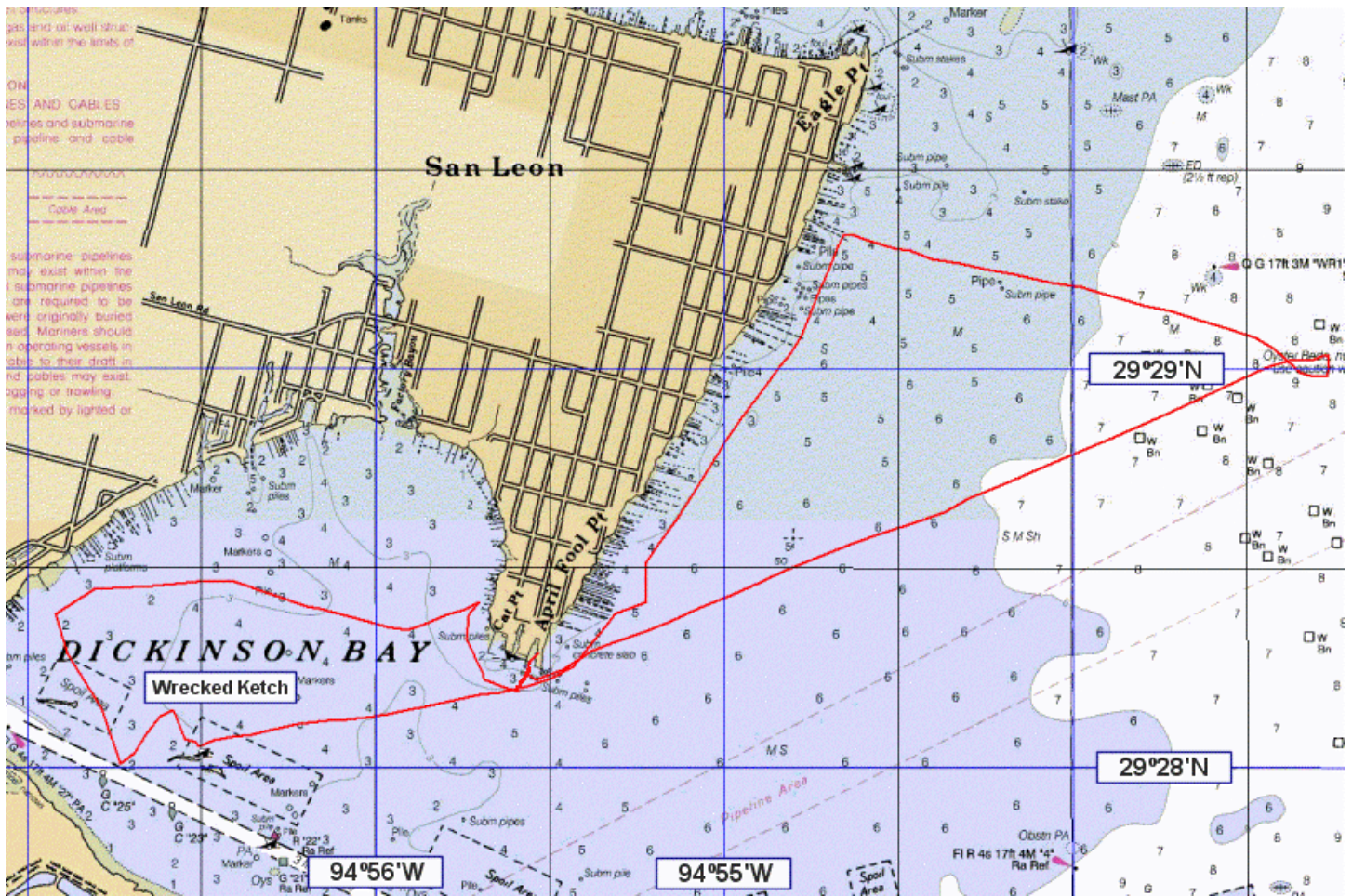


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SAILING DICKINSON BAY
Bob Hunkins, Fleet 25

I have the great fortune and blessing to reside on San Leon peninsula that separates Galveston Bay from the smaller Dickinson Bay. The view of the water out my backdoor often leads to an overwhelming desire to be sailing. One might even admit to hearing voices from the waters edge calling your name. Dickinson Bay is a quiet little bay with a depth between four and five feet. While there are shallow locations you definitely want to avoid, the bay is perfect for Day Sailers and other smaller craft. The bottom is sandy clay muck, with oyster reefs scattered here and there. If you find yourself unlucky enough to have to take an unplanned step in this soil, you'll likely sink in up to your shins and come back on board with a missing shoe or two. But for those of us that do our best to keep inside the boat, the bay offers fair ocean breezes and endless adventure.

One clear Texas day last October my friend Cliff and I took *Surprise* out for an afternoon sail around the Dickinson Bay. Cliff is a Hobie 16 sailor, who often sails his catamaran from his house a few miles up one of the bayous northwest of Dickinson Bay. His knowledge of the bays and bayous in the area is extensive, making him the perfect companion for the day.



San Leon Peninsula

We left from a boat ramp at April Fool Point Marina located around the corner from my home. The marina is sometimes a challenge for a motorless sailboat if the wind is from the south. I've had many an occasion to short tack the narrow opening into the bay. It tends to turn a few heads as you work yourself between the docked shrimpers cleaning their catch. As luck would have it, the wind was with us this day, and we sailed through on a reach. We were off to find a small spoil island along a channel dredged into the southern end of the bay. Cliff calls the island "La Isla de Muerte" because of the dead fish skeletons that have been brought there and picked clean by the gulls and other seabirds on the bay. As we sailed across the bay we saw a wreck beached on the shore of that island. It was an old beat up motor ketch, probably 25 foot long, and definitely homemade. She had been stripped of any usable hardware. All gone except for her ports. I was a little nervous about bringing *Surprise's* rudder and centerboard so close to

the island, but I trusted Cliff's knowledge of the area. We approached the beached wreck close hauled on starboard tack. A few feet from the island, I turned *Surprise* into the wind, let fly the sheets and Cliff jumped overboard, pulling *Surprise* inshore while I raised her centerboard and rudder. We tied off to the wreck that was high and dry on the island. Cliff struck a typical catamaran sailor pose on the boat, and I took a photo.



A sea trial or a beer ad?

Having exhausted the interesting points of the wreck as well as our beer, we shoved off and sailed back towards April Fool Point and continued into Galveston Bay.

We took advantage of the building sea breeze and sailed on. But with the shortening length of the day and the hopes of getting the boat out of the water and de-rigged by the time dusk arrived, we decided to head back home. As we tacked around, we saw one of the shrimp boats leaving the April Fool Point Marina, heading out into the bay. Strange time for them to start shrimping. As we passed the shrimper, we saw what mischief they were up to. The skipper had one of the crew being pulled from behind the boat - water-skiing!



Shrimpers need to have fun, too.

We managed to contain our laughter long enough to take a photo as they passed, and decided we had seen enough oddities on the water for one day. *Surprise* arrived at the dock just in time to be put on her trailer and down rigged before dusk. We finished off a most excellent day with a shrimp po'boy and a beer at the little restaurant at the marina. All and all, owning a Day Sailer and living on the bay isn't that bad.