to the first lock. When we got there the port motor was reading just a little less than 140C. I didn't expect it could keep up that pace for another 30+ miles.

Tying to the tug the first time was not graceful but it worked. However, when untying Asanagi was to just move to the side so the tug could move forward to the next lock. When I did that we got hit by the tugs prop wash and with not forward momentum could not control Asanagi. We were pushed sideways almost into the far side of the lock however luckily, certainly not skill on my part, we corrected and were able to make it out of the lock without damage.

There was a hold up for the ship we were scheduled to lock with in the 3rd lock so we continued to the 2nd lock at about 5 knots. We still had to wait about 30 minutes when we got there before locking through. By now we had worked out a better technique when untying from the tug so we locked through without incident. Now our 3rd lock partner was even more delayed so the Advisor said we should just maintain 7 knots for the next 20 some miles to the 3rd lock - that was a relief!

Made it the 3rd lock just in time for an afternoon rain storm. Had to circle and maintain position at the locks entrance for about 30 minutes in heavy rain and lighting until ready to lock in. At the last moment the lock captain ordered us to the other lock saying we were at the wrong one. Our Advisor knew the captain was confused since our big sister ship had been switched to this lock and we were bound to it through the lock we also were switched. Therefore the Advisor had me power up to the lock's entrance and tie up against the wall - blocking traffic so Asanagi ad to be next in the lock. The Advisor then called his boss to have things sorted out with the lock captain, turned off his radio and we waited. Eventually, things were resolved, a tug was available to tie to so we entered the lock after the tug and ahead of our sister ship and finished our transit without incident.

The Advisor said we actually finished the transit 5 minutes ahead of schedule. We flagged a pilot boat down at the Flats to pick up the advisor. Junior guided us to the Panama Yacht Club where one of his guys was waiting to direct us to our end tie.

So ended our Canal Transit. THIS ENTRY WAS PREPARED 11/04/2007 FROM MEMORY.