

Sailing With Others Across the Seas

by Alan Stummer, 2021



Version:
v1.0 Initial
v1.1 Fixed ePub metadata
V1.2 Added List of Photos

Table of Contents

Preface.....	2
Perspective.....	2
Finding the First Boat.....	4
Delivery Crew.....	5
Life Afterwards.....	35
Appendix.....	36
List of Photos.....	38

Preface

This memoir is an edited version of my journals. In the mid-1980's, I sailed with my then girlfriend Val in the Irish Sea, the Mediterranean, the Atlantic and the Caribbean. Val was from the Isle of Man, an island in the Irish Sea. We were itinerant sailboat delivery crew, guns for hire. Most of the sailboats we were on had dedicated skippers but absentee owners. Some had owner/skippers but that would not be preferred because while a skipper must know how to sail well, an owner only needs money. An absentee owner would tell the skipper to bring the sailboat to some place for friends or business associates, the skipper would get a crew person or two and we would deliver the sailboat. A delivery could take months or maybe just a day. Sometimes we could stay on the sailboat afterwards, sometimes we would look for another delivery or find a place to stay on land. We were only delivering sailboats, never power boats.

In my early twenties, I had worked with John, an electrical engineer, who had built a 16m (53') ferrous-cement sailboat in which he and his wife sailed around the world in three years. On joint trips for work, he had described some of that trip. He had also said that describing such sailing to those who had not done it was like second hand mountain climbing. Often working with John and me was Derrick, a mechanical engineer, who had built an 11m (36') sailboat. Soon afterwards, a friend bought a small sailboat on which I learned the ropes. I bought my own boat and learned some more. A couple of years after crewing, Derrick sailed with his family only as far as Florida before they revolted. His wife and kids flew home, I flew down and we took his boat back home to Toronto.

At the age of 30, I left my job at the University of Toronto, where I would be back working in a couple of decades. Thirty was already getting old for that uncertain life of delivering boats. The transient life could be hard. Besides 24-hour sailing and watches, we might be off a boat at sunset and have to find a cheap or free place to stay. Everyone knew everyone so often we could just move to another boat. Unlike most other crew, we were financially self-sufficient. If we rented a place to stay, often just a hut, it usually filled up with other crew who were off boats and broke. We were nomads of the sea, with neither a fixed home on land nor sea. We slept on beaches or hotel stairways or kind strangers' houses. Val and I had enough money so we could pick and choose boats. We never needed to take a paying job with passengers, such as crewed charters. Those were a way to make some money but the price was to endure the passengers. Only one of the trips we made was for pay and on only one trip did we partially share the cost of food. We didn't need the money, we were there for the adventure.

This is a story about sailing but also the people, the places, the good times, the hard times, the threatening times, the joys, the fun, the adventure, the highs and the lows, the exhaustion, the sleeplessness, wishing it will end, wondering why I ever wanted to do this, the glow of having come through, looking back years later and never regretting having been there, done it.

Many names of people and boats have been modified for this memoir. The name of this memoir is a nod to Joshua Slocum's book, *Sailing Alone Around the World*, written in 1900. Many thanks to Christine Malec for her editing and advice.

Perspective

One person's exotic is another person's mundane home. Although sailing across oceans sounds like a rare experience, it isn't. In the mid-1980's, hundreds of boats crossed the Atlantic every year. A common route in the north half of the Atlantic is to summer in the Mediterranean or north eastern Atlantic coast and then winter in the Caribbean. This is also a common pattern for cruise ships and passengers can find inexpensive fares for a repositioning cruise, something my partner Tracy and I did decades later with friends. Probably hundreds of people crewed these boats as we did. We knew or knew of many of them.

As for scale, I have sailed approximately 8,500nm in blue water (open ocean), inshore and freshwater don't count. Many people sail around the world, my experience might be a quarter of that. Some people sail around the world non-stop, many are single handed (meaning alone), some even twice around the world without stopping, some 10 times and counting. I can keep going with other's achievements just to put my trips in perspective: it is a lot and a little.

Now in this third millennium, there are organized passages (a trip between land, from hours to weeks) with all sorts of navigation, communication and weather reporting gear. In the 1980's there was no fast GNSS (Global Navigation Satellite System, GPS was the first and is the vernacular name) and only some boats had shortwave radios. VHF radio, common inshore, would be of little use offshore due to line of sight range. Back then, a boat could go weeks without any contact. There was a simple satellite system called Transit or SatNav which could give a Line Of Position (LOP, you can be anywhere on that line) a few times a day. That LOP was plotted on a chart and extrapolated according to the boat speed and direction. With several LOPs, an approximate position was known. Transit would not be much use inshore, only on the open ocean. Without GNSS, positions had to be estimated. Near land, visual landmarks were usually sufficient. Offshore or at night, speed and direction were the only known parameters, known as dead reckoning. Sometimes the north star could be used as a direction references. I had used a sextant for sun shots to get a reasonably accurate position but only for practice.

At the time there was no internet, so your reputation was your resumé. If a skipper needed a couple of crew to deliver a boat, word of mouth would quickly spread of who was going where and who was capable. Sometimes we would walk the docks and talk with people and sometimes get lucky to hear that a boat needing crew was going in the same direction that we wanted to go. A chat with the skipper usually brought up mutually known crew or boats and we were on. Now in the 2020's, the internet rules everything. Unless a skipper knows available crew, he will browse the online listings and select crew.

All of the skippers whom we met then were male, although women sailed with others or alone. Although crew was mostly male, everyone was included equally, with of course some exceptions because some things never change.

For those who sail and wish to know, the boats were generally 13m to 20m (45-65'), a couple smaller and some larger. Most were sloops or ketches, one cat rigged. Most were fairly new, well equipped and in very good condition. A delivery usually had three or four people onboard.

For those who do not sail, there is a short appendix at the very end.

Finding the First Boat

I spent time on the Isle of Man, a small island in the Irish Sea between England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. Regarding boats, I mostly just day sailed in races or for pleasure. There was a memorable trip with a fellow named Henk from the Netherlands. Building a boat takes a lot of time and dedication. Roughly half of all boat building projects are never finished. Henk was one of the few who built and sailed his own boat. He had sailed up England and Scotland on the North Sea, through Scotland via the Caledonia Canal (which includes Loch Ness), down the coast to where we met in the Isle of Man. Together, we sailed along Wales and England. He taught me about sailing alone at night.

A friend of Val's father, Nick, had raced single handed on a maxi (large catamaran) across the Atlantic. We talked with him about our planned adventure. His very good advice was to not buy a boat until we had sailed the oceans with those who know how. That sounded a lot like what John had told me years ago. It turned out to be the best advice we could have been given and maybe even saved our lives. One should no sooner climb a mountain without learning the ropes than sail an ocean without experience. We decided to crew.

In the northern half of the Atlantic, many sailboats followed a common route because it was practical. They would summer in the Mediterranean then cross the Atlantic, also called the pond, to spend the winter in the Caribbean. In spring they would cross back to the Mediterranean. Some would summer in the eastern seaboard of the US and Canada. The route to cross to the Caribbean was either from the Canary Islands or the Cape Verde Islands. The route to the Mediterranean usually went through the Azores or Madeira. We hoped to join the boats in the Mediterranean in the fall.

In early September of 1985 we flew to Liverpool, took a coach to Manchester then eventually a package flight to Majorca, a Spanish island in the Mediterranean. The tourist area of Majorca resembled a gaudy version of Blackpool in England. Within easy walking distance were Welsh pubs, English pubs, Scottish pubs, no Irish pubs, video arcades, fish and chips stands and anything else British. We walked the docks looking for a boat needing crew, first in the Real Club Nautica then the down scale but still impressive Club de Mar. We bumped into a friend of Val's from the Isle of Man, Chrissie, who was on a Swedish owned boat. She told us where the yachties hang out (yachtie was the slang we used for itinerant crew who work on the sailboats). There was the daytime pub and the evening pub and ne'er the twain should one confuse. We advertised in the local English language newspaper. There were many nibbles but no bites.

When our week at that hotel was up and we had sold our return flight tickets (tickets could be bought and sold in those days), we were committed. Our next accommodation was a 1-star hotel. We selected one without dogs wandering through or any gay hookers. On the docks and at the pubs, we met up with our growing list of contacts, including an American couple on their own boat, Sam the perpetually pleasantly pissed jack of all trades on tall ships, Klaus who might need crew to go to Portugal and many more. Our networking continued. There was Ian, on the boat Carolian (Carol was his ex-wife), a 22m (74') wood ketch that he had built himself and needed crew. We didn't like the boat and would have to pay £50 a week each. Another boat came up but they only wanted one person. John and Chrissie were going to deliver the boat to the Caribbean but were unsure about other crew.

Being mechanically and electrically inclined has advantages: you are useful and you meet people. I fixed the generator on Carolian, which caused us to meet his friend Jack, who also had generator problems. Both the generator and conversation with Jack were irreparable. However, the next generator on Bruce the skipper's boat had a bad connection at the diesel starter and was easily fixed. Tom, the owner of Bruce's boat, gave us lunch on his 14m Taiwan boat. They planned to cross the Atlantic via the Cape Verde Islands off Africa, south of the Canary Islands. Chris, a delivery skipper on Gypsy, needed crew and would let us know tomorrow.

Most people really were friendly and helpful in getting the word out for us. Everyone would drop what they were doing and chat with us. There was no animosity between us and other crew looking for boats. Francis had a boat on the hard (on land, being fixed or modified) and would need a navigator and crew (me) and cook (Val). The following day Klaus told us that he was selling his boat.



Henk's home built boat

The search expanded to Aranell where we met Lawrence, a Canadian. He owns Jenisa, an Irwin 52 (16m) cutter ketch that he was trying to sell. However, if that didn't pan out, he would need crew to take it to the Caribbean. Jack and Willy, on the boat Beard, were willing to chat but didn't need crew. Anxious to hear from Lawrence, we returned to the hotel. He called and we were going! Suddenly the world was turning the right way, what a feeling.

Delivery Crew

1 Oct 1985, Palma de Majorca, Spanish Balearic Islands

Our first day on the job and we arrived later than expected, although not a problem. After lunch at the Club Nautico El Arranel, we got to work. The boat was large and comfortable. Val and I had our own room with a head (bathroom) and shower. We declined the room with two single berths in favour of the V-berth (the most forward room which narrows at the front). Lawrence has the aft cabin with a full bed, shower and bathtub. Jenisa carries over 1,000 litres of water so showers in port were unlimited. We topped up the fuel with 420 litres of diesel, then motored across the bay to the Pasea in Palma. Note that the log shows 6148nm (nautical miles, 1nm is almost 2km). We considered picking up a fourth person in Gibraltar.

While discussing what to buy for food for the crossing, I fixed his AM/FM/cassette deck. Afterwards, Lawrence and I dismantled and fixed the anchor winch. Dinner was ashore at a cheap place, his treat. I played with the SatNav.

2 Oct 1985, Palma

The deal was that we paid for half of our food and he obviously paid all expenses. The store, Pryca, was huge. It sold everything from food to clothing and had 47 checkout counters. We filled two huge shopping carts holding two months of supplies; the receipt was 1.5m long. The boat already holds some supplies and we will need more later.

3 Oct 1985, Palma to Ibiza, Spain.

We left Palma just before sunrise. No wind so we motored. Then the problems started. First the autohelm (self-steering which keeps the boat in a straight line) tried to put us in circles, then its drive chain broke. We took turns at the wheel. When the wind came up we put up the main (the mainsail, often simply called the main) and it promptly gybed (bad news, it changed sides when it should not have) but no damage. Next the furler (setup to roll up sail in place when not in use) jammed so no headsail (the front sail, also called a jib or genoa or genny, depending on size). We didn't feel like setting any other sails. The weather was nice and warm and sunny with a good breeze. The traveller (part of the mainsail) was not working. Lawrence decided to put into Santa Eulalia on Ibiza for repairs. We went into town that evening.

4 Oct 1985, Ibiza

Lawrence and I tried to fix the traveller but it was really stuck. The next attempted repair was to the furler. This meant that he had to go up the mast and the only way to do that was for me to winch him up. After that was a minor fix to the log input on the SatNav. It was beyond repair, so we had to estimate and enter distance manually to get a rough location fix. Val did all of the cooking. After the jobs were done, Val and I took the bus to El Cana, a tourist town. As in Palma, there were many British and also German places. Without tourism, the town would all but disappear. Nice beach, not full of chairs and canopies and people, just a beach for us. That evening in a pub we drank beer while watching the parking cars bump the parked cars as they squeezed into the small spaces.

5 Oct 1985, Ibiza to Costa Blanca

Again we left before sunrise. There was no wind before noon then enough to motor sail (motor assists the sails in weak winds). We all slept when off watch, swapping watch arbitrarily. By sunset the wind was gone and left a miserable swell. Lawrence took the 2100 to midnight watch, I was on at midnight.

6 Oct 1985, near Vera Gulf, Spain

Val joined me at 0100 for the tedious and boring graveyard watch. We alternately napped. The monotony was broken briefly when we had to change course to avoid a ship. According to the international laws of the sea, ships cannot turn easily so smaller craft such as us have to take the initiative. I saw my first flying fish and dolphins. Flying fish are simply fish with pectoral fins on steroids. To escape predators they speed towards the surface and glide through the air for a few



Jenisa under sail

seconds. We picked up an interloper after noon, a small black, white and grey bird much like a tern. Later, we had to change course to avoid another ship. After deciding that we were not in a hurry, we tried to find a marina. We followed the coast for a couple of hours, saw many magnificent villas, all white, but no marinas or ports so continued to Motril. Once closer, Motril was not possible to dock because it was filled with fishing boats, so on to Malaga. I sat my midnight watch again. A factory ship (the mother ship for small inshore fishing boats) chased us thinking that we were one of their fishing boats but we only had one small frozen flying fish. They realized the mistake before they were disappointed by our catch.

7 Oct 1985, southern Spanish coast, 394nm so far.

We followed the coast. That consisted of large lumps of rock with huge gullies and crevasses, virtually no trees. The towns and villages were crowded into the small flat areas between the hills and the sea. These small plains held the only farms, besides some terraced hills. Some towns had houses so closely packed that from a distance the all white houses look like a rubble heap. We motored all day, no wind, boring. Around sunset we went into Malaga harbour and moored near the fishing boats. An Italian boat, Giok I D'Acqua, rafted (tied up onto the side of our boat) and we visited each others boats to talk with the crew, and also the owner if we had to. Mario was the owner, Bert the German crew. They were also going to Antigua. The harbour area caters to tourists so we left it alone.

8 Oct 1985, Malaga to Marbella, Spain, 425nm so far.

There was enough wind to put up the main and half the genoa. Of course the wind died so sails down and motor only. The wind came back stronger so back up with the sails. You can't trust Mediterranean winds, it lies below the westerly trade winds and above the easterly trade winds. With the next wind shift we motor sailed but then the propeller started making an unhealthy sound so the motor was turned off. While under sail, we investigated and found that the prop shaft had shifted. It was temporarily fixed but a proper repair would have to wait till we were in Gibraltar. After preparing to enter the wrong harbour – remember, long before GPS – then finding the right one, we entered Marbella harbour. A vagrant mooring line floated up and fouled our propeller. Harbours were shallow and plenty of lines were dropped or fell overboard, fouling the prop was a constant but not too common hazard. The location was inherently crowded so there was little time between losing power and drifting into something. I was able to turn the prop shaft by hand to free the line. We pulled up the mooring line (a fixed anchor line supplied by the harbour) and found that every loose piece of line in the harbour must have wrapped itself around it. The boys working at the marina came out in a dingy and cut it free. Finally moored, Lawrence treated us to dinner. The town was incredibly clean and white. Even the back alleys were clean.

9 Oct 1985, Marbella, Spain

We planned to be here all days so we cleaned the boat, scrubbed the decks, inflated the dingy (small boat used in harbours) and did the laundry. Yesterday when the prop shaft had jammed, it had also crushed the drain pipe for our shower so it overflowed, soon repaired. With all of the work done, or at least most, we went to the beach. I snorkelled, watching the fish. I also dove to inspect the prop, which fortunately was not damaged. The zinc anode had been knocked loose and had taken the brunt of the force. The boat will not need the zinc anode just for a short time. We will replace it in Gibraltar. Lawrence again took us to dinner.

10 Oct 1985 Marbella, Spain to Gibraltar, Britain, 503nm so far, 78nm today

We had quite a fiasco leaving Marbella. The wind was pushing us onto the neighbouring boat. The marina boys came in a rowboat, suggesting a plan which would make things worse. They eventually helped with their mooring lines and a makeshift system. I cut a fouled line off of their mooring ball and we were off.

A group of dolphins swam with the boat. They played in the bow wave, swerving back and forth. Occasionally one would jump from one wave to another. They soon tired of this big lumbering thing and suddenly disappeared. A double check of the navigation showed that I had entered a wrong sign. Oops, not where we thought we were but no casualties. Gibraltar soon appeared through the mist by mid-afternoon. A laventa was blowing. A laventa is a Mediterranean east wind which can blow steady 10-20 knots (18-35kph) for several days. It picks up moist air which condenses as it rises over Gibraltar's big rock and forms a stationary cloud over Gibraltar. The British must have



Gibraltar with its cloud

taken one look around and thought that that looks like home so they took it. Over the border just to the north in Spain was clear skies. We cleared customs and docked in Marina Bay.

11-22 Oct 1985, Gibraltar

Mario and Bert on Giok I D'Acqua were docked right across from us. They picked up their third crew, Joan, one of the surprisingly few Americans we met crewing.

We had a disturbing experience just before arriving. The wind and waves were quite variable so we were steering by hand. While Lawrence was on the helm, the wheel suddenly went slack and settled back in place half a turn off. This morning we went over everything in the steering system. Nothing was out of place. The only way to reset the wheel was to disconnect it and turn it back. A clamp broke trying to find the issue. We left everything as is because curiously it was previously half a turn off centre. To be safe we checked that the emergency tiller was handy and working. That big issue semi-resolved, we worked on flashlights, Epirb (emergency beacon) and other minor problems. Val ripped apart the lounge cupboards to thoroughly clean them.

Boats and repairs went hand in hand. There was always a to-do list, some urgent, some will wait, some will never get done, but urgent repairs are done at the time, night or day. During our crewing trip, we were on more than one boat which lost steering while under way, several lost engine power either through engine or propeller problems, there was one fire which was put out fast with minimal damage, only one sail ripped and never was anyone injured. Electrical failures of all types were just assumed to happen. Rare was the boat which did not need any work.

The boatyard had replaced the prop shaft bearing with a regular ball bearing instead of a thrust bearing to take the force of the prop. We spent the morning removing it. Lawrence will get the proper thrust bearing in Britain when he goes there next week. The laventa was causing a swell which made the boat rock and roll and made sleep patchy. We changed the dock lines which helped a bit. After more repairs to the rigging, Lawrence and I assembled the third lung (compressed air for shallow scuba dives with a gas engine on the deck and a long hose). Even with the repair work, we found time to go to the beach on the far side of the rock where the waves were still crashing in. Lawrence left for England and Wales with boat parts to be repaired. He came right back, no seats available. He left again and had not returned by dinnertime. Bye!

Gibraltar was not what I expected. The famous rock was smaller than the pictures imply. The whole of Gibraltar was about 5km long by 2km wide. It was dirty and run down. Everything had dirt, dust and gunk on it. No one ever swept a sidewalk or cleaned a street. Be careful not to brush past anything. At the bottom of the famous rock was a scrapyard. Shops tended to be makeshift and dreary, every second one selling radios and watches (pre-mobile days) and small cheap imports. The Spanish and Moroccan areas formed the majority of the population although Gibraltar was undoubtedly British, even if they do drive on the right.

Many evenings involved pubs. That first night we caught last orders with Lawrence at Charlie's Pub. The navy boys on leave congregated at the Angry Friar Pub. Another favourite watering hole was the Stagecoach Inn. There were no Spanish pubs and the Moroccans being Muslim did not drink.

While Lawrence was gone, the days were filled with trips to town, a half hour walk each way. The town had few people out and about. One day we walked to town to see the new governor's key ceremony but it was the next day so we went to a pub then back to the boat.

Our possible new crew, Kim from Denmark, dropped by for a coffee and chat. He seems nice enough, even if lacking in sailing experience. I liked that he was big and strong so he could carry the sails around instead of me. When Lawrence returned a few days later, they talked and Kim became our fourth person on board. We spent several months with Kim, on and off. Decades later when Tracy, my long time partner, and I were in Liverpool, we arranged to meet with Val. She told me that she had tried to find him around 2015 when she was in Denmark. She did find someone with that name, the right age and looked vaguely similar. However, that Kim was on the tail end of a decline from years of drug abuse and a hard life. She could not be sure if it really was the same person. He was vague about sailing, unable to truly answer even that simple question coherently. He died a few months later.

Tom and Bruce on L'Affaire dropped in for a visit. Bruce, a Maori from New Zealand, previously was a diver on an oil rig who had been injured and now skippered L'Affaire. We agreed to meet up and sail with him in the Caribbean. I tried to contact him decades later but no success. Bruce had a lasting effect on me, teaching by example his calm but precise understanding of the world. L'Affaire was going to the Canary Islands (Spanish islands off of the north African coast) then Cape Verde (a group of islands south of the Canary Islands) then sail across the Atlantic to Antigua. Giok I D'Acqua was also leaving. With a deep 2.5m draft (the depth of the boat below the water) they ran aground 3m off the dock and had to wait half an hour for the rising tide. No damage was done except to their pride.

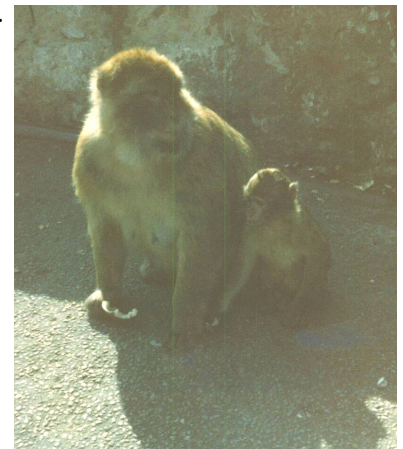
One morning we cleaned the boat just before Alice from Norway and a friend showed up unexpectedly. Then Christian from Germany, then Chrissie and John off of Refanut, then Alice and friend left and Chris and Linda arrived. This busy social life was the norm. We visited people on their boats but many came to us because of the spacious main cabin.

Not being British, my visa had to be extended at the immigration office. Newly validated, we met Alice and Christian and we all walked across the border into Spain for dinner. The border was across the Gibraltar runway which meant waiting for the barriers to lift between planes. La Linea was typically Spanish, very loud, crowded, colourful, clean. This put Gibraltar's dismal colours and sad state into sharp contrast. Susie, a Scottish hairdresser who lived in La Linea and craved meeting some Brits and speaking English, joined us for dinner one evening then a group of us met at Charlie's Pub. Most went on to the The Barrel House but we returned to the boat with Susie. She stayed the night before returning to La Linea next day.

Val and I took a bus to Europa Point on the very tip of Gibraltar. As a tourist attraction it was disappointing. The lighthouse was off limits, military grounds surrounds most of the area as if Spain or Morocco might invade. That would never happen so the reasoning for military presence was unknown. The public viewing area had a decrepit map of what you could not see through the broken pay binoculars. The decorative anti-aircraft guns were rusting apart. Surprisingly, the MOD (Ministry of Defence) residential area was open to tourists, it was much cleaner and better kept. We walked back the 4km in empty areas then zigzagging through the upper town.

One day Val and I took the cable car up to the area of Barbary apes dens. A troop of Barbary apes live wild on Gibraltar, centred up one slope. Most apes had a baby on their backs. They were tolerant of tourists. That is, until one girl got too close and was bitten. We walked the innocent sounding Mediterranean steps. Two hours into a hard slog brought us back to the road. These were the steps used by soldiers to get to the lookouts. Determined to use the other half of our cable car tickets, the next day we went back up the rock to see the Moorish castle. That was in sad shape after a few centuries of neglect. The big dents in the stonework left by the invading British cannonballs were quite visible. We walked some British cannon galleries, all hand cut and blasted into the rock in the late 1700's after kicking out the Moors.

There were often power cuts, first in the mornings then again in the afternoons. Rumour had it that a diesel generator was out of commission and the repair crew were on a work slowdown. Gibraltar did not have fresh water. Toilets and anything possible used salt water. Almost all fresh water was shipped in with a small amount collected in the large catchment system on the east side. Spain wants Gibraltar back so will not supply water or electricity. The border was only opened as a condition of Spain joining the EU however no one thought of asking for utilities.



When Lawrence had come back early from his trip to Britain, he found the boat locked. He jimmied open a hatch and climbed in but broke the glass on an instrument that had just been repaired in Britain. The town being fairly small, we ran into him at the tail end of his commiserating pub crawl. The boat repairs resumed next day, first the prop shaft then a fuel gauge. I worked on the third lung engine and with it finally working, I dove to check the prop. It needed a bit of work but the third lung stopped. Even with 3kg of diving weights I shot to the surface. Only 2m down but air is air. I braved the reluctant third lung to finish working on the prop. Lawrence went up the mast to add a new line, which meant that I was manually winching him up because Kim was not yet aboard to do the winch grinding.

After a false ending, the laventa did end after several days. Without the obscuring cloud, Africa was visible from up the rock.

22 Oct 1985, Gibraltar

Our last day here involved a few preparations such as navigation for the trip to Safi, Morocco. Alice, on the Swedish boat Cinderella, left for the Canary Islands. The boat was a 21m ketch (two masts, second one is smaller) with all roller furling, which was not common in the 1980's. The two owners had hoped to sail it themselves but conceded having Alice as crew after they saw how much work was involved. They eventually also hired a skipper for the long Atlantic crossing. We met Alice many times later.

23 Oct 1985, Gibraltar

After putting in two new batteries and an Epirb (emergency beacon), we left around noon. At 1:30 we were back to get Lawrence's credit card from the chandler (marine supply store). With good winds we were going 6 knots under genoa alone until the wind died and we motored the rest of the night. Lawrence, Kim and I took the watches.

24 Oct 1985, off Morocco, noon to noon 130nm

Although the weather was sunny and warm, there was no wind so we were motoring. Val and Lawrence had their first argument. She tries but he came down hard on her. They both agreed to start afresh. If he did not become more tolerant of her, Val and I secretly agreed to leave the boat in the Canary Islands and find another boat.

25 Oct 1985, Safi, Morocco, noon to noon 144nm.

No wind so we continued motoring all night and day. A low mist came in by noon then visibility dropped to 1/8th nm. We passed a dory within yelling distance so Kim stood at the bow as lookout while I watched below on the radar. Many radar blips turned out to be birds on the water, we stopped turning to avoid them. Radar and the recalcitrant SatNav put us right on the breakwater entrance to the harbour. We waited for the Moroccan immigration people to arrive. Meanwhile, Lawrence put out a few items such as bananas and toys and bottles of wine, appearing that they were always there. The immigration officer finally arrived and casually took a banana. He was taking his time so Lawrence smoothly offered him some toys for his kids, which he took, followed by two Twix chocolate bars and a glass of orange juice. Still no visa but we saw him eyeing the wine. Morocco was a Muslim country where alcohol was prohibited but Lawrence knew what to do and the wine magically was exchanged for a visa. We still had to buy a very expensive and quite smelly Moroccan courtesy flag which the immigration officer just happened to have on him, to fly on the boat when in Morocco. When we later went through the exit visa process, the immigration officer did not want the flag back and told us to fly it everywhere because Morocco was well respected around the world. We gave the flag the heave hoe over the side when well past the breakwater. I never knew that a flag could smell bad.

Safi was an industrial town. The harbour was busy, loud and friendly. There were always locals standing or sitting on the pier right beside us, staring down at us. Unemployment being the norm, they would try to sell us anything or be guides. Kim was a good person to handle this. He selected what he hoped to be the most reliable person to take himself, Val and me to a bank to exchange Spanish pesetas to Moroccan dirham. We changed guides at Kim's insistence to get a short walking tour of the area. Mohamed, who called himself Zachariah, spoke three languages fluently and three partially, including a generalized Scandinavian which Kim could understand. He took us to the old Portuguese castle area then to a friend's tea house. We sat on the floor with them, drinking the sweet tea and smoking hash. Mohamed took us through the narrow streets. Fresh water came from pipes in the centre of the small squares. People were everywhere. Many lived on straw mats under overhanging roofs. We bought bread from woman squatting at the side of a road. We bought a fishmonger's whole supply of 13 mackerel and he was so pleased that he gave us the store too, that being a piece of plastic on the ground.

26 Oct 1985, Safi, Morocco.



Dolphins playing in our bow wave



Kim, Lawrence and Val in Safi

Because someone had to be on the boat at all times, Val and I stayed while Kim and Lawrence went out. After lunch they returned and we went out with a guide and entourage. This guide took us to the pottery factories, which were holes dug into the ground so that the potter can kick the wheel. Sadly we could not buy any pottery because we would have to carry it for the next year. Safi was a pottery hub for Morocco. Most were small family run businesses. We next visited the old town, which was old by even Moroccan standards.

We gave our guide some cigarettes which we carried as little gifts, just to see if he would stay with us as he had promised. He didn't. Without a guide, our entourage lost interest, letting us wander the narrow streets alone. Everywhere were people living in anything from houses to cardboard boxes. Everything was surprisingly neat and clean. What did surprise me was clothing. Except for children, everyone had on what I considered as lots of clothing. Most people wore at least two shirts and a sweater. Some wore jackets, even ski jackets. Many women wore slightly relaxed burkas with only eyes, nose and hands exposed. Some even wore over that something similar to a thick scatter rug. People with disabilities were

common, from blind beggars to a man with no legs on a homemade skateboard. Poverty was everywhere, however in this climate people can survive with very little.

We left that afternoon. Before reaching the breakwater, we ran into heavy fog. I ran down and turned on the radar while Kim stood at the bow and Lawrence on the wheel. The radar eventually warmed up and the top of the screen was white, meaning some big object reflecting the signal. I yelled up to Lawrence just as Kim saw the ship at anchor and we turned sharply just in time. We slowed down until out of the fog by dark. Kim sat watch until midnight, then me until 0400 then Lawrence until 0800 then repeat. No wind yet again, we motored all night.

27 Oct 1985, Safi, Morocco to the Canary Islands, Spain, noon 114nm from Safi

With still no wind, we continued to motor along. There was a bad swell and with no sails the boat rolled a lot and none of us slept well. We were all tired. The waves eased by the afternoon. Val managed to cook a big Sunday chicken dinner with potatoes and vegetables plus dessert. Several birds had landed on our boat because they were land birds which had been blown out to sea and we were the only solid thing around. They seem to have no fear of people, hopping around the deck. One staggered a lot as it had no sea legs. A couple died soon after landing, the others disappeared. None would touch any food left for them.



Working at his sunken wheel, Safi

28 Oct 1985, near the Canary Islands, noon to noon 147nm

We all slept better that night, of course when not our turn on watch. Not good but better. Kim found his first flying fish on deck, too small to keep and quite dead. I awoke to see a small, fat, brown bird staring back down the hatch. The weather was a reasonable 25° and sunny but annoyingly still no wind. Our destination was Arrecife on Lanzarote Island, which was a nice but not crowded holiday spot.

After mooring in the harbour and clearing customs, Val, Kim and I rowed into town for dinner. Arrecife was a strange town, neither old nor new. There were lots of half built buildings. The sidewalks were not fully finished yet starting to fall apart. It was as if everyone started with lots of enthusiasm then halfway through lost interest. Maybe the expected tourist boom never happened.

29 Oct 1985, Arrecife to Las Palmas, Canary Islands

Val and I went back into town for bread and a peek at the quite odd museum. Displays were either unlabelled or a few words in Spanish. The man at the door was no help, only saying that it was Spanish.

No wind yet again so motored day and night to the city of Las Palmas on Gran Canaria Island in the Canary Islands, part of Spain.

30 Oct 1985, Las Palmas, Canary Islands

The harbourmaster had us move all over before accepting our boat in a spot agreeable to him. The electricity went off, then on, off, repeat. The harbour was filthy with lots of brown stuff floating by. The city core was not inviting being loud, dusty and crowded. Kim, Val and I took a bus to Arucas to see the cathedral. As expected, very large with lots of woodwork. The town was quite different from Las Palmas. It was clean, small and new with an old cathedral. The school children were not used to seeing tourists. The affluence was unexpected. Maybe this was in contrast to Morocco. The main industry was bananas, many fields of them each with its own irrigation system. As we were to find out, water was precious in this island. Bananas grow in small 3m trees with large up swept leaves. The fruit, our store bought bananas, point up on large stalks which hang down. They do look like someone misread the instructions and assembled something upside down. Green bananas are dry and bitter and stolen fruit does not taste better.

We walked in the two adjoining towns of Las Palmas and Puerto de la Luz and found the rich area. The contrast with the town was striking. One club had three large pools with tennis and squash courts. However, many of the houses had barred windows and guard dogs. A half hour wandering took us to the regular homes and we popped into a cheap bar. A Siamese cat on a leash slept while a large flock of flies covered the plants.

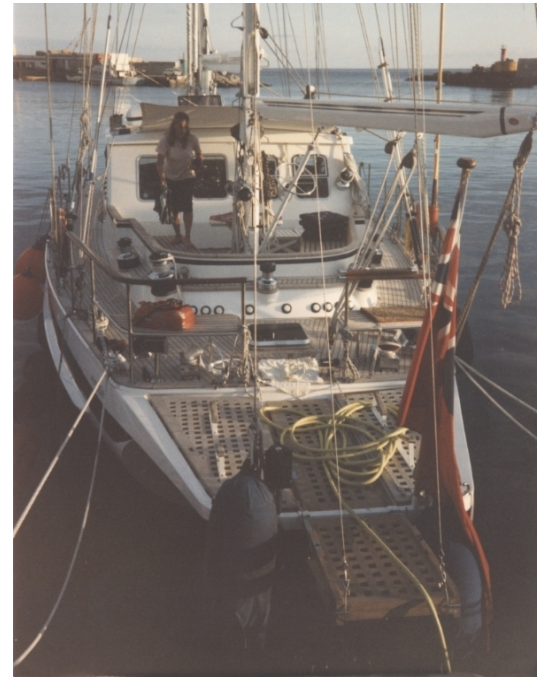
31 Oct 1985, Las Palmas

We walked north into a big difference from before. There was a Chinese district, rich houses, poor houses, parks, pedestrian street malls, hotels apartment building jungles, a beach, surfing and lots and lots of traffic. The diversity made it quite acceptable.

1-4 Nov 1985, Las Palmas

That Friday was a public holiday. We walked almost an hour to the beach then toured a 5-star hotel which was quite inexpensive at about CDN\$75. Alice came to visit from her boat in Puerto Rico, which was a port on the south end of the island. The boat she was on, Cinderella, was a Swedish owned but British registered Jongert worth well over one million dollar and was only four months old. There was a dishwasher, laundry, water maker, garbage compactor, two generators, a bar, ice maker plus of course the latest in 1985 navigation and communication equipment. The owners were away and left her with use of the car, so Alice invited Val and me to come down in a couple of days and stay over. The English language now reared its ugly head. Val said to Lawrence "We are invited..." which Lawrence understood to include him. We grimaced and said nothing. Next day the four of us took the bus to Puerto Rico. Alice bravely told Lawrence about the mix up – that he was not included – and he disappeared. We feared that we might be kicked off the boat, even if immigration would ensure that he would still be responsible for us to the island. Val was worried. The day progressed with a water slide, swimming dinner and small get together on Alice's boat, Cinderella.

Anne from Edinburgh joined us on the boat. She single handed (meaning sails alone) from Scotland and would eventually continue to the Caribbean then back to Scotland. Her boat, a 26' sloop called Rupert, was hit in the Bay of Biscay off France by a Russian ship. Anne jumped up to see the name in Cyrillic go by high above and promptly forgot it. She fired two flares over the bridge but no response. Her bow was badly damaged but luckily the headsail held up the



Alice on Cinderella of Hamble

mast. She carefully sailed for a day into France for repairs. Later in the year when Anne sailed back to Scotland, she had another adventure. She was well south of the Azores, a group of islands north of the Canary Islands which were part of Portugal. In bad weather, a ship saw her on radar and came close. Rupert was under sail and autohelm but no sign of life. They called on the VHF radio, blew their very loud horn and shone spotlights on the boat with no response. The weather was too bad to get close so they could only stay close for a while. She was reported as lost at sea. Coincidentally I found out and called the Canadian coast guard who reported back that yes, she and Rupert had not been seen since. Unaware of the turmoil, a week and a half later she sailed into the Azores, quite alive. Her engine had quit working so no radio, lights or even radar detector. She says she probably just slept through the whole incident.



Anne and Val with her cat Pooh on Rupert

Herman, the 21-year old Norwegian skipper, came by. His 13m sloop spent the winter there so he never went far. He was the youngest skipper we met. Sam, from Saudi Arabia, came by. He makes his living not on the boats but writes diving and fish books. Shy Masimo from an Italian boat was coerced into a visit. Meanwhile, Lawrence's reaction to his exclusion from our group hung over us. He did not show up for dinner.

We went to Anne's boat for breakfast. It was tiny inside, especially for four people, but fine for one and her cat. Val and I borrowed a windsurfer and with much instruction I was able to not fall off and even move. Lunch was on Cinderella's foredeck with a constant flow past of tourists. Val and I left later, leaving Kim the lady killer behind, possibly with Alice but we did not ask. The town of Puerto Rico was completely for tourists. It did not exist a decade ago, charts did not even show roads going to that southerly region. In true Spanish fashion, the town was half finished. There was only one beach and we were told that the sand for it was shipped over from the Sahara. Several other nearby and all new towns had beaches, probably man-made too.

The Canary Islands had a water shortage. Other than the islands in the group with a high volcanic mountain, the clouds just blew by. Fresh water was precious. The yachties on the boats were mostly from places with at least occasional rain and we did not appreciate the shortage – at first. After a week or two we each caught on about conserving water and no to wash down the boats. We keep the boats' water tanks topped up for when the domestic water supply was shut off. On trips inland we saw many water tanks and cisterns, some built as part of the house. During the dry season which lasted at least March to October, all plant life turned brown. In seven weeks we have had no more than a sprinkle of rain. However, when the rains finally happened it was in no half measure. It poured, the heavens opened. For several days the rains would deluge then stop and all of the cisterns were full again.



Dry terraces on Gran Canaria

After a trip south to Puerto Rico, we took the bus back.

It broke down. The driver made several curious attempts to get the air pressure back up then radioed the terminal. He hit this, kicked that, turned off the headlights and raced the engine. With the doors barely closed, we drove away without headlights on the dark road. There were a couple of stops to open and close the door, presumably to verify that there was enough air pressure for the brakes. We did come to a stop when arriving at the bus terminal.

On the evening of the “We are invited...” incident, Lawrence was surprisingly agreeable. He said that he was “an unwanted old man among youngsters” and had caught the bus right back. He also announced that he was flying home for three weeks. The next day Lawrence and I changed the oil in the engine and generator, he took the VHF radio for repairs. The day after that he left in a bad mood.

Lawrence was typical of many owner/skippers. They often know everything, quit set in how they run their boat rather than learn new and better ways. Lawrence would make rules on the spot to suit the situation so as to benefit him yet explicitly said that he was a reasonable person. When sailing his log entries were haphazard at best yet he once got mad at me when I did not enter anything for five hours. I had spent hours plotting a safe course from Gibraltar to Safi on a brand new chart to remain well offshore (there were inshore pirates reported), but he scrapped it in favour of his hand drawn one. I secretly used mine because his also took us though islands instead of around them. I never forgave him for sacrificing our safety for the sake of his ego. This was not the last time he did this. We certainly were not amused when he tried to tell Val, who was a nurse, about nursing then me, who works in electronics, about electronics. Val and I look on this leg of the trip as a learning experience. Just as he was leaving he reneged on our food arrangement and we had to argue that we were still crew even if only taking care of his boat. He had taken a particular dislike to Val, was tolerant of Kim and me.

Soon after Lawrence left and Kim the heavy lifter was still in Puerto Rico, Val and I safely wrangled a 30kg anchor into the rubber dingy. The first anchor was dragging but we could not get this one to hold either. The Mediterranean anchoring system has the boat backed into and moored to the dock or jetty and the bow held by an anchor well out from the boat. Without a solid bow anchor, we were forever adjusting lines to keep the boat in place as the tides rose and fell. The boarding ramp had to be kept up all of the time because the jetty was higher than the boat and the ramp could get caught and break. That always made for interesting times getting on and off of the boat when we were all away.

We met Charlie and Jennifer, brother and sister in their early 20's. They were sailing with their parents. They were the quintessential rich Americans, from near New York City. They team talk, when one pauses for breath the other takes over. We soon noticed that their sole topic of conversation was themselves, specifically their town, surfboards, sailboards, beaches, pot, work, school, etc ad nauseam. During a mutual breath by both of them, we said that we were going to the beach. The five of us took a cab. On the return trip the driver took the scenic route and tried to double the cost. The next day the driver tried to charge us more than what the meter said. Another time the meter was preloaded with a similar charge when we got in and we made the driver reset it. Pubs and night clubs tried to charge very high admissions but we knew where other places were. It was best to ask the price of a drink first because it could be ten to twenty times what the stores charged. We were past being tourists and now savvy workers.

Charlie was becoming a pest. His sister Jennifer caught on but he persisted. Curiously, he and Kim were becoming buddies so Val and I relented a bit. Mike from Colorado went with us to the beach once and he commented “Aren't they so American?”, meaning that even he wanted to distance himself. Mike was much like Kim. Both were soft spoken, reliable, honest and helpful. Kim and Mike planned a camping trip in the Gran Canaria interior and Charlie invited himself

along. Mike was not amused and the trip was cancelled. Mike eventually got onto a big 100-year old 23m Norwegian gaff rigged (old style of sails) ketch. It was a cruising community with 15 adults and four children. They were on their way around the world in three years, changing crew regularly so as to give each of the 19 shareholders a chance. Mike was a carpenter, he hammered and sawed his passage although he still had to pay a reduced share.

Although Americans are mentioned here a few times, they were few and far between. The US was one of the surprisingly underrepresented countries among yachties. Quite common were Scandinavians of all types (their common language was English because their languages were just a bit too dissimilar to converse and all spoke English), Germans, French, British, several other European countries if a bit less so, Australians, New Zealanders and from the Caribbean. The common language was always English, those who did not speak it were restricted to boats from their country and that would be a big disadvantage and even result in poor treatment. Most yachties were in their 20's. Val and I were around 30 so were older than most. Some skippers were older than us, they had a more stable life by being fixed to one boat and never having to fend for themselves.

Boats in the La Palmas harbour were always coming and going. We had an ignorant, rude German on one side and a very proper Brit on the other. In good British naval form we could hear "Forward lines clear!" then "Going aft!" then "Aft lines fouled in prop!" and "Bow clear!" followed by an audible bump on their other neighbour's boat. Finally clear, the Brits were replaced by Swiss who we assume did not sail from Switzerland. The grumpy German left and was replaced by a French boat from St. Tropez. The owner and skipper's docking instructions to the two crew consisted of "Merde!" repeated emphatically every time he hit anything and everything in the area and turning on and off the motor repeatedly. The crew gave up and went onto the pier to watch while we ran back and forth with fenders to protect our boat. The two crew were great fun. Neil from Liverpool was a mechanical maintenance worker and Simon from Sweden was a chef. Marcel, the 55-year old owner, had a wife in France and a 20-something mistress aboard. Neil and Simon quite often came to our boat. Charlie kept coming by to join in but we discouraged him from coming aboard. Simon volunteered to cook a dinner for the five of us. Neil kept us laughing with his Scouse (Liverpudlian) humour, although poor Kim had a bit of trouble following the humour because it was so different and also the accent gave him trouble. Neil and Simon's boat took them to the Cape Verde Islands, another island group a bit south of the Canary Islands which were more into the easterly trade winds. The day before their planned departure to cross the Atlantic, Neil and Simon returned to the boat only to find their belongings on the dock and no boat. It had left without them. They eventually found another boat before the immigration forced them to buy tickets to fly out. We met them later but never that boat.

More and more people we had previously met were arriving. Sometimes our dance card was so full that we had breakfast at noon. Seven people were at the curry dinner made by Val: three crew of Jenisa, Neil and Simon plus Al and James from the boat Jason. We had met the latter two in Gibraltar. For that dinner we had to ask about seven other people to leave so that the invited seven can have dinner. All in all not a real problem, everyone understood.



Yet another party on Jenisa

Al owned the boat, he was from Toronto, the Beaches area. Unfortunately we soon found out that he has a drinking problem. Al and James have to take the boat to Puerto Rico to be hauled out for rudder repairs. We went along for the ride. One of the boats in Puerto Rico was Vetea from France, two mid-20's guys. They asked James to join them and he did. Al was probably disappointed but he did not show it. Crew change boats fairly often and word would get around if anyone was not nice about it, applies to skippers, owners and crew. Vetea had a good trip across the Atlantic. Their boast was that they had a 24 hour period where they did not leave the cabin.

On a trip to Puerto Rico, Val and I spent a couple of nights back on Al's boat Jason and one night on Anne's boat Rupert, a Vega 27 with Hydrovane self-steering. Jack, the skipper on Lady Andorina which can best be described as a 1920's gentleman's boat, came

into port. Jack was 52-years old, the oldest skipper we met. When he gets going he was hilarious. His story of how he broke his leg and the recuperation in hospital was so funny that I almost wanted to break my leg for the fun. We met Jack and Lady Andorina several times later across the pond. The trip was quite tiring being always on the go, visiting and too much drinking. The last day we were there was to see Anne leave to cross the Atlantic. At 25 years old, she was the youngest Scottish woman to cross single handed. Many people saw her off and she got the regular treatment sailing out of

the harbour: she blew her air horn and all other boats blew theirs. She expected to take 30 days to cross to Antigua. We arranged to try calling her on VHF every day at 1200Z (Z or Zulu, the new name for GMT). We never made contact on VHF but met her in Antigua.

The constant jockeying of crew between boats continued. Back on Jenisa in Las Palmas, Kim decided to go to Puerto Rico, presumably for a dalliance with someone he met there. He did not say, we did not ask. A neighbour at that time was an 11m Dutch boat with six guys and one girl, Janna. The five unaffiliated guys decided that she should leave because the others found it difficult to be with her and her boyfriend together. She came to our boat for the night. That was an awkward situation because she was right beside the boat from which she had been informally evicted. Jonteng, one of the rare Asian crew, was on a 10m Spanish boat with four Spanish men and one Italian man. She was not looking forward to three weeks of that so she left the boat and looked for another. Alice spent the last week on a Norwegian boat called Berge Viking, nicknamed Burger King. The boat was a Swan 57 (17m), an ex-BOC racer which raced around the world and was then used for sail training. I spent the better part of a day wiring up their new electric anchor winch and was paid with a 1 litre bottle of scotch. I liked the deal, so did they because they were tired of hauling up the anchor by hand.

When Kim was away, Val and I took the milk run bus to Agaete on the west side of the island. As much as Puerto Rico was a tourist town, Agaete was a Spanish town. We saw a tourist bus shoot through town without stopping. With our shorts and backpacks, we stood out like sore thumbs. Old men sat in open bars or by the side of the road. Old women dressed in all black had chairs on sidewalks or ground floor rooms looking through open doors. Dogs paced their rooftop domains of the all white buildings. Dirty paths, narrow streets. One half of the town was half finished, the other half falling apart. After too much tourism and towns, we loved the local colour.

One day Alice got in touch with us. She was still alone on the boat. She had run one of the generators and it would not turn off. That was unusual. We went to Puerto Rico to see her and hours later it was still running. After the obvious simple attempts, we shut off the valve from the diesel tank and waited. And waited. And waited. Still running. We turned on everything we could to load down the generator. That was probably not the right fuel valve and we could not find another candidate. All this was done while crouched inside the small generator space with the engine running and exposed moving parts, we were yelling to be heard. Stuffing rags into the air intake slowed it down. Still carefully leaning over a hot running engine, we stuffed in more rags. It refused to quit, it just kept ticking over. Finally, a stick pressing in the rags made it cough, sputter then thankfully stop. During the passage across the Atlantic, that generator would not start.

Near the end of our stay in Las Palmas, a kid rowed over to ask us for dinner on his parent's boat, a Canadian registered Swan Nautor 43 (13m). Interesting people. They were originally Dutch, had built houses in Vancouver, tired of that so took up ranching in northern BC while reading about sailing. Ranching over, they bought a boat in Amsterdam and sailed it to the Canary Islands. This was trial by fire, reading books to learn to sail was as effective as for bicycling. Wisely, they read enough that they might not go across the pond without help. We did talk about me skippering them to Tenerife, a short trip, but he backed out at the last minute because his radar was not working. Radar was not needed but maybe we had put the fear of God in him. He eventually did get a skipper for the crossing. We met the skipper later and he said it was not nice, they were so afraid and overly careful to the point of hindrance. He shuddered when speaking of it.

Back on Jenisa, the elephant in the room was the aft toilet, the one in Lawrence's cabin which we were not supposed to enter. It was plugged. With a fan blowing and gloves on, Kim and I removed the drain hose. It emptied into the bilge. The boat stank like a sewer, which technically it had become. Some slopped onto the carpet. After much beating up of the pipe and lots of water, the pipe was partially clear and we were filthy and tired.

On the tenth anniversary of the end of Franco's reign, there was a big festival. No one wanted to say the connection, the fear of the regime still lingered. In the dingy race, everyone flew their country's flag. Not to be outdone, in addition to the Canadian and Manx flags, we also flew a jolly roger decorated with balloons and a flyswatter. Equipped with water balloons, we did not fare well but managed to water bomb a few boats. For the best decorated boat and most trouble makers, we won a coupon to a local store. The event ended with much free food followed by drinks.

Kim, Val and I rented a tiny car for a drive into the mountains to see a few towns. Out of the city, people reverted to old traditional ways but with modern



Festival in Las Palmas, Val and me

conveniences. Women wore black dresses with optional black scarves. The women, more so than the men, were quite, shall we say, sturdy. Notably, the younger women were starting to break away by making their own styles, as happened in many other countries. The centre of the Gran Canaria Island had more rain than the coast due to the mountains, although still dry. Some valleys had dams to make small reservoirs. Before returning, we cut down a small Christmas tree with pocket knives and later stored it in a sail bag. Lawrence thought that it was a sail and left it alone. On the return trip, we ran into Jennifer and Charlie, who complained about not enough water at the dock. Driving through Puerto Rico, we saw only tourist places, not one house for the Spaniards. They must all have lived out of town.



Anne ready to cross the Atlantic

On the day of Lawrence's return, we thoroughly cleaned the boat. He arrived and the party was over. He was worse than ever, full of complaints from not doing what we should have and doing what we should not have (true) and taken or not taken more initiative. I knew of a problem in the radar and had been hesitant to fix it in case it was not repairable and I would be blamed, so I left it. Lawrence berated me for not fixing it. He went up the mizzen mast (the smaller mast near the back) and could not fix it. I went up and had to extend the time to look as if I was really working because the problem was actually quite simple if you know electronics, which was, after all, my profession.

Next day we sailed to Puerto Rico in about eight hours, our departure point for the Atlantic crossing. The coast at night (did we have to go at night?) was featureless and dark. Lawrence and I alternated watches because Kim and Val did not have coastal navigation experience. I took 2100 (9PM) to 0300 (3AM), Lawrence took over from there. Our ETA was 0430 and he was supposed to wake me before then. At 0600 (6AM) he woke me. The SatNav did not get a fix all night and he had lost track of where we were. Dead reckoning (standard method of estimating position) put us two hours past Puerto Rico. Lawrence went below. With him gone I turned the boat around and 2.5 hours later we arrived at Puerto Rico. I was surprised that the dead reckoning was that accurate after so long. The good effect that Lawrence was slightly humbled by his mistake and was easier on us after that. We filled the diesel tanks then anchored in the harbour. Kim and I took turns diving with the third lung to clean the hull. The prop had some rope wrapped around it. The rope had damaged the anode which I had struggled

to reattach in Gibraltar.

On our last night on the European side of the Atlantic, the three Musketeers (Kim, Val and me) went into town. We met some people from the Isle of Man and many others we were in touch with. In the Big Ben Piano Bar, we were listening to a Louis Armstrong song until someone pointed out that it was Hans, the "Burger King's" skipper.

30 Nov 1985, day 1 of Atlantic crossing

The log showed 7417nm, total so far on Jenisa was 1,270nm.



Jenisa under way

Val and I arrived back at the boat at 5AM, Kim at 10AM. I dove yet again with the third lung to work on the prop shaft. The fuel and water tanks were full, 30 litres of water strapped on deck as emergency, life raft checked, dingy stowed, everything tied down and hatches closed. We were ready. The wind had other ideas. It was blowing us hard onto the pier. A neighbour used his strong Zodiac (a brand of inflatable dingy) to pull the bow while we poled off the stern. Lines off and so were we! I tooted the horn and other boats joined in. The crossing to Antigua was about 2,400nm, we estimated a three week crossing but more distance because we could not sail straight there.

At first the wind was strong and we sailed steadily at 6-7 knots (12km/h) which was a reasonable if slightly slow speed. That ended after a few hours and we

motored. Even with Jenisa's large diesel tanks, we had to ration fuel because it would only last a few days. I had evening watch, 2000-midnight, Kim had the graveyard watch midnight-0400 and Lawrence had the sunrise watch 0400-0800. The watches were boring, just watch the autohelm steer, check the compass and stare at the stars. I had a 15 minute timer and took naps. If a ship appeared, I had to watch that our little boat stayed well clear of it. Still close to shore there were several ships and I even changed course slightly to avoid a couple. I never left the cockpit when alone and even then clipped on with a safety harness. Neither Kim nor Lawrence wore a safety harness, even at night. Val does not do watches at all. Lawrence said that was a man's job. Every other boat we knew of had every crew member sitting watches.

1 Dec 1985, day 2, 136nm from Puerto Rico

No wind again and we burned more of our limited diesel fuel in the hope that heading south would put us in the easterly trade winds in a couple of days. The SatNav was acting up, we could not rely on it. However, it was not necessary at all because we just headed south and a bit west.

Here's some geeky navigation trivia. a rhumb line is any line that crosses all meridians (lines of longitude) at the same angle. Another way to look at rhumb lines are that they have a constant angle to the poles. It is simpler to plot a course using a rhumb line because you do it on a flat map, using the grid lines. Fringe groups notwithstanding however, the Earth isn't flat. This means that plotting a course using the rhumb line too far from the equator will be very inefficient. We were close enough to the equator though, so that plotting a course using the rhumb line was not that much different from taking the shorter Great Circle route, which is defined as the shortest distance between two points on the globe. An 8° difference in heading had almost no effect. This angle reduced the further we went. To reach the easterly trade winds to the south of us, we were well south of both the rhumb line and great circle routes, on a course of 235°.

2 Dec 1985, day 3, noon to noon 150nm

We had crossed the first time zone and set the clocks back so our 24 hour run was actually a bit shorter. As arranged, we tried to call Alice on the boat Cinderella on the short wave radio (technically an SSB). No answer. The couple who had planned to sail across by themselves were up to six with their daughter, Alice, a friend and an engineer to keep the boat running. Surprisingly, through a short fluke in the weather and the radio gods, we contacted the boat Cougar on the VHF radio as they were leaving Puerto Rico.

We saw our first whales, four all black but with some white patches similar to killer whales or pilot whales. We called them Frisians of the sea because Val's father farms Frisian cows. Even 100m away they looked huge with their massive fins above the water.

3 Dec 1985, day 4, noon to noon 137nm

The noon to noon distances were estimates because the SatNav and the log did not agree, when they worked. By noon we were sailing, finally. The winds were finicky.

4 Dec 1985, day 5, noon to noon 120nm

We were really guessing at our position because the log stopped working and the SatNav only gave LOP (we could be anywhere on that Line of Position) a few times that day. Normally it would be several hours apart but it was not being a team player. We continued with Kim, Lawrence and me doing continuous four hour watches each. Val cooked, which was not easy on a boat on the ocean.

5 Dec 1985, day 6, noon to noon 121nm

The log still not working and the SatNav was on a work slowdown so we relied on dead reckoning to estimate our position. We had hoped for 150nm a day. We should do better when we reach the easterly trade winds. At least the winds were enough to sail as we approached the real trade winds. Being a nice sunny day with reasonable waves, I went up the main mast to thread in a new halyard (to pull up a sail) and to try fixing the deck lights. Kim was on the winch helping me up and with a safety line if I slipped. It was quite a ride at 20m above the waves as the boat rolled and pitched. I had a death grip with my legs around the mast while working. The halyard was in but the deck lights never did work. The lights would have been useful at night if we had to change sails. From high up I saw another sailboat in the distance. We called on the VHF but they did not answer.

6 Dec 1985, day 7, noon to noon 128nm



Kim and Val

The daytime watches have been haphazard so long as someone was on deck. We reset the times and now I am on from 4 to 8, twice a day. The new watch times may have been what Lawrence preferred for himself. At the start of my watch, the SatNav stopped, just showed garbage. Reset, it showed new garbage. It may have overheated so it stayed off for most of the day. At least the log was back working so we just dead reckoned our positions.

The ocean turned quite lumpy. The boat was bouncing and rolling all over without enough wind to hold it reasonably steady. We had up three sails. Sleep was intermittent.

7 Dec 1985, day 8, noon to noon 150nm

The boat was moving well, we made good distance. The autohelm was having trouble holding the boat on course so we had to hand steer. Val was not allowed to steer even though she was willing and able. Kim, Lawrence and I took shifts of one hour on and two off during the day then two on and four off at night. We were becoming quite tired. As much as Jenisa was a comfortable boat for the harbour, it was tough work to steer and keep on course. I had to lean on the wheel until the boat came back on course, then turn the other way as the unbalanced sails pulled back and forth. The concentration was tiring let alone the physical work. During the day the sun and clouds were good course indicators but at night if the stars or moon were not visible then the only choice was to stare at the compass, lean on the wheel to turn then wait, lean and wait, repeat.

Around midnight Kim was on the wheel. Val woke me. Kim heard a thumping noise in the cockpit. Every time the boat rolled, it shuddered as if a cannonball was rolling around. We woke Lawrence. The cockpit floor especially would jump with every thump. The masts were still in place and secure as was all of the rigging. The engine and generator were secure too, as were the water and fuel tanks. The rudder was acting normally so it was okay. What we could see of the hull was intact yet the scary thumping sound continued with every roll. Nothing else above the waterline could make such an impact. The keel was moulded on (as opposed to bolted on) so it had to be intact because the boat was right side up. The Irwin 52 had a swing keel (an extension below to help sail under certain conditions) and the lift cable was tight so it was still retracted. Lawrence said that it had not been lowered in years and was frozen in place. We were stumped and more than a little nervous. I checked our life raft and emergency water. If the boat did suddenly sink, the life raft was supposed to release and inflate itself. We could also manually launch it. Kim, Val and I prepared for a quick exit if need be. Lawrence did nothing because he was of the school that nothing bad will happen until it does.

A couple of nervous hours later as the thumping continued to shake the boat, we did what we should have done right away, which was to shorten sail and slow down. Kim and I spent one hour in the dark and wind and on a rolling deck to take down two sails and triple reef (make smaller) the mainsail. The reefing was the most difficult with a poorly designed mainsail. The wind was strong and we were still moving too fast, even with minimal sail to keep the boat in control.

Things went from bad to worse that night. We changed course to run (wind from behind) in an attempt to reduce the thumps. Kim and I moved the main to the gallows (a wooden support for the mainsail when not in use) to attach a preventer (a line to keep the boom in place when on a run). Lawrence was on the wheel. He turned the boat slightly so that we could let out the sail. Before we could attach the preventer to the boat, he began to turn back on course. We yelled at him that we were not ready and that he was going to gybe (when the boom is thrown over to the other side by the wind). An uncontrolled gybe is dangerous so Kim and I stayed very low as we tried to attach the preventer. Lawrence turned too far, the main gybed and with a quiet poof the main ripped in half. Fluffy pieces of Dacron (sail material) flapped in the wind and clung to the rigging. Lawrence looked like he might have a breakdown right there on the wheel. Kim and I pulled down the sail fragments. The wind was strong enough for us to hold course with no sails, just the wind hitting the boat.

8 Dec 1985, day 9, noon to noon 126nm

When the sun came up we examined the sail. The rip was fortunately near the top of the sail so only 3m long, however the material around it was damaged. It looked as if it had exploded rather than just ripped. A cannonball would have done less damage.

We were in a pickle. The banging continued with every roll of the boat and the mainsail was ripped. The Cape Verde Islands were only 200nm away but all upwind. We did not have enough fuel to motor that far and with the damaged sail rig would take many days or even weeks to reach Cape Verde. Antigua was 2,000nm away but all downwind which the sails could handle. However, first to do was to find what was still banging the boat. Kim was volunteered to dive with the third lung. He saw that the swing keel was indeed down. The swing keel should only be lowered when close to the wind (going more into the wind) when the boat would not roll but stay heeled over (sails slanting the boat on an angle sideways). Apparently the lifting mechanism had rusted in place from not being used then snapped, letting the swing keel fall. Kim and I took turns diving under the boat with the third lung. We had run a line under the hull and would walk under the hull. Feet firmly planted on the hull and an arm looped around the line to prevent us from being thrown back and forth

as the boat rolled, we took turns diving and trying to secure a line around the swing keel. After several hours, Kim and I were exhausted, we gave up.

Lawrence started the engine then told us to pull in the lines under the boat so that it would not get caught in the propeller. Before the lines were in he started to go and the propeller caught a line. He was beside himself with frustration. The three of us had to quietly laugh at the situation: swing keel down, mainsail ripped, fouled propeller, no autohelm and the teapot had just tipped over. Out came the third lung. Kim was too cold and tired so I had to dive to untangle the prop. The water was warm and clear, the ocean floor was 2nm away. A couple of dolphin fish, also known as mahi-mahi, were circling as I worked. As soon as I cleared the prop and came out, a pair of iridescent blue-green and black bull-nosed dolphins swam by. They were all harmless.

We sailed with what sails were working in fairly strong winds and a bad 3m swell. Without the main the boat was even more unbalanced and did not want to go in the direction we wanted to go. The wheel was a constant fight. The three of us took turns steering eight hours a day each. Val was still not allowed to steer. The night was miserable, constantly working hard on the wheel or trying to sleep. The fragments of the ripped mainsail remained lashed to the boom.

The wind settled into the proper easterly trade winds, the swing keel had all but stopped making a big boom with every roll and we were moving okay under sail. With the trade winds behind us, we changed course directly to Antigua.

9 Dec 1985, day 10, noon to noon 143nm



The swing keel was suspiciously quiet. That in itself was not bad, the problem was that it should have been banging every time the boat rolled. We suspected that it had broken off. The missing two tonnes would not have a big effect on the rest of the boat.

Kim and I had a fishing line trailing behind. It soon broke and took our only hook. The culprit may have been a big fish or maybe just seaweed or even a piece of a tree. Trees do fall into the ocean and slowly break up. A few years before, a large racing catamaran had hit a tree and sank. However, there were plenty of flying fish around, skimming over the waves in ones or twos or sometimes schools. At night, they would crash into our boat, some high enough to land on the deck. We would pick them up in the morning and have them for breakfast. We could not catch any fish when we tried, but they literally leapt at us when we gave up.

10 Dec 1985, day 11, noon to noon 132nm

We were halfway to Antigua. We removed the torn mainsail and tied it in a bundle on the deck. The storm staysail (a miniature mainsail used

A flying fish that landed on the boat
during storms to keep control of the boat) was put on instead but it did not make the boat faster, it only made steering more difficult so it was taken down.

We came within half a boat length of a pair of whales. Kim thought they might have been baby blue whales. They were lazily idling on the surface then moved away as we passed, maybe our boat looked like mommy whale.

The wind died away after nightfall. With the engine back on, the autohelm could be coerced into holding a reasonably straight course, letting us relax while on watch. We had a break from the physical and mental exertion of being dragged from bed to stare at a compass and steer an uncooperative boat which always wanted to go anywhere but where it should.

11 Dec 1985, day 12, noon to noon 137nm

Lawrence changed his mind. The four of us (women apparently were allowed to sew) spent a few hours stitching the torn mainsail back together. The three of us said that a single line of sail thread will not hold, Lawrence said that it was a cosmetic repair, not a strong one. We had nothing better to do so we stitched away. Even though the boat was going slower than it could have, Lawrence did not want to put up the repaired mainsail. Overnight, a sand storm had passed us. The easterly winds often picked up the Sahara sand, it could blow to the Americas, or, drop onto our boat. Everything on the side facing Africa was covered in a reddish brown sand. We had to wash it off before the sand rubbed into the lines and sails and damaged them. Better to have salt than sand on the lines.

12 Dec 1985, day 13, noon to noon 132nm

The wind picked up by the afternoon. We added sails one at a time as the wind rose enough for them to be of use – Jenisa had four sails. After much arguing and persuasion, Lawrence allowed us to put up the mainsail. With a full compliment of sails, Lawrence stood back and looked at them and said that that was the first time all sails have been up. He had always used just two or maybe three sails and motored a lot. This was common among owner who were their own skippers. The autohelm was cooperating.



Laundry day!

13 Dec 1985, day 14, noon to noon 142nm

It was a bright and sunny day [sic]. However, the constant irregular motion was affecting me. Jenisa had what was called a Dutch roll, where the bow does not pitch straight up and down but makes an elliptical movement. The V-berth in the bow, where Val and I called home, had the most movement. Sleep was light. I was too tired to do much when off watch but rest.

I was checking the water tanks and noticed that the previously full tank was low. Under the cabin sole (the floor boards), all of the water tank levers were on. Lawrence had opened them all for unknown reasons. He had even drained the emergency container on the deck by the life raft into the water tanks. We then had a single water supply. If anything had happened such as a leak or contamination or a tap left running, we would not have had any water, no reserves. We would have had to rely on rain water, if any. He had put our

lives in peril. I never forgave him for that.

14 Dec 1985, day 15, noon to noon 149nm

The Canary Islands were two weeks behind us, Antigua one week ahead, we were on schedule. The autohelm had given up, again, so we had to steer by hand. The wind and seas were up, I slept less than before. I spent my off time catching some sun and hopefully sleep.

The latest problem was that the propane had run out. Lawrence had said that the spare tank was full, it was not. Val had to cook with the one burner electric hotplate powered by the generator. The diesel tanks still showed enough fuel for that, but we had to be sure to leave enough to motor into the harbour in Antigua plus some for an emergency.

15 Dec 1985, day 16, noon to noon 160nm

That day's problem was the failure of the fridge and freezer. With previous rumblings, this was not unexpected so Val had been emptying them. Only some fish and leftovers remained for dinner. Unfortunately there were fewer flying fish than when on the African side of the ocean.

For the past couple of days we were hand steering, 24 hours a day, each of us had four hours on the wheel then eight off. Eight hours seems like a lot but that included eating and washing dishes and laundry and sail changes and repairs. Val was still not allowed to steer or change sails. After a few days we were bone tired. The seas were higher and the wind rose. We could not leave the wheel for even 10 seconds or Jenisa would steer well off course. At night we ran strings from the cockpit to the thumb of the next person on watch. When the two hours were nearing the end, the string was pulled and an answering tug meant that the next unhappy person was getting up. After a few days the conditions allowed longer watches and enough time to run down to wake up the next person.

16 Dec 1985, day 17, noon to noon 138nm

We estimated arriving in Antigua around noon in four days. The day was hot and sunny, we were still doing four hour watches hand steering. During one of Kim's watches, I worked on repairing the refrigeration with Lawrence. It refused to work.

17 Dec 1985, day 18, noon to noon 132nm

Our estimated arrival in Antigua shifted to the evening three days from then. We were still hand steering for eight hours a day each, plus sail handling and any maintenance. Kim and I did yet another awkward sail change. Normal procedure was to turn into the wind so that the pressure was off of the sail being put up or down. To save time so as to arrive in Antigua before dark in a few days, we stayed on course and struggled with the sails. That was quite exhausting, I was glad that Kim could do the lion's share of the hard work.

We made VHF radio contact with the boat Sugar Bum Bum, they were near us in Las Palmas. They were only 16nm away but we could not see each other. We arranged to contact them in a few hours because they could get weather reports by satellite. They did not make contact later, probably out of VHF radio range.

18 Dec 1985, day 19, noon to noon 150nm

If all went well, three more days to go. Our destination was English Harbour on the south side of Antigua.

The autohelm was still not working and could not be repaired so we hand steered. Anyone who loves steering a boat has not spent this much time on the wheel. It is tedious and if the boat is like Jenisa, takes a lot of effort. It was dominating my life, either on the wheel or recuperating. My elbows ached, my right shoulder hurt, my arms were always tired, I was tired. Because the swing keel might be down, we may not be able to enter the harbour. The plan was that if we arrive in daylight, we will carefully run the boat up to the beach to start the swing keel going up then sling a line under and pull it up. If we arrive after dark we will anchor further out and wait until dawn.

19 Dec 1985, day 20, noon to noon 158nm.

At that speed we predicted arriving in two days. Lawrence said that we cannot go in with the swing keel down and it was his boat so that was that.

The penultimate day at sea was quite lumpy with a 3-5m swell from two directions which occasionally met and slopped over the deck. There was some sun, some rain, sufficient wind.

20 Dec 1985, day 21, noon to noon 154nm

On this last full day at sea, the dead reckoning predicted arrival was early afternoon the next day. The excitement grew. Of course the view of the waves was the same, but there was a light at the end of the tunnel.

21 Dec 1985, day 22, noon to noon unknown

By noon we were just outside English Harbour on the south shore of Antigua. Lawrence must have forgotten that this was a sailboat because he turned and almost ripped the sails again. Valour being the better part of discretion, I laughed. Lawrence was in a particularly bad mood, calling mild mannered Kim a damn smart ass punk.

The land looked incredibly green and lush. After two weeks of dry Gibraltar and a month of the arid Canary Islands then three weeks of just water, water, water, seeing the lush green hills and trees was like the thrill of a prospector finding gold. We could not get enough of the verdant view. The harbour was calm, we could walk a straight line across the deck. We dropped anchor early afternoon. In the excitement we had all ignored the swing keel issue, although we suspected from the silence that it had broken off. Later on, a swim confirmed it.

After clearing customs, the real first things come first. We went ashore. I had land rock for an hour, where my mind could not suddenly accept solid unmovable ground so it kept rocking back and forth. We had a beer and lunch made by someone else. Lots of friends were there to meet us. Ann, single handing on the boat Rupert, crossed in 31 days, including a mid-ocean meeting for wine and cheese, each on their own boat. Her engine had flooded and solar panels had failed in the first hour so she was without radio, lights or SatNav for a month. John and Chrissie and two others on the boat Refanut had little wind but plenty of diesel on a 24 day passage. Bruce the Kiwi, on the boat L'Affaire, was around and the owner had left. Alice and the others, on the boat Cinderella, had beat us by a day. Both of their generators had failed so among other problems such as having to charge the batteries with the main engine, they had to hand wash the dishes. Life was rough for them.

24 Dec 1985, Antigua

The day started as a festive season on shore. The previous night, Ann's boat had dragged anchor in the wind. With no working motor, she bumped into a boat. George, a 66-year old single hander, pulled her off and they reset the anchor. The two local owners of the boat which had been hit, had gone to the police, claiming that their boat was damaged. Ann was arrested and put in jail on Christmas Eve. The police sergeant went out to look at the scene of the crime and saw that Ann's boat was far too low to have done the damage. With the added persuasion of a few donated bottles of beer, he released Ann from jail and roughed up the two locals. They would think twice before trying that stunt again.

That was also Lawrence's 66th birthday. Kim, Val and I had bought him some nice wine glasses and bottle of wine. Before we had a chance to give them, he told us

that we were not his crew anymore because his family was arriving. He later offered us a spot to crew to Florida but we declined. We had gone over 4,300nm on Jenisa. We gathered our things and left, with wine to console us and poor Ann, fresh from jail. Val spent the night on the boat Yachtagan. Kim and I spent the night on the beach with other displaced yachties in intermittent rain. For the next few days, Val and I plus Ann's friend George were on on Ann's little boat



Party in Antigua

Rupert while Kim stayed on the beach. She had discussed her partner troubles with the sympathetic police sergeant while in jail then soon after kicked George off the boat.

25 and later of Dec 1985, Antigua

After most of the boats from Europe had arrived in Antigua, the game of musical boats began. Crew were no longer needed, or animosities had built while on passage, or some yachties wanted a change while some just wanted time ashore. There was no stability, with accommodations, plans and personae shifting daily. Alice left Cinderella for the boat Sandcastles. Martin left Sandcastles for the boat Santana with another Martin from Yachtagan. Jenna left Yachtagan to stay on Francis Theresa. The two Swedish girls were off Sandcastles, but, being two blond 20-something Swedes would have another boat quite soon.

Most yachties were white and in their twenties, equally male and female. Most spoke two, three or even four languages while English was the one used by all. Surprisingly, few had much sailing experience before they became yachties. Like Kim, they were labour and soon learned about sailing. Very few had any other means of support, Val and I were the exception. Most worked for room and board and maybe some pay but most were perpetually broke. Broke, they could not afford more than the next day's meals, let alone a place to stay. Many had to find paying work on the boats then live the wild life ashore until broke again. Rare was the yachtie who could afford to go back to their home country. With all of this, they were a friendly, happy go lucky crowd. We helped each other as we could. If capable (or not), with a pair of scissors someone could charge a dollar a haircut, or for free if the client was broke. One person fresh off a boat and with cash would buy food and a broke yachtie would cook and all would eat. It all worked out. The saving grace was that in this climate, at least in the dry season, a person could always find some spot to spend the night, even if it was only under a tree.

Temperaments on all of the boats ranged the gamut from grumpy to giving the shirt off their back, from energetic to laid back (but not lazy). Being so close and confined with someone soon brought out their true character and idiosyncrasies. Human nature was quite visible. We adapted and tolerated as required, within limits.

Antigua was a friendly island. The locals were quiet at first but soon opened up. The standard greeting was "Hi" or a friendly grunt. Everyone was easy going, life moved along at a slow pace. Food was relatively expensive except for the common meal of chicken and rice. Coconuts and lemons were inexpensive because they did grow on trees everywhere. Val and I rented a tiny cinder block shack for US\$8 a day and soon after Kim and new friend Jackie moved in with us. Jackie had an interesting crossing on the boat Charmarn. Apparently the owner changed completely for the worse after leaving Gran Canaria. While stopping in the Cape Verde Islands for fuel and supplies, he lost his temper and tried to strangle Jackie. They must have come to a truce because she stayed with the boat. Antigua immigration did not trust him so they kept hold of his passport until he checked out with them.

Neil and Simon, who had been abandoned in Cape Verde, had found other boats needing crew. Neil was on the boat Vetterre with three others. Simon was quite experienced so he was asked onto Charmarn. However, the owner would not let Simon be skipper so the predicted 15 day passage took 24 days and all of the crew could hardly wait to abandon ship in Antigua.

For New Year's Eve we organized a beach party and BBQ. With boats at or near their ultimate Caribbean destinations, most of the yachties at the party were not working and broke. The event ended a day later.

Kim was supposed to crew with Bruce on L'Affaire for a trip to St. Thomas in the USVI, but instead he



Our rental in Antigua



Our rental with other yachties

changed to the Finnish boat Renja so that Val and I could go with Bruce. Not that more crew was needed but Chris and Linda joined us, just because. We rounded up Lawrence so that immigration could sign us off Jenisa and onto L’Affaire. That was standard procedure for all countries, everyone must always have a way to leave.

4 Jan 1986, Antigua to St. Barts

I was sad to see that L’Affaire’s autohelm was broken and that we would have to hand steer, but the passage to St. Thomas went quite easily because it was a well balanced boat. One night Val was on the wheel and I was snoozing in the cockpit. She woke me because the boat was off course. I grabbed the wheel but it just spun with no resistance or effect. I yelled down and it was all hands on deck. As Chris and Linda were taking down the sails, I found the emergency tiller but smoke was coming out from below. I grabbed a fire extinguisher while Bruce jumped down into the aft lazarette. The steering cable had broken and fallen across battery terminals. Bruce grabbed the cable and burnt his hands, although not seriously. Val, a nurse, treated his burns using the first aid kit. Later, Bruce found that the chain on the wheel had worn thin and broken.

Next day we arrived in Gustavia on the French island of St. Barthélemy, usually called St. Barts. The island was noticeably more affluent than Antigua but the price was less friendliness. That said, Val and I hitchhiked around, getting five rides, two of the cars stopped twice for us.

5-6 Jan 1986, St. Barts to St. Maarten

With Refanut nearby, the two boats motor sailed to Philipsburg on the Dutch side of the island. St. Maarten was even more built up than St. Barts and as wealth climbs, friendliness drops. Again Val and I hitchhiked around, we had trouble getting rides back to the port. The island survives almost completely on tourism.

Bruce fixed the steering properly. We did a test cruise up the coast with Refanut to go swim at a beach.

7 and after of Jan 1986, St. Maarten to Tortola, BVI to St. John, USVI

After an extended farewell to Refanut, we motor sailed in light winds overnight to the marina in Roadtown, the capital of BVI. It was a friendly place, quite busy too. Next day we sailed in favourable winds down the Francis Drake Channel to the town of Charlotte Amalie, the largest town on the island of St. John and the capital of the USVI. In contrast to Tortola, this was a crowded area with lots of boats. The QE2 was anchored just out of the bay. The marina in Charlotte Amalie was where the rich and trendy went to see and be seen.

17 Jan 1986, St. Thomas to Tortola, BVI

Bruce let us stay on L’Affaire until the owner arrived. We joined two English girls who had a big hotel room in town and wanted us to share costs. After a while we had had enough of St. Thomas, too built up, too commercial. People were not helpful like on other islands. There was crime, all ground floor windows had bars or locked shutters.

On route to St. Thomas, Val and I had met Meg on her boat Lucky in Tortola. She was the 60-year old skipper of a not too busy charter boat. She had seven children. A few years earlier, her husband (or friend?) had died while lighting a barbecue and she had moved alone to the BVI. She had invited us to sail with her – she needed to learn how to sail her boat. We took the fast ferry to Roadtown, the capital of BVI, then a local bus to Nanny Cay.



Meg said she will paint the name, he told her letter by letter

We first sailed with Meg to a nearby island, Jost Van Dyke. The big business in that harbour was Foxy’s bar on the beach. During the day, the washrooms were locked but the bar left open. This was because water was precious and people just did not steal, mostly. Besides, said Foxy, any thief will be found in the morning, passed out on the table. He poured me a free drink. Thirty years later I went back to Foxy’s, it was the same ramshackle place but expanded and run by his daughters. A year later it blew down in Hurricane Irma. We sailed to other harbours, had a pig dinner at Sidney’s Peace & Love, which was also there three decades later. Near Salt Island, BVI, we snorkelled over the wreck of the 100m ship Rhone. In 1867 it tried to sail to open waters to weather a hurricane but was too late and ended up on the rocks, most hands drowned. At Norman Island, BVI, we snorkelled over the reef. There were huge brain corals, parrot fish, long

schools of small fish, sea urchins, sea slugs, barracuda resting on the bottom and fish of all colours and sizes. We dangled a chicken bone on a line and watched the feeding frenzy.

Meg's boat was scheduled to be hauled out and serviced so Val and I moved to Carolian, the big wooden sloop we had met in Europe. Someone had spilled a pail of saltwater onto the generator, I spent quite some time fixing it. Ian was broke, he waived one night's fee of US\$10. I felt a bit sorry for Ian and his son. He was a simple, down to earth person who did not expect anything from anyone yet was caught in the real world of running his boat.

A notice came up for a short trip back to St. Thomas on a Swan 47, taken there for a bareboat charter. Nice skipper, one of the oldest at 45-years. The boat handles so well that he admitted that he really only needed us for docking. After all that, we ended up anchoring out and staying aboard. Ashore, we bumped into Bruce from L'Affaire and Chris from Refanut, Linda was on a charter to earn some cash.

For one night we were official wetbacks, staying illegally on US soil and staying on a beach. Without a boat and afraid of being caught, we took the ferry back to Tortola and unhappily stayed on Carolian again for a couple of nights. What a sorry step down after the aft cabin in the Swan. Ian announced that he was getting a US visa to work as a carpenter so we left. We had arranged to meet again with Meg and her friend Peter from a nearby floating restaurant. Foxy's bar was having its surprisingly subdued 18th birthday.

Pat, from the boat Sandcastles, was staying in the campground. They rented everything you need from tent to pots, it was right at a beach. Unfortunately the campground was out of the way, we had a long hard slog back to town. Although we hardly knew him, the skipper of a Taiwanese Voyager 44 kindly let us stay the night aboard. Next morning we were on an Amel Mango 53, one of my favourite French boats. The owner and skipper, Jack, wanted crew to go back yet again to St. Thomas. We illegally picked up some passengers without clearing customs then returned to the BVI. Val and I stayed aboard to babysit the guests' child while they went ashore. That was our only babysitting job in the trip.

In Europe, we had a quite unusual baby experience. A few of us were walking on a dock when we heard a baby crying. However, as we walked the noise came from below. I reached down and lifted a baby in diapers out of the water. We stood there, stunned, crying baby in hand, looking around. What should we have done? Shortly, a woman popped out of a boat close by, thanked us with little emotion, took the baby and disappeared inside the boat. We were still stunned.

Val and I stayed on Jack's Swan as we all toured around the BVI, babysitting duties were interspersed with sailing duties. Ashore, we saw hordes of land crabs, cacti, mangroves and the odd looking banjo trees. They do not appear to have trunks so much as vertical above ground roots. Dinner was disjointed with Jack all but passed out. Eventually we had had enough of being treated as lowly workers by his guests so we left. Without animosity, Jack let us off in Virgin Gorda, BVI.

Joe and Lois, from the US, had built a house on Virgin Gorda and invited us to stay there. Even though they knew many locals, surprisingly they wanted company. They enjoyed having company, we enjoyed being in a house. Lois knew the captain of a local freighter, Yankee Lady. Kenneth, the owner and skipper, was quite friendly. He was thinking of buying a tug to use from Puerto Rico to the Virgin Islands. Although he had 16 siblings, we coincidentally had met one of his brothers while hitchhiking on Tortola. Pat, someone we had met somewhere, had a room in a hotel. We stayed with him one night then two more after he left but before he returned.

Ricky, crew from Berger Viking which we knew from the Canary Islands, was in town to see his girlfriend. He put out the word for us for crewing. Val and I spent the night on a local bus which was really a small truck with seats and plastic sheet for sides. Another night was secretly on couches in a back hall of a hotel. That improved when a couple from New York invited us to their guest house. They were friends of the owner who gave us an actual room with real beds, it was luxury.



Alicia

20 and later of Feb 1986, Tortola to St. Martin

The skipper of the boat, the 21m (71') Alicia, which had won its class in recent races, needed crew to St. Martin so we jumped at the chance. The skipper and probable owner was Joe, who said that he was Canadian, was a fire fighter somewhere in the western US and lived in Texas, other than when on his boat. Joe also went by the name Don. Alicia was a 100-year old quite narrow sloop with separate cockpits for crew and passengers so that the latter do not have to be with the former. The beam (width) was only 3.7m (12'), the mast was 25m (85'). It was built on the Clyde in Scotland for Swedish royalty. Aboard were his roommate Terry who was half his age, Susan from the US and her friend Rob from Toronto.

The sail to St. Martin was uneventful, the crew did not need to work much. Next day we moved to Philipsburg on the Dutch side of the island. With Alicia's big draft (depth below the water), we carved a channel through the mud and silt into the harbour. For several days we mostly played tourist.

Ann, the Scottish single hander on Rupert, was there with her beau Rob. Her cat Pooh had been given away. She wrote a column in a Scottish newspaper for income.



Crew of Alicia, without Joe/Don

We moved Alicia to a bay on the east side. Rob and Joe had gone spear fishing for lobster. Using a mask aboard, I found a mask on the bottom. It was covered with barnacles and was soon clean and usable. At the local nudist beach, most people were at least partially clothed and only the pudgy and elderly went naked.

Joe eventually decided that six were too many and asked Val and me to leave soon. The circumstances were becoming more and more suspicious. Joe, carrying a Canadian passport, knew nothing of Canada. He never went into customs but delegated it. He had what were obviously two bullet hole scars on one arm. As for the boat, he said that he won it in a game of cards in Jamaica and that it was at that time on the bottom of the harbour. We were ready to leave anyway.

Through a convoluted series of someone we knew who

knew someone who was looking for crew, we ended up having rum punch on a boat with a group of yachties. This led to the catamaran Mahoh which at one time held some sort of speed record. It had been heavily modified since then for its current life. We were led below to hide in case the harbour master came by for a head count, then let out when clear. The sail to St. Barts was fast.

That had been a mistake. The St. Barts harbour had few boats and we feared being stuck there. Within a few hours we met Tom, the skipper of the 22m (72') Italian built ketch named Tivoli. He needed crew for the night watch for a trip to Antigua and so we left St. Barts after a very short visit. Although Tivoli was a very nice boat, it was a wet sail.

True to Tom's word, we were off the boat next day and back to our previously rented cinder block hut, nicknamed the hen house. Connections led us to a real house for a few nights. English Harbour was the same as a few months ago. Ann was there with Rob. The yachtie game of musical boats was in full swing. Gerard and James from the French boat Vetere had left and James went to the boat Victoria of Strathern, a Swan 65 (20m). It was to go back to the Mediterranean in the spring and we were potential crew. Norwegian Olf was on another Swan 65. Olf had taken Ann's cat and while at the vet, poor Pooh had died. Ann was quite upset.

We toured the island. In the north side I stepped on a thorn. I thought it had just cut my heel but it had broken off. It became infected in the next few days. Val, a nurse, said that she would remove it. Finding a doctor was possible and might be no better than Val's field work, so she did. It was extremely painful to the touch, I had to stop her several times. Once I all but passed out as she tried to grip it, then it was out. With a cleaning and bandage and some time to recover, I was back on my feet.

Our next boat was Vixen, built in 1913. It was abandoned for years before being raised from the mud and fitted with a ferrous-cement and fibreglass outer hull. It was a 21m (70') staysail schooner (two masts, five sails). On the eve before leaving on Vixen, Val and I were ashore and Mike from Nova Scotia offered us a ride to our boat on his dingy. The oars were gone and the motor did not start. Ann's Rob repaired the engine. We had settled down when Sarah the cook arrived back, very drunk. The first bunk she saw was mine and regardless of occupancy, dropped in dead asleep. I awoke and left. In the morning, Tony the skipper woke us and we found Sarah on the floor with her dress hiked up, again. She did not cook breakfast for us.

The overnight sail to Martinique was fast but wet, full weather gear for us. Vixen was moored in the harbour. The owners had arrived so we departed.

There were no docks to walk so we talked to people as they came in on their dingies. Matteu, whom we met in Las Palmas, had stayed with Kim in a cheap motel so we went there. Kim was in St. Thomas looking for work. I later met a mutual friend who knew Kim from Denmark. The room was sparse yet functional. It had more than its share of cockroaches.

Cockroaches were everywhere we went, from cheap motels to multi-million dollar or pound boats. They were shy and harmless. Turn on the light with a shoe in hand and whack them as they run. All bags were always zipped up tight, shoes and boots shaken before putting them on. Groceries were unloaded on the dock or dingy and food inspected then passed over piece by piece. No cardboard was allowed on boats because it could hold eggs. They still managed to get aboard. If

the situation was dire, the boat could be “bombed”, which was to seal up the boat and release a pesticide inside. Once in mid-Atlantic, a flying cockroach landed on Val’s shoulder, she was not amused.

16 Mar 1986, Martinique

Hitchhiking was slow at best, the locals were either friendly or not and few in between. The less friendly could be outright rude, assuming we were monolingual Americans and saying things expecting us not to understand. They wanted us gone, we obliged when we could. The wealth and happiness of an island continued to be an inverse relationship. Martinique was the most populated and richest island we had visited so far. The other feature we noticed was that few spoke English so few would or could travel to other islands. The people on BVI by comparison were half indigenous and half immigrants.

We exchanged currency, yet again, this time on Martinique. The bank tellers seemed uniformly indifferent as to whether we bought francs or robbed the bank. The next customer was a young Brit with only a couple of words of French. He tried to exchange francs to pounds and suddenly both tellers spoke only a couple of words of English. Without the proper words in French, no transaction could occur. The tellers yelled at him words to the effect that he lacked a father. If I had had my money already I would have intervened with my poor but passable French but I dared not take the chance.

Our boat which we took off of Martinique was owned by Stu. By far the smallest boat we were on, Encore Snoopy was a 9m (30’) sloop. Besides the extrovert American Stu were his big friend Gary, bible thumping but otherwise nice Linda and Danish Henrietta, known as Henri. Even though there were enough people onboard, they did not mind some who had sailed before. We sailed off of the anchor then a short sail to another anchorage in Rodney Bay, St. Lucia. The motor was not used at all.

Henri's English was better than she thought. We taught her several ways to politely – and less so – say that you are going to the bathroom. She was fun to be around and unfortunately we never ran into her after Encore Snoopy. The boat was too crowded so Val and I soon left.

For the record, we have passed the 5,000nm mark as crew, with the majority in blue water (open ocean). It was a lot by some standards, only a good start by others.

Because of the size of the boat and the number of bodies aboard, St. Lucia immigration made us buy fully refundable flights off of their island. The procedure took the whole day. This was one of the friendliest islands, even without the contrast to our experiences on Martinique. Everybody goes out of their way to help, hitchhiking was easy, we always chat with the people in the cars. Even off duty buses stopped to give rides for free.

Buses was a euphemism for paid transport on the islands. Some islands used vans of various vintages and condition, some used flatbed trucks. Routes were flexible. The driver might drop off cousin Joe in Le Clery then pick up Mary from Scotiabank and return via another route. Especially on St. Lucia, the drivers knew everyone and where they were going so would only stop to pick up those going where the bus was going. The concept of bus schedules was nonexistent. All buses were private and licensed, they worked when they wanted to. In the words of a Tortolian bus driver, “If I don’t want to go, I don’t.” There were also taxis. These were differentiated from buses by the word “Taxi” on the roof. They were for tourists. Tourists prefer taxis so some of the buses were pretentious by putting a taxi sign on the roof. Taxis always tried to charge us more but we paid the locals’ rate and everyone was happy.

The main city on St. Lucia was Castries, in the north. Gros Islet, where we were, was Caribbean middle class and there was pride in the place. Most shacks were in good repair and painted, all had electricity, many had running water, few had phones. Cinder block or poured cement was the norm, all were raised off the ground on blocks or precariously on rocks.

We were up early to catch a bus for the 2.5 hour ride to Sousfrière in the south. It was Palm Sunday so no buses. We hitchhiked. Along the way, from some kid who climbs trees we picked up green coconuts to drink, then bananas from an even younger kid who took them from a banana plantation. No one minds. Our destination was the two Pitons, a pair of 750m volcanic mountain cores. After that we visited the mineral springs with their huge multicoloured deposits.

The rides back took over five hours, via the better road. The first ride ended at a well attended cock fight. The bets were high, some over a month's wages.

The next ride was from a 23-year old police man on the way to work. His old pickup was all but worn out with a passenger door which had to be tied closed through the missing back window, slick tires and a windscreen held in with putty and prayer. It was not really his, it was a friend's who could not drive. Every 15 minutes we stopped to put water in



Me, a cocoa grower, Gary and Henri

the radiator, every hour to tie the muffler back in place. He used a tire iron to fix one door so that only a solid hip check from outside was needed to close it, then climb in through the window. Periodically the driver's door flew open, he did not mind. We constantly picked up and dropped folks walking along the road because it was the proper and polite thing to do. Excess passengers went in the back. My job throughout was to ensure that the passenger door was tied closed or hip checked, or both. When just the three of us were in the pickup, he stopped to visit his family. Along a narrow path through the trees appeared a shack. His 17-year old quite pregnant sister was surrounded by a few younger kids who only spoke the local French based patois and wore old, ripped clothes. The family collected and sold coconuts for a living. But it was home. He was proud of having a real paying job and helping his family. His siblings were both inside (from married parents) and outside (a child with someone else), all were treated as theirs.



Val and Jack on Lady Andorina

Arriving back at Rodney Bay, we met with Chris the local customs man and his girlfriend. They were married, just not to each other. Chris introduced us to Jack, the skipper on the boat Lady Andorina. Jack was not amused at having to spend the whole winter there, he wanted to visit other islands. Lady A, as we called it, was an old motor sailor, meaning that it had the best of a motor boat and sailboat but was good at neither. Regardless, it was a classy boat with flat wood decks and many comforts, if a bit old and worn. We stayed on the boat while I worked on its poorly designed electrical system. I spent too much time crawling over and around batteries which leaked acid, rewiring the mixed 100V and 12V systems. Unfortunately, a proper overhaul would take far longer so Jack had to tolerate the problems.

We were staying at Scotties Bar and Guest Room. He was a wonderful man, always smiling, always helping people, wealthy by local standards. Across the road was the ubiquitous open stand selling anything they could: coconuts, clothes (new and used), tobacco and food. My favourite little shop was a bakery which also sold cement. The combination was not encouraging.

As much as we liked Scotty and Gros Isle, our goal was to reach Antigua for race week so we were on an agenda. The boat out was a C&C 47 named Celerity, name derived from the Latin for swift. The two men were John and Bob, both retired, owner and friend. With little sailing experience, they had been motoring from place to place. Val and I were crew, to show them how to use the sails. To find people on sailboats who could not confidently sail was surprisingly common. Many people would simply motor everywhere and maybe raise sails under good conditions only, if ever. I spent the first day tracking down and repairing a broken wire in the autohelm. The next day we motored an hour to Sousfrière Bay, right by the two pitons. Early next morning we left with plenty of wind to sail. Although not needed to move, the engine was running to charge the batteries. About two hours out the engine suddenly raced and there was a banging noise from below. The prop shaft coupling had let loose because the wrong type of bolts were installed. Vice grips were used to hold everything in place. The wind increased, waves were 3-4m with the occasional one slopping into the cockpit and soaking us. About 4nm out from St. Vincent, we were becalmed and without an engine. After drifting further, we caught the winds again and soon tacked into Admiralty Bay on Bequia then anchored. Without clearing customs, we sneaked ashore for dinner. Encore Snoopy was there with Stu and Bonnie, he stayed on the boat for fear of customs problems, we did not know why. Celerity's batteries had gone flat, we ran the generator all night.

While Val cleaned the boat, I spent hours tracking down a hidden, useless and mysterious light which was permanently on and draining the batteries. The problems continued. By the end of the day, Val and I were both frustrated and tired of cleaning and fixing and we had, one may say, a heated discussion about it.

Leaving Bob alone, we went with the Encore Snoopy group to a nearby jump up (party and dance by the locals) in Friendship Bay. Besides the locals, tourists and people from boats were a large gaggle of teen age boys. They were pushing through, drinking, smoking, talking loud, acting tough. One slob bumped into me once to often so I told him off. He looked at the ground, mumbled and shuffled off. A cohort of his came by and gave me a beer as a peace offering. Apparently I had unknowingly and unwisely shown up a paper tiger. On the way home we stopped into a midnight mass celebrating Easter, not my cup of tea.

For some reason Celerity towed two dingies, one with a motor and seats, the other bare. One night John forgot it was there and tossed chicken bones into it. The wind came up and saved us the trouble of cleaning them out by tossing the dingy right over the boat and emptying it of the bones. That dingy often acted like a kite in strong wind, I did not like having it out.

The Bequia regatta was on for a few days. There were both sail and power boat races which we watched from the shore. That was followed by a big barbecue and dance. Stu, the owner of Encore Snoopy, drank too much. He tipped over his dingy and lost money and credit cards. To add to his troubles, his girlfriend was blatantly promiscuous. In the small town of boating that can not last long. Wet, newly broke and alone was too much. He lost his temper, blaming everyone for his troubles. His friend Gary had had enough, telling Stu that it was his own fault and almost punching him. Stu was his own worst enemy.

The big May Day festival was the following day, with steel bands, music, stalls and of course a May pole. I never found out why May Day was celebrated about a month early, probably just an excuse for a jump up. The festivities were followed by a swim at a beach.

One day we caught the early ferry from Bequia to St. Vincent, a one hour trip. Technically a schooner, the ferry was too clunky to move by sail alone in anything under a Force 8 gale. Passengers, paying or free loading friends, were expected to work the sails. The man beside me working the main sheet turned out to be the newly elected president of St. Vincent and the Grenadines on his way to make a televised speech. For all of the agriculture and some tourism, St. Vincent was a poor island, even by Caribbean standards. The main city, Kingston, was run down. Other towns were small ramshackle places, one simply called Gas was a glorified shantytown. A bay away and isolated from all of that were the hotel and boating areas. There were no buses. Transport was by any vehicle going in the right direction. With helping hands to climb into the back, we caught a dump truck going across the island. We caught the ferry back to Bequia.

Leaving the born again Bob and Linda to talk religion, John, Val and I went back to Princess Margaret Beach. Val and I swam, John talked with a topless lady. Everyone was happy. For religious reasons, Linda decided to leave Stu's boat Encore Snoopy and move in with us on Celerity. She and Bob could continue the discussions. We talked with the people on the boat Gift Horse which was heading to Australia, but they already have crew and the crew were paying for the trip.

2 April 1986, Bequia to Mustique

After a morning of mundane groceries, fuel and water, we set off. I wanted to go to Petit Nevis to see the Bequian whaling station but the winds were wrong, would have taken too long. We rounded Isle à Quatre and Pigeon Island, finally anchoring in Grand Bay, Mustique. Dinner was ashore at a quite expensive restaurant.

Val and I explored the ridiculously rich but small island. The population, other than the workers, were royalty, movie stars and plain old millionaires. While we sat at the side of the road with our Spam sandwiches, Val recognized the Earl of Lichfield, a blood relative of the queen, ride by on his trail bike and he waved and smiled at us peons. We did not get his photo. We swam in the sea (could not afford to even look at the hotel) then walked by Princess Margaret's and Mick Jagger's houses. Later, a charter skipper told us that recently Mick was on his boat.

John and Bob each rented mopeds. Being British, one drove on the left on Mustique and most Caribbean islands. John forgot. An oncoming dune buggy avoided him and crashed. The driver was trapped but John and Bob managed to free him. With a US\$100 donation to the uninjured driver, the broken fender was forgotten and surely later repaired for free. John continued his aerial acrobatics on a well marked speed bump, walking away with minor cuts and bruises and a smaller donation to the moped rental place.



Arlene, John and Bob on Celerity

she was delighted that someone had been to her island. Bob was usually good with charts, however he ignored the wind warning and we were caught with too much sail up, making for exciting times as we quickly reduced sail. We were only

One of John's girlfriends, Arlene, joined the boat. Val and I had to abandon the V-berth (the most forward cabin) and take a smaller cabin. Arlene was a peace corp worker on a nearby island.

The anchorage was giving us trouble. The first spot was relatively deep and Celerity was drifting too far on the long anchor line. We moved to another spot. That was popular with charterers who often anchor like parking a car. We had all of the fenders hanging on the side, just in case and they did their job fending off a boat. We shortened the anchor line as much as we dared but a charter boat anchored too close and hearing a noise, found that the pulpits (the metal railing at the front) were locked together.

In the morning we left for the nearby island of Canouan. Decades later, one of the grad students I met at University of Toronto was from Canouan and

the third boat there in a large harbour. John wanted to drop anchor far too close to one of the boats and I asked him to move quite a bit further. He was insulted at being told how to sail, but grudgingly moved. Linda had taken the mail boat from Bequia to Canouan then stayed with the very religious nurse. We met her ashore. Encore Snoopy arrived later that day.

We walked around the island. The guide book had said that there were four vehicles on the island. We found all four, on blocks, abandoned. One field looked to me like an airstrip, Val said it couldn't be. As we discussed it, a small plane landed. Out by a rickety open structure which could have been the terminal building, near two cows, was an old man wearing goggles and holding a hammer. While sitting on a pile of big rocks, his job was to make a pile of little rocks. They were to be used for building houses.

The nurse had shown Linda the nursing station. The refrigeration was broken so they could not keep vaccines or other medications. Linda told, Val, who was a nurse. Val told me. Gary, who was still on Encore Snoopy and I worked to fix it. Although built by NASA, it was a horribly designed hodgepodge of parts cobbled together. After an hour of dismantling the unit, we found the fuses which were disconnected. By repositioning the solar panels and some kludging and coercion, we had the freezer section working. The nurse said she could manage with that.

Someone had told us of the old church on Canouan. It turned out to be several buildings, all abandoned. While carefully pushing through the thorn bush at the entrance to the church, I disturbed a bees nest. We beat a hasty retreat, I was stung several times and we both were well scratched from the bushes.

We left for the even smaller island of Mayreau, a short sail. Mayreau had four less vehicles than Canouan. Neither were there any roads. Val and I walked the path to the village, about 700 people. Probably the result of some aid project, the nicely kept houses were concrete or stone, but litter and garbage was scattered everywhere. It seemed like a good idea to return to the boat via the windward (east) side of the island. This took us along several paths and beaches. That regressed to rocky outcrops. With the sun was getting low we ran up against a cliff. We backtracked post haste and scaled a small but steep cliff. At the top was an old path which took us through thorn thickets, past cows, over small drop offs but we arrived at the boat at sunset. We should have brought a flashlight.

In the morning we motored the 5nm to three tiny islands off of Palm Island, which was smaller than Mayreau but had a road. I stood at the bow watching for reefs while Bob slowly manoeuvred the boat. Encore Snoopy was at the island too. Gary, Henri, Val and I went swimming on the reefs. Gary caught five small lobsters, a conch (pronounced conk, looks like a very large snail) and a crab. I climbed a tree for a few coconuts then macheteed them open. Lunch was on the beach by a fire.



Canouan Airport Terminal, goat on right



Coconuts and machete

Next morning we carefully motored out of the reefs near Palm Island and through the reefs to enter a bay on the much larger Union Island. There were three wrecked boats on the reefs. Union Island had an airfield, post office, a restaurant and supermarket. It was functional but not interesting so we left by noon, Encore Snoopy followed. We wove through the reefs for the aptly named Petit St. Vincent Island, nowhere near St. Vincent Island.

Bob, the owner of Celerity, was easy going. However his friend John was becoming a problem. He had invited Arlene to join us and she did not want to be around him anymore, neither did Val nor I. Bob was too quiet to confront his friend. Arlene, Val and I planned to leave in Grenada, even though Bob wanted us to stay. We cleared customs before leaving St. Vincent and the Grenadines. We motored the short distance to Carriacou and cleared customs there for the Grenada area. Henri and Linda, still on Encore Snoopy, came to Celerity for dinner then we went ashore for what turned out to be an African dance show. We ended up spending the night on Encore Snoopy. In the morning we caught the early dump truck back to where Celerity was anchored.

While leaving Carriacou, the prop shaft sheared its bolts again. Never trust questionable hardware in a questionable store. Without power and becalmed, we drifted in roughly the right direction until we were out of the lee of the island and could sail. The wind allowed us to sail into Grenada's large outer harbour but it

was wrong the wrong direction to sail into the inner harbour. The coast guard sent out a man in an inflatable dingy to tow us. He did not know how so I had to connect the lines then steer us in at a very slow speed before dropping the anchor. We thanked him then the man returned to their patrol boat with a large machine gun mounted on the fore deck. Encore Snoopy had not followed us.

Although we were going to leave Celerity, Bob asked me to look into the autohelm. It was irreparable without new gears. Bruce on L'Affaire was there. He too was working on his autohelm. He was told that in the spring L'Affaire would be going to New York and he asked us to crew. We would see what happens before then.

We set off to the Concord waterfalls high up the mountains. That involved several chats with locals for directions and to learn about making mace, nutmeg and cocoa. The locals picked up the fruits and dried them then cracked off the mace which surrounded the nutmeg. Cocoa was more complicated. It was sweated or fermented for a few days in barrels, then dried husked and crushed. Full of new information, we arrived at the steamy rain forest with the falls and a large pond below. Being high up and nearer the source, there was less chance of parasites, a constant concern at lower elevations. We were all hot and tired so we skinny dipped.

As can happen when with someone 24/7, Val and I had a disagreement about something probably not very important. I left and she took a dingy and somehow it tipped. She could not get out alone without a ladder and had to hail someone nearby. It was scary to think what could have happened if she was not a strong swimmer or any number of things had happened.

Differences patched up, Val and I left Celerity. We rented an apartment. Henri and Gary from Encore Snoopy wanted a break from Stu so they moved in with us. The apartment had a resident mouse near the fridge, a cockroach, a mahogany bug (similar to a cockroach) and an occasional frog in the toilet.

The following evening was too busy. Bruce, a Maori, had invited a 14-year old boy from New Zealand to join us on the beach. The boy got drunk and passed out, Bruce walked him home later. Henri and Gary told us about Stu, that he drank himself to sleep every night and forgot things, a lot. That affected Gary quite a bit and that night it came to a head. I was volunteered to row Bonnie and Stu back to their boat. Bonnie got in, Stu rolled in. A wave rolled over the end and Stu yelled and abandoned ship. Bonnie got out, I pulled it ashore. Stu yelled at Bonnie and Henri to prepare to go back to the boat, except Henri was already on the boat.

Gary reminded him of this but Stu kept yelling. Gary passed the tipping point. He called Stu a drunken idiot and grabbed him but let me pull them apart. Gary gave Stu a parting cuff. Gary came back with us, he was off of Encore Snoopy. We were supposed to go to a sangria party on the boat Ibn Batuta. In a nutshell, a Frenchman got mad and pushed a local lady overboard. She could not swim so an Italian jumped in and put her in a dingy, which tipped over. She was rescued, again. He lost his wallet. The next day the wallet was found, one shoe was still missing and we cleaned the outboard on the dingy.

16 April 1986, Grenada heading north

The time had come to head north to Antigua for the race week. The customs man told us of a boat going that way, a couple on their boat Waltz, just finishing a charter but they did not mind our help. Waltz was a nice boat for four people. It had hydraulic steering and I found that it had no feel compared to a cable system. Oh well, it worked. While under sail, we threw out a fishing line on a piece of wood using a finger of a rubber glove for bait. A large kingfish took the bait, dinner for us. I cleaned it. At our next anchorage in Carriacou, the locals asked what we did with the head and were disappointed that we had just thrown it overboard. Ibn Batuta was there and caught us up on gossip: Chrissie was off Lady Andorina and back on Refanut.

With an early start we sailed to Bequia. By the time we had dropped anchor, the customs was closed for the night. Val and I stayed aboard while they went ashore. Although she was friendly, he seemed to tolerate us. He probably wanted to be alone with her, who was 16 years younger than him. We left them alone and took an apartment ashore.

We talked with lots of people, getting anxious to reach Antigua soon. Tom on the boat Avenger wanted crew to go to Bermuda then Nova Scotia but we would all wait and see. Lady Andorina was there. The owners were aboard and Jack was not allowed to leave the boat except to get supplies, which did not make him happy. Lady A was to go to Antigua and he asked us to crew it once the owners thankfully left. Even with Jack's boat imminent availability, we still swam from



Henri on the way to Concord Falls

boat to boat, asking if they needed crew. We did meet with Christina and Chris who wrote a sailor's guide to the Windward Islands. They would take on crew so as to give them a break, but friends of theirs came instead.

For two days we swam to boats and talked, still nothing. We explored the island. In an abandoned hotel, we entered an open cabin which was full of bats. We ran out, they flew out and not one touched us, even in the small doorway. Anxious to get to Antigua, we took the ferry to St. Vincent to see if anyone there needed crew. There was nothing for us. We took a flight to St. Lucia to meet Jack on Lady Andorina. Unfortunately Lady A needed some repairs and would not go, yet. While down in the dumps and all but ready to end our crewing trip, Lady A's repairs ended early and we were the crew. Fortune had smiled on us.

The catch was that I had to do the electrical repairs before we could go. That meant moving a whole battery bank then rewiring their taps. The space was cramped and hot, acid would splash out and I had to quickly wash it off. I also had a few shocks from the strange 110VDC system. Next was the SSB radio (long range communications) and an engine alternator. That took two days.

By the next afternoon we were fuelled and off the dock. With good winds we sailed with full sails all night. By noon of the next day we were becalmed so motored with Lady A's twin engines. Lady A was an elegant 19m (61') long by 5m (17') beam (width) motor sailer ketch designed in 1951 by Thornycroft. The engines were also Thornycroft from 1946, rebuilt in 1967. Jack thought that the boat was built in Spain under license. A new wood deck had been laid over the old one and now there were ants living in the spaces. Lady A leaked everywhere. Parts of the hull were rotting. The electrical system made me shudder to think of it. As nice as Lady A once must have been, it needed a lot of TLC and money to keep it afloat.

We reached English Harbour in Antigua after dark so rather than risk the entrance, we motored and sailed back and forth all night then entered Falmouth Harbour in daylight. We had arrived in Antigua for race week, just had to find a boat to race on.

28 April 1986 Antigua

Luck was with us. We were on the boat Tunnix, owned and skippered by Hans with his friends Giselle and Paul from England. All were trilingual but spoke English for our sake. Tunnix would have been awkward to stay on so Val and I rented a tiny house and of course had other yachties move in with us. Tunnix was a Taiwan built 13m (43') cat rigged ketch (two sails of an unusual design). We were in the lowest racing class due to its relatively small sails. In the first race with strong winds we tied for third out of 22 boats, mainly because Tunnix needed a lot of wind. The following day's race was longer and in lighter winds, we did not fare well. After a day of no races, the next race was in light winds. Big heavy Tunnix wallowed around before we gracefully retired from the race, although we had a solid 18th place in class. The following day was also light wind for a longer course. Our class started first. Tunnix moseyed over the start line and casually wandered upwind and around the course. Hans initially ignored our comments about the big orange mark to port, then realizing that it was the mark, turned and we wallowed in its general direction. Not totally disgraced, one of the 101 boats did finish after us, but they had lost the mark and sailed all around to find it. Another was no where to be seen so we solidified 99th place.



The maxi Speedy Gonzales

To add insult to injury, the real racing class had a longer course and started almost one hour after us. The racers were big and fast. They always had what we called organic ballast, meaning a bunch of people who moved to the high side to add weight there. Although not weight effective, a common tactic was to have topless women as ballast to distract the other boats. The biggest of the racers were the maxis. As big and fast as they were, the professional crew were annoying and even obnoxious. They took racing very seriously. One boat, Heavy Metal, did not give us right of way when they should have because they were racing and we were mere cruisers, so we had to avoid hitting them as they cut in front. I did manage one race on a real racing boat. I was assigned to half of a winch.

These winches, used to pull in the sheets (on the sails), did not have mere handles on top. There were stands beside them with crank handles turned by two large men, called grinders. I, however non-muscular I was, was one of them. I frantically tried to at least keep up with the large and friendly gorilla on the other half of my winch.

By the end of the race week, we had had enough windy days to save face, coming in tenth out of 22 boats.

We stayed on Tunnix to watch the classic race. Although mildly serious about racing, the six boats were quite showy with old style hulls and sails. Alicia was one of them, the boat we were on from Tortola to St. Martin. The most impressive was

Whitehawk, a 28m (92') traditional ketch. The largest was the 53m (175') three masted schooner Aquarius, built around 1939. The boat Stormy Weather had won the Fastnet Race (famous English race) 50 years earlier.

Meanwhile, Jack from Lady A was having trouble signing us off as his crew. Immigration had us pay for refundable tickets off of Antigua, but we never had the chance to go back for the refund. Don on Alicia told us of a boat heading north and needing crew. Murray, the Kiwi skipper of the 15m (49') Equinox Too (nicknamed E2), agreed to have us as crew. The owner would fly two friends to Antigua for the leg to Bermuda. On assurances that the friends would help and not expect us to cater to them as passengers, we accepted, with pay. This was our only paid trip. The friends did work well with us. Murray became the problem. Murray was the polar opposite of Bruce, a fellow New Zealander. While Bruce was a genuinely friendly and empathetic person, Murray showed his colours as insecure and having to always be the top dog. Relations with him slowly regressed.



Val on the wheel of E2

Jenna on the boat Nonstop. She was one of 11 crew, at the time the boat was the fifteenth largest private yacht in the world, although by now it would be far down the list. It had a pool, a helideck (for a helicopter), elevators and lots of other amenities.

Late that afternoon we left, sailing again in the same unsettled winds with many sail changes. E2 handled very well. The sails and hull were balanced, often the wheel could be left alone with a bit of friction to hold it in place. My first watch was in light winds, by Val's watch they kept changing so we motored. South of St. John Island in the USVI, we ran out of fuel. Oops, slight miscalculation. The winds were sufficient to get us into the Charlotte Amalie Harbour on St. Thomas, the main USVI. Using the dingy to get some fuel, we bled the air out of the engine (a quirk of diesel engines), motored to the fuel dock and topped up the fuel and water tanks. The next day was spent fixing the anchor winch which had earned its keep and required an overhaul. Val cleaned the boat. The following few days had me repairing the clunky battery chargers and rewiring the autohelm, the problems with it having been why it had continuously turned itself off. The fuel gauges never did work.



Robert, Jeremy and Murray on E2

4 May 1986 Antigua northbound

We moved onto E2 and left the same day. Murray, Val and I took short watches in pairs because the autohelm was not working. While one person steered, the other could snooze or get bored then do any work required. Two people in the cockpit at a time was not common, Murray preferred it, we did not mind. The winds were fickle. Through the night we changed them a few times, often wing on wing (wind behind so two sails on opposite sides). A few gybes (changing sails from side to side with wind behind the boat) made for more work than sleep. Ahead of schedule, in the early morning we stopped at St. Barthélemy Island ("St. Barts") for a few hours.

After a short rest, we sailed to St. Maarten, dropping anchor in Philipsburg harbour. Murray restocked the boat from the duty free shop. While waiting, I called

With E2 back in working order, Val and I went shopping. Besides sandals, I bought an intriguing mask from a man at the roadside. He claimed to be Carib, one of the two main indigenous groups in the Caribbean, the other being Arawak. Not knowing that they were not supposed to, that airline counter refunded our unused tickets from Antigua. I dropped a fishing pole over the side. Reluctantly diving in the murky harbour, I found the pole and hooked my finger, my first catch. Val the nurse removed the hook.

We had a fourth person join the boat. Melissa had stayed with us in the Antigua house during race week, she was our cook, much to Val's relief. Melissa moved into the aft cabin with Murray, just to save space in the main cabin, of course. Bent [sic] also came aboard. He was a semi-retired masseuse from the QE2 cruise ship.

Last were the two business associates of the owner, Robert and Jeremy, both in the 30's and from London where they ran a development business. We had expected only three plus the latter two but seven meant less work and watches for us. However, only Murray and I had enough experience to set the sails.

11 May 1986, day 1 to Bermuda

After untangling the mess of lines on the dock, we left, joining several other boats also going on a similar route. Occasionally we kept in touch with some boats with the VHF or SSB radios. We all took two hour watches on the wheel then two hours on standby. With seven people, we had plenty of time off, except for sail changes. That first night was light winds so we motored most of the time. The direction was simple, due north. On clear nights the north star was a good reference and a break from staring at the compass.

12 May 1986, day 2 to Bermuda

The winds were still light, the spinnaker would not stay inflated and again we motored, nursing the fuel supply. At noon the sun was almost directly overhead. Just for practice I used the sextant to determine our location. To my surprise it differed only 0.5nm from the SatNav. I blamed the SatNav for having the error.

13 May 1986, day 3 to Bermuda

The light winds moved our arrival estimate one day later than initially hoped. In the afternoon we caught a 4kg tuna. No sooner was it cleaned and in the freezer than one twice the size took the hook and joined the first one.

14 May 1986, day 4 to Bermuda, two day noon to noon 247nm

During the night, the winds had picked up but were still not settled. Knowing that the weather was not looking good, I slept wearing my safety harness. Sure enough I was woken up. Murray had taken over the wheel while I, wearing only shorts and a hat someone handed me, was on deck shortening sail as the squall rose and soon hit quite hard. Back inside, a boat was calling on the VHF to warn anyone within VHF range of the winds, too late for us but thanks anyway. I had to change sails several more times that night, no one other than Murray would have been safe on a dark wet windy foredeck with waves coming over.

The boat had become very messy below with all of the rolling, no one had the urge to tidy up. In the morning the one remaining propane tank sprung a leak and lost the propane over the side. We dug out the charcoal barbecue and lashed it to the pushpit (the back rail, opposite to the pulpit). A boat appeared in the distance. By VHF they said that they could not find crew so just the two of them were aboard. We had seven.



Mellisa on the wheel in bad weather

15 May 1986, day 5 to Bermuda

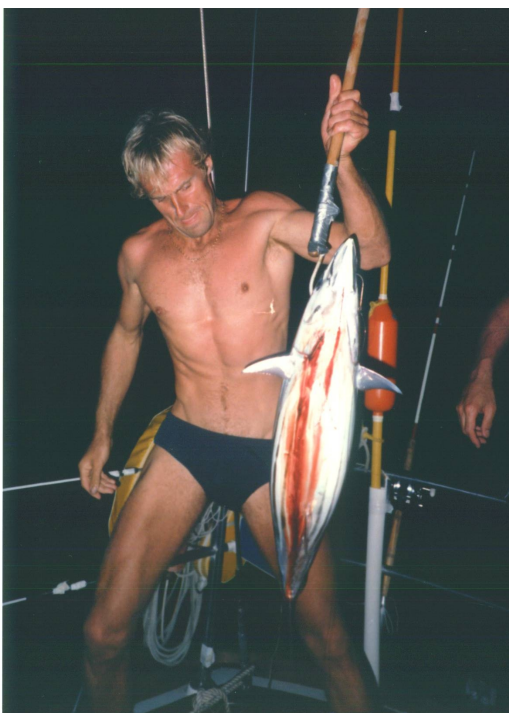
The SatNav refused to pick up any satellites, no usable noon position. The wind had settled in from the north, we had to beat (tack back and forth into the wind) all day. By evening the seas were too rough to do anything but lie down when off watch. For a meal we barbecued tuna and tea. During my watch at night, there was a squall then a thunderstorm then clear skies.

16 May 1986, day 6 to Bermuda, two days noon to noon 217nm

Still 300nm south of Bermuda and too far east because of the winds, the winds were at last favourable for turning almost back on course. Food was becoming limited after a few days of excess so we rationed water, fruit and vegetables. The trip was starting to become tiresome.

17 May 1986, day 7 to Bermuda, noon to noon only 64nm

Not only was the noon to noon distance achingly short but the angles put us only 40nm closer to Bermuda with still 260nm to go. In the cold and rain of last night, I was forgetting about the romance of sailing. My highlight was being hit by a flying fish, Melissa threw it back in the water. The day turned sunny and warm and last night's frustrations melted away. Bent spotted another boat on the horizon, Tivoli. Val and I knew them, we had sailed on it



Murray with a tuna

from St. Bart's to Antigua. The skipper Tom had asked us to crew to Newport, Rhode Island but we ended up on E2 instead. By VHF Tom said that they had spare propane. Within shouting distance of each other, we put a line across to them, Tom tied on the propane tank, dropped it over the side and we hauled it in. Hot meals again! Our moods picked up. A large 1m long dolphinfish, also known as mahi-mahi, took the hook and we had fresh fish for dinner.

The afternoon turned cloudy, the night was cool. After being in the tropics, anything under 25° was cold. For my night watch, I wore a shirt, sweater, track suit, turtleneck, jeans, boots and wet weather gear, secured with a safety line. Only hands and eyes were exposed. The wind turned fickle again so we motored yet again, bringing motoring time to 75 hours.

18 May 1986, day 8 to Bermuda, noon to noon 112nm

With 150nm to go and in light winds, we motored and sailed with a drifter (large light sail). When Murray shut down the engine for maintenance, Jeremy and I swam beside the boat. That was fun but still hard to do, to keep up with a drifting boat.

19 May 1986, day 9 to Bermuda, noon to noon 149nm

Expecting to reach Bermuda late that morning, we all cleaned up the boat. The owners, Colin and Annette, were there to meet us. Robert and Jeremy left E2, full of tales for their cohorts in London.

The trip from St. Thomas to Bermuda would have been 850nm in a straight line, we went 960nm. That was less extra distance than hoped for. Another boat, Yellow Drama, had lost its mast in the storm we were in on the fourth night. The people aboard a boat named Avant or similar (we never knew if it was the Avanti we knew) had safely been taken off their boat by helicopter near New York.

However, the worst off was the tall ship Pride of Baltimore. With too much sail up for the conditions, it had capsized in that storm. Only four of the eight aboard managed to get out and into the life raft. The Bermudian coast guard rescued them in a couple of days. A girl whom we had talked to from the tall ship said that it had lost the large bowsprit in waves twice since she was aboard. She was one of the survivors. The Pride of Baltimore was a replica of the original tall ship of the same name, which we were told had sunk. Since about 1970, modern boats are much more capable in bad conditions, in the worst case they can even be knocked flat and will come back upright.



A cockpit party (token drinks only)

20 May 1986, Bermuda

Bermuda was by far the cleanest, coldest and most developed island that we had been to. Tourists were everywhere, the economy was based on them. Cruise ships were in St. George harbour and Hamilton, the capital. We made a quick tour of the island.

21 May 1986, Bermuda and day 1 to Newport, Rhode Island

John, a friend of E2's owner, joined us on the boat for the passage to Rhode Island. No sooner was he onboard than we left. Light winds plagued us again. First with motor and the main and genoa, then spinnaker. The topping lift (line to hold up the boom) slipped off a winch and the boom hit Murray on the hand, luckily missing his head. When taking down the spinnaker, one of its lines was lost overboard, making the spinnaker harder on the rest of the trip. Murray wanted to test E2's shotgun. He threw the leaky propane tank over the side while I waited for it to be a respectable distance and on top of a wave. The 12 gauge slug gave a hard kick. We had expected any remaining propane to explode but all we heard was a thunk, no bang. It was anticlimactic.

22 May 1986, day 2 to Newport, departure to noon 119nm

This leg of the trip was shorter, there were only 510nm left to go. We had an informal pool on estimated arrival day and time. Light winds after sunrise soon picked up enough to turn off the engine. We sailed with the main, genoa and a poled out drifter (a large light sail). We tried to change to the larger spinnaker but nothing went well. The spinnaker wrapped around the forestay, then a lift line came loose. We were not amused by the unnamed person's sloppy work. Next, a snatch block (a pulley which can be easily relocated) came open and bent. I was able to hammer it enough to be usable again, for a while. Finally, the spinnaker pole was too low and the line came off the end. The spinnaker was taken down, Murray climbed out on the pole to reattach the line and the spinnaker went back up. We had to double check a lot more after that fiasco. Once the spinnaker and its issues were settled, I went up the mast for photos. By sunset we played safe and took

down the spinnaker. With the weather turning, I again went to sleep wearing my safety harness. A squall was building fast and I had to go out to reduce sail, this time in underwear and a hat.



E2 flying a spinnaker

23 May 1986, day 3 to Newport, noon to noon 144nm

The Loran (old navigation system for close to shore) would not start when turned on. John likes celestial navigation so he was taking several shots a day with the sextant, comparing his results with the SatNav, if it had a reasonably good position fix. During the night we had to adjust course to avoid a ship. On this huge open ocean, how could we be so close?

24 May 1986, day 4 to Newport, noon to noon 120nm

The ETA was two days away. We were trying to catch a reported northbound current of the Gulf Stream but the wind died. We motored in a rolling sea. For amusement, we tore open pop cans and bent them to see how slowly we could make them sink. Judging by their sinking speed and knowing the ocean depth there, the estimate was two days to reach the ocean floor.

That was the proverbial calm before the storm. Soon

after sunset, the storm hit. I had forgotten to close our hatch in the V-berth and a bucket of water came in. Most of my regular clothes for watch were wet, I won the best dressed on night watch award. By midnight we were pounding into heavy seas with minimal sail up.

25 May 1986, day 5 to Newport, noon to noon 103nm

The night was miserable with the boat being tossed around by the waves. The winds were around 25 knots (45km/h) with 3-4m waves. No one had much sleep. Off watch we just rested and tried to sleep. The boat was a mess. We would find a dry spot and prop cushions or sails around to keep from rolling off. Food was quite basic because the cook had a high probability of cooking herself. The storm increased.

26 May 1986, day 6 to Newport, noon to noon 65nm

There were only 110nm to go but at this rate would take almost two days. In the wee hours as the wind increased, we hove to (only enough sail to keep the boat on course) with just the storm jib up. By sunrise the winds were blowing force 8, 30-40 knots (55-75 km/h), gusting over 50 knots. Trying to run out of the storm, we motored with the small storm jib. The wind increased again during the day. We still had to have a watch out to look for ships. When the unnamed person on watch came inside because he/she was cold and tired, he/she was told to get back out and watch for ships if they know what was good for them. Being on watch was cold and wet. Even wearing full weather gear, eventually water always found a way in.

By the afternoon either we did move out of the storm or it blew itself out. By the evening, the winds had calmed to 10 knots (20km/h) and the waves were only little lumps. Two other boats called on the VHF that they had been in the storm, the Owl of Abersoch and Celebration, an Irwin 65 nicknamed Floating Condo.

27 May 1986, day 7 to Newport, noon to arrival 120nm

After weaving through the maze of buoys, lights, traffic separation zones, fish trap buoys, pilot boats and ships, we arrived in Newport at 3AM. We slept on the quiet and steady boat. Approximately one or two dozen other boats had come from Bermuda. The passage from Bermuda to Newport in a straight line would have been 645nm, we took 670nm. As expected, Murray tried to renege on paying us so that he could keep the pay. After a long discussion, he angrily paid, albeit some in traveller's cheques.

That was our last sail. I cut the string off of my glasses to make it official. After a couple of days in Newport, we flew to Toronto. From Majorca on the boat Jenisa, we had sailed an estimated 7456nm.

Life Afterwards

This memoir was written 35 years after the events it covers. In some aspects, the sailing trip had permanent effects. I had learned that even under extreme conditions, never panic but just keep doing what has to be done. To focus on a task was another lesson: you steer and I will handle the sails. Trust that the other tasks are being done and concentrate on yours.

On the less favourable side, after sailing long passages, I found day sailing tedious. For many years after that trip I did not sail much, other than a delivery from Florida. To poke holes in the water for no reason had lost its appeal. To simply steer a boat was at the bottom of my list and still is. Sailing is far more than simply turning the wheel, usually an autohelm does that quite well. That all may have been different if I raced, but, I am not competitive, I only do subsistence racing.

What finally drew me back into sailing was first chartering a boat in the North Channel by Manitoulin Island, then joining the nascent Blind Sailing Association of Canada as a skipper. The new and enthusiastic sailors served a purpose for me, to get back to sailing by feel, by sound and by touch. After untold hours steering, we had often tried to break the tedium by lying down or looking backwards or not looking at all. Blind and visually impaired people have to steer without seeing. I enjoyed having someone feel the wind and the heel of the boat and not simply look at instruments.

Tracy and I now have a boat, a Nonsuch 30 that was brand new at the time of this memoir. The cat rig (one mast, one large sail) appeals to me in its simplicity, not to mention the extra space in the cabin. We use our boat as a floating cottage that can also go out on day sails or longer. However, I will probably never go blue water sailing again. Been there, done it enough. I am not one to circumnavigate the world. Life has changed, I leave that for others who are more adventurous.



Our Nonsuch 30, Corvus

Appendix

This section is for non-sailors, to describe some of the sailing terms used. Sailors please do not critique it, these are my descriptions.

Aft: Anything near the back of a boat, or as a direction towards the back. See forward.

Anchor winch: A mechanical or electric device to let out and pull in the anchor.

Bow: The most forward part of the boat. AKA pointy end.

Blue water: The open ocean. Also known as deep water.

Cat rig: A sailboat style with one mast near the bow and one large sail.

Cleat: A attachment point for a sheet or halyard, used properly will quickly attach and release.

Close hauled: Sailing as close into the wind as possible, generally about 45° off the wind.

Compass: Indicates direction relative to magnetic north, would always work even without electrical power.

Crew: People to sail a boat, picked up as needed, on larger boats sometimes permanent.

Cutter: Similar to a sloop but with a third smaller sail, the staysail, just ahead of the mast.

Dead reckoning: A method of estimating position by extrapolating speed and direction from a known location.

Downwind: To sail with the wind coming generally from behind the boat.

Draft: The lowest part of a boat below water, always the keel, usually 1.5-3m range.

Fender: An inflated rubber tube between the boat and a dock. Called bumpers in Europe.

Forward: Usually as a direction towards the bow. See aft.

Furler: A system of rolling up the headsail, not very common in the 1980's. The alternative was to hank (clip) on the sail.

Geona: The sail between the bow and the top of the mast, extends aft of the mast. An oversized jib.

GNSS: Global Navigation Satellite Systems, the generic name for electronic navigation using satellites. See GPS and Transit.

GPS: The vernacular term for GNSS. One of several GNSS. Gives continuous position points. Similar to Galileo, Glonass and BeiDou. See transit.

Great circle: For long passages, the shortest course to plan, although not intuitive. See rhumb line.

Gybe: To tack the main, hopefully intentionally and under control. If unintentional can be dangerous and damaging.

Halyard: The line to raise and lower a sail.

Head: Toilet, bathroom.

Headsail: Pronounced "head-sill", the sails forward of the mast.

Jack line: A line or lines running most of the length of the boat to connect your harness to via a tether, to prevent going overboard.

Jib: The sail between the bow and the top of the mast, just reaches the mast. Similar to a genoa.

Loran: An obsolete navigation system used near some shores.

Main: Also called the main sail or simply the main. The sail aft of and attached to the mast.

Mate: The second in command, would take over when the skipper was not around. See skipper and crew.

Keel: A heavy weighted fin below the boat, to keep the boat upright and from moving sideways.

Ketch: Not very common, a sailboat style with two masts, the aft (mizzen) mast being shorter than the main mast. See yawl.

Passage: A long sail between points, almost always on open water.

Port: The left side of a boat, so as to use the boat as a fixed reference. See starboard.

Pulpit: The metal railing on deck at the bow. See pushpit.

Pushit: The metal railing on deck at the stern. See pulpit.

Rhumb line: For long passages, the simplest course to plan. See great circle.

Rope: No such thing on a boat, when they have a purpose they become lines such as sheets or halyards.

Reach: The broad range between close hauled and downwind.

Reef: To reduce sail area in high winds. Often an awkward and messy process due to high winds.

Schooner: Not very common, a sailboat style with two masts, the aft (mizzen) mast is the taller than the main mast.

Sextant: An old but still viable device to measure angles of celestial bodies for navigation purposes, would always work even without electrical power.

Sheet: A line to adjust the position of a sail. One end fixed to the sail, the other to be adjusted.

Shroud: The wire ropes to keep the mast from moving sideways. See stays and spreader.

Single hand: To sail alone.

Skipper: The top dog on a boat. For larger boats, usually permanently on that boat. See mate and crew.

Sloop: The most common type of sailboat, with one mast and two sails.

Spreader: Sideways bars high up a mast as part of the system to keep the mast from moving sideways. See shrouds.

Starboard: The right side of a boat, so as to use the boat as a fixed reference. Pronounced "star-bird". See port.

Stay: The wire ropes to hold up the mast, in front of the mast (forestay) and behind (backstay). See shroud.

Stern: The very back of a boat.

Tack: To change the course such that the sails change from one side to the other. The only way to sail upwind.

Transit: An obsolete predecessor to GPS, AKA SatNav, gave sporadic lines of position rather than continuous position points.

Upwind: To sail generally facing the wind, although limited. See close hauled.

V-berth: The most forward, became narrow at the bow, room for two people.

Watch: Your turn on deck to watch that all was okay and possibly to steer. Not always fun.

Winch: A mechanical drum with a handle to pull in a sheet or halyard.

Yawl: Very similar to a ketch, not worth differentiating here.

List of Photos

Most photos by Alan. Page numbers are for PDF format. Note that these descriptions are for the benefit of blind readers.

Cover: Five of us laughing, in the cabin of Jenisa.

Page 4: Henk's home built boat, at anchor, genoas lashed to life lines.

Page 5: Jenisa under sail in the ocean.

Page 6: Gibraltar with its cloud caused by the Lamenta winds.

Page 8: In Gibraltar, a Barbary ape mother and child sitting at the side of a road.

Page 9: Some of the dolphins swimming in Jenisa's bow wave, just west of the Mediterranean.

Page 9: At the wharf in Safi, Morocco. Kim is crouched down and negotiating with locals for their wares, Lawrence and Val watching.

Page 10: Safi, Morocco, a potter sitting on the edge of a hole in the ground with his wheel, kicking it to turn as he shapes a tall vase shape.

Page 11: Alice on Cinderella of Hamble in Puerto Rico, Canary Islands. Stern boarding gangplank lowered, Red Ensign visible. The boat looks as fancy and expensive as it was.

Page 11: Anne and Val inside Anne's boat Rupert, Anne is holding her cat, Pooh.

Page 12: Dry terraces on Gran Canaria. A couple of small houses, cisterns, a few small trees.

Page 13: Yet another party on Jenisa while in Gran Canaria. Kim, Neil, Simon and Alan.

Page 14: Val and Alan posing on the wharf in Las Palmas, Gran Canaria. Many boats are flying signal flags for the local festival.

Page 15: Night, Anne on her boat Rupert preparing to leave in the morning to cross the Atlantic.

Page 15: Jenisa under sail in the Atlantic.

Page 16: In Jenisa's cockpit with part of the cover up. Kim is on the wheel, Val keeping him company.

Page 18: Val holding up a flying fish that was found on the deck. The dark body is longer than her hand, the very large pectoral fins, dark with a white band, are held out, each wider than her hand.

Page 19: On Jenisa under sail on the Atlantic, laundry pinned along the lifeline. The boat is rolling into the wind on a wave.

Page 20: Antigua, a group of yachties in a good mood, Val front and centre.

Page 21: Antigua, Val sitting in the doorway of our small rental hut, concrete block painted light green.

Page 21: Inside the hut with friends.

Page 22: Jost Van Dyke, BVI, on the beach. Meg is painting a name on the side of a rowboat, local owner and Val watching and laughing. He would only give her one letter at a time, now shows full name "Power to the pussy".

Page 23: Alicia at anchor in Tortola. Three people standing on deck, main covered, genoa lashed to lifeline. The old style of arching bow and stern are obvious.

Page 24: Inside Alicia, the crew except for Joe. Susan is flashing her chest for the photo.

Page 25: Alan, a local cocoa grower, Gary and Henri posing with a the jungle background.

Page 26: Val and Jack sitting on benches on the deck of Lady Andorina while under sail. The former opulence and comforts of the boat are obvious.

Page 27: Arlene, John and Bob sitting at the table inside Celerity.

Page 28: The open shack beside the Canouan air strip. It is in good repair and painted, on stilts to accommodate the slope, stairs at front. A goat is grazing beside.

Page 28: Union Island, two women each with a bag of coconuts balanced on their heads, both wearing old torn clothes and rubber boots, the near woman is chewing on a piece of sugar cane and carrying her machete.

Page 29: Grenada, Henri walking over boulders as we approach a waterfall, on the way to Concord Falls.

Page 30: Antigua race week, the maxi Speedy Gonzales passing us quite fast. It is a sloop with large sails, heeled over almost to the deck level, several people visible near the stern.

Page 31: On Equinox Too [sic] under way on the Atlantic, Val on the wheel wearing weather gear.

Page 31: On E2 under way, looking forward at Robert standing at the wheel with Jeremy and Murray sitting.

Page 32: On E2, Mellisa on the wheel in full weather gear, only nose and eyes are visible, she is wearing a safety harness.

Page 32: Murray holding up a tuna we just caught. He is holding a stick with a hook, the tuna is impaled on the hook, blood running down its belly. The tuna reaches from his knees to his upper chest, he strains to hold it up with one arm.

Page 33: In E2's cockpit at night, the warmly dressed crew raising glasses in celebration of having come through another storm, unaware of the sinking of The Pride of Baltimore.

Page 34: A view of E2 from high up the mast. Crew are sitting in the cockpit and lying on the aft deck. The main is out on a beam reach.

Page 35: A drone photo of our boat Corvus in 2018, close hauled in flat water.