

I WAS DEALT A BAD HAND AT THE POKER RUN

Author's note: We credit the title to member Larry Lettick.

The weather prediction for the week leading up to the day of the Poker Run (Saturday, June 7, 2025) was for a lot of rain, but it improved as the week progressed. Our chapter had seven members with boats signed up to attend. Here is the story of the collective misadventures at that event—hence the worthiness to be considered for the 2025 ACBS Broken Gunwale Award.

Poker Run Sad Story #1 by Larry Lettick

My friend Bill and I were looking forward to trying our luck at the Poker Run that was organized by our chapter, on Saturday, June 7. We loaded "Sweetie Pie" (Larry's 20-foot 1946 Chris Craft Custom Runabout) onto her trailer Friday evening in preparation for the 40-minute drive from Chocowinity, NC to New Bern, NC the next morning. Maybe we would win some money to pay the fuel bill! Alas, it was not to be. The bad news is we did not win any money. The good news is we didn't use any fuel either. The worse news is we made it only about five miles before we felt the sickening rumble of a flat tire behind us. The worst news was that the flat was caused by a broken leaf spring that allowed the trailer wheel to wander from side to side.



With a collapsed suspension, it was impossible to fit the bottle jack (which I now carry since a three-flat-tire-trip to Lake Norman two years ago) under the axle of the offending wheel. While this octogenarian and my septuagenarian friend stood uselessly staring at this hopeless situation, a pickup truck pulled to a stop across the road, and out stepped our personal Batman. I could almost hear the music *"Here I am to save the day"*. Bryan, a strong 23-year-old logger from Pantego, accompanied by his fiancée, figured out that if he lifted the wheel and the broken suspension, I would be able to fit the jack under the axle. The deed was done and a spare tire was fitted, so off we went .

. . back home. Bryan at first refused any payment until I immodestly attempted to slip a bill into his fiancée's pocket. He was a gentleman as well as a bona fide good Samaritan. This world needs more Bryans.

My hope is that we will actually attend the next local chapter event from beginning to end without any drama, and instead get to enjoy the camaraderie of our fellow members.

Poker Run Sad Story #2 by Sharon Conley

The weather was beautiful, my T-shirt said 'LIFE IS GOOD.' We had seven boats meeting in New Bern to follow Alan Hills along the peaceful Neuse and Trent Rivers. We would pick up poker cards at five venues that were carefully arranged by Judy Hills. We began the outing with a mishap: Larry Lettick's boat trailer had a flat tire. They couldn't make it. 'Is Life Good?'

The boats were launched: Alan Hills in his newly renovated 1959, 15-foot Chris Craft Cavalier, John Dougherty in his 1950 14-foot Wagemaker Wolverine, John Peck in his 1955 13-foot Kit Runabout, Jim Hartman in his 1958 23-foot Chris Craft Continental, Kevin Leiner in his 1958 18-foot Chris Craft Sea Skiff, and Bill Conley in his 1952 17-foot Chris Craft Special Runabout. We were heading for a delightful adventure when, suddenly, the Conley's boat stopped about 50 yards from the dock. No amount of 'coaxing' could get it moving again. 'Life is Not Good.' Kevin and Jen Leiner insisted on towing them back to the dock. They helped put the boat back on the trailer and insisted that the Conleys ride with them to gather the poker cards.



Conley's Chris Craft when it ran

Now, a little backstory is needed on the Conley's boat, Blue Tango. Blue Tango has been plagued with several issues over many months. Just a few weeks before the Poker Run, Blue Tango had engine work done and had been running well, when taken for two long test runs. The Conleys had anticipated that Blue Tango would perform well on the Poker Run, but alas, that was not to be. Bill was so disappointed!

Poker Run Sad Story #3: Poker Card Envelope Stops

We were due at the restaurant at 12:30 PM. The launch was scheduled for 10:30 AM with the anticipation that it would only take a short amount of time to do so, leaving plenty of time to make three stops to pick up envelopes (Bridgeton Marina on the Neuse River, member Leif Eriksson's dock on the Trent River, the Eastern Carolina Yacht Club on the Trent River). The boats were each to get five envelopes: one at the launch, three at the stops on the river, and one at the restaurant.

We got off to a late start, trying to figure out where Larry Lettick was. We finally gave up, launched the boats, and started down the creek to the river. Then we noticed that the Conley's and Leiner's boats were not following. It took a few minutes to figure out what had happened to them. We waited for them to rejoin the group. This made us even later, and so it was decided on the fly to forego picking up an envelope at the Bridgeton Marina due to the time and distance involved, as we did not want to be late for the restaurant. But John Dougherty took off for Bridgeton, and it took a few more minutes to get him to come back.

The group headed to pick up the second envelope at Leif Eriksson's dock. Leif was assisted by Austin Lewis and Austin's dog, Frank. 'Life is Getting Good?'



Leif distributing cards, Frank the dog, and Austin

During this time, Judy Hills, who was in a car, had been communicating with Alan, expressing concern that we were going to be late for the restaurant reservation. They decided to drop the Eastern Carolina Yacht Club envelope pickup site as well, but Alan had misunderstood and led the group there. It took a few minutes to clarify that faux pas, and the group proceeded to the restaurant. When the group finally arrived at the restaurant, they were only a few minutes late.

Poker Run Sad Story #4: A Short Downpour

At about 3:30 PM, the weather reports encouraged us to head back to New Bern to retrieve the boats. On the way back to the ramp, it rained heavily for a few minutes—just enough to soak everyone in the boats since none of the boats had tops.

Poker Run Sad Story #5: Jen & Kevin Leiner

The Leiners and Conleys were hydroplaning rather hurriedly back to the ramp in the Leiner's skiff when suddenly there was a catastrophic jolt, a screeching noise, and a radical change to the boat's handling. We were less than a mile from our destination. 'Life is Not Good.' Ultimately, Kevin's boat was towed to the ramp by Alan Hills. (Kevin towing Bill to Alan towing Kevin!)



Alan Hills towing Kevin Leiner's boat



Kevin's boat on the trailer
note prop, rudder, and strut above & on right



We may never know what submerged object Kevin's boat hit, but we do know it caused tremendous damage to Kevin's prop, rudder, and shaft.

One other thing happened just after launching, member John Dougherty ended up doing a good deed by towing a boat with an engine problem back to the ramp.



John Dougherty providing a helping hand

The lunch, drawing for the door prizes, and the poker game went very well. Everyone was pleased, so the event was not a total wash.

While the Poker Run was not without its challenges, we were surrounded by supportive friends and dependable people who are always there for each other. As Anne Marie Hartman said, we had no injuries, we have good health, and we're still here. Yes, **'Life is Good.'**

Another day of boating adventures!

Submitted by:

Alan Hills, President

NC Coastal & Piedmont Chapter ACBS