



# Clipper Snips

Summer 1999

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## President's Column

Dear Trailer/Sailors,

As I write these words (in mid May) the flowers have won their fight through the cool garden earth in Western Pennsylvania. But by the time you read my ramblings most of us will be enjoying the summer weather and the sailing that is so much apart of our lives.

“For Whom the Bells Toil”, our swing keel, standard rig, Catalina 25, sits at her dock at the Davis Hollow Marina at Lake Arthur. But just a few days ago she sat in the driveway waiting for a couple of warm days for me to don my coveralls and put another coat Micron CSC over the one a weather window allowed the week before. But by the time you read these words of mine, our boats will be gently pulling at their dock lines or swinging on the hook at a favorite anchorage. Major maintenance, will be something for the fall or next spring.

Every time the UPS truck rambles down the dirt road I live along called Creek Drive, I hope I will hear the brakes squeal to a stop in the limestone of my driveway. The new set of sails were or-

dered from Banks of Annapolis, Maryland, six weeks ago could be on that truck and I really hope they arrive soon.

The teak is Cetoled. The hull is waxed. The parts department of Catalina Yachts has promised me that the new rudder will arrive well before we trailer “Bells Toil” to Georgian Bay and the North Channel in early July.

So much thought and so much planning and so much time, not to mention so much expense. But it is who I am, who Debbie and I are as a couple. We are sailors. We have a Yacht Ensign flying from the flag pole in our front yard. My favorite Christmas present this year was the new mainsheet my son gave me. My extended family knows that if the sun is shining and the wind is blowing and I can slip away from the office between late April to late October, where I will probably be. We are sailors.

Fair Winds, Wayne Bell

## Trailer/Sailor's Association

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**Launch Ramp Advisory:** John Ulmer, 659 S. Canal St., Box 4101, Canal Fulton, OH 44614

The Association is a non-profit networking organization formed to provide those who sail trailerable boats with a means of exchanging ideas and information. The Association publishes a directory annually, as well as 3 issues a year of Clipper Snips. The Cruise Recorder's purpose is to put people in touch with each other. If you have plans, or want company, or want to know about other cruises, contact him. Clipper Snips accepts personal ads from members. All Clipper Snips articles are written by members.

**NOTE:** The editor welcomes articles on any and all aspects of the sail-boating experience (see contact information above). Deadline for the Autumn Issue is September 30.

## Summer 1999 Cruise to Ontario, Canada

*David Craigie*

Our summer cruise plans for summer 1999 take us again to Ontario Canada and Lake Huron's Georgian Bay and the North Channel. We will leave Oklahoma during the first week of June and have a relaxed road trip to the Syracuse NY area. There we will visit relations and make final preparations for our cruise.

Our cruise will begin on June 22 at Brewerton NY on the upper Onida River of the Erie Canal. From there we will passage through the Erie Canal out to Oswego NY on the shores of Lake Ontario. We will leave Oswego and cruise for a week on Lake Ontario, heading east across the St Lawrence River/Seaway and the entrance to the Thousand Island's area. We will enter Canada at Kingston, Ontario where we will check in through customs. After a little sightseeing we will sail west past Prince Edward Island and through the Bay of Quinte to Trenton. Here is found the southern entrance to the historic Trent-Severn Waterway that we will follow for 240 miles through forty-five locks. At the northern end of the Waterway we will pass through Port Severn and enter Lake Huron's Georgian Bay. We will spend the next month in this area and the North Channel cruising with Trailer/Sailors friends and a host of others. In mid August we will begin to retrace our course and return to Brewerton where we will put the boat back on the trailer. If time permits we would like to cruise up the St Lawrence River to the Alexandria area for a short visit. We will leave the boat in NY while we return to the New England area for some land cruising and a visit with relatives. We should be back in Oklahoma sometime in late September.

Because cruising by boat is not an exact science then an exact itinerary or a cruise plan is difficult to commit to writing. But we do have a good idea of where we want to go and a sort of "time frame" of when we want to be where. Following is just such a plan that is subject to change, not only before we leave, but after we leave too. For those that are in a spirited mood and wish to join up with us somewhere along the way to either sail with us in your own S/V or

perhaps show us your home cruising grounds, welcome. We plan to check our answering machine in Oklahoma as often as possible and our e-mail is being monitored by friends that will be aware of our most recent location and our general whereabouts for the next few days.

### Craigie Float Plan

**June 21** Mile Marker 150 Erie Canal Brewerton NY USA 21 miles. Launch "Incipient" and get under way by AM

**June 22** Mile Marker 23 Oswego Canal Oswego NY USA--12 miles. Arrive at Oswego in the early afternoon and raise mast for sailing. Enjoy Oswego for the rest of the day and prepare to leave in the AM.

**June 23 & 24** Lake Ontario USA & Canada--about 45 miles. Arrive at Kingston Ontario on the 23rd and check in with customs. Lay over a day and explore historic Kingston.

**June 25 & 26** Lake Ontario and the Bay of Quinte, Canada about 60 miles. Arrive at Trenton early on the 26th and lower the mast for passage in the Trent-Severn Waterway. Spend the remainder of the day enjoying Trenton.

**June 27 - 30 & July 1st** The Trent-Severn Waterway from Trenton to Peterborough, Ontario--90 miles. Enter the Trent-Severn Waterway and begin the passage that will go through 45 locks, including two hydraulic lift locks and a marine railway. Travel the 89.9 miles to Peterborough Ontario. Arrive at Peterborough on the 30th and stay through Canada Day, July 1st

**July 2 - July 8** The Trent-Severn Waterway from Peterborough to Port Severn, Ontario. Transit the remaining 160 miles of the waterway to Port Severn and the terminus of the Trent-Severn. There will be various stops along the way at Bobcaygeon, Coboconk, Beaverton, Kirkfield, Orillia and Severn falls and a variety of

**Craigie Float Plan, continued**  
chorages yet to be determined.

*(Continued on page 4)*

**July 9** Lower Georgian Bay. Meet up with the Laws and the Bells and sail north to the North Channel and a planned rendezvous with other Trailer/Sailors on July 18th in the Whalesback Channel.

**July 18 - August 15** *Sail with other T/S's in the North Channel and enjoy the area.*

**Mid August** *Start heading south and prepare to transit the Trent-Severn Waterway and head back to NY. We intend to be back in NY about the 7th - 10th of September.*

If anyone wants to join in on a part, or all of this journey, please get in touch.

David and Joyce Craigie,  
101 W Marshall Dr, Midwest City, OK 73110-5539 (405) 741-2555 e-mail:  
dcraigie@aol.com

## Boat information from the Internet

*Sue and Joe Orinko*

Sue & I and 'Unicorn' have been acquiring/sharing a lot of information about the Oday 23 on an email list hosted by Sam Cheryl Boyle at sailnet.com We registered for the Oday list on their web site giving them our email address. About 300 other Oday have done so. Being a member allows us to post questions in the form of an email. The server receives our email, and blasts it out to each of the other members. If they have information of a general nature, they email back to the list, and their response gets blasted out (to all 300). If anyone has information of a specific nature, they can email directly to our address. We love our Oday, but with the Oday company out of business the list is the best way to share information. Best part - IT'S FREE (and we're not noticed any increase in the amount of junk email). You can drop out of the list at any time.

If your boat is listed below, and you'd like to try it:

1. Go to sailnet website (use someone else's access if you have to; the list server works fine with the free emails like junos, yahoo, etc). <http://www.sailnet.com/list/index.htm>

2. Click on the list you want, and follow the instructions, entering the email address to which

you want email sent.

3. Read the Frequently Asked Questions (like no advertising)

4. Save the email response from the server - it tells you how to leave the list.

5. While you're at Sailnet, see if there's some way to help out the Boyles. We want them to stay in business.

The Oday list passes about 5-10 e-mails per day. Most I just blow away, but those particularly regarding the 23, I send a note. Someone has the information I want. I have knowledge/experience someone else needs.

|                                |                |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Allied Princess                | Bayfield       |
| Beneteau                       | Bristol        |
| Buccaneer                      | C&C            |
| C380                           | CAL            |
| Caliber                        | Catalina       |
| Charter Boat                   | Chrysler       |
| Columbia                       | Dufour         |
| Ericson                        | Hunter         |
| Island Packet                  | Islander       |
| J/Boats'                       | Jeanneau       |
| MacGregor                      | Moorings Group |
| Morgan                         |                |
| National Women's Sailing Assn  |                |
| Newport                        | O'Day          |
| Pacific Seacraft               | Pearson        |
| Ranger                         | Rhodes         |
| S2                             | Sabre          |
| Seafarer                       | Tartan         |
| Taswell                        | Tayana         |
| Texas Mariners Cruising Assoc. |                |
| Valiant                        | Wauquiez       |

I didn't see too many trailerable Island packets, but who knows.

## Cruise to the North Channel and Georgian Bay

*Wayne Bell*

Dear Trailer/Sailor,

Bell's Toil is looking forward to dipping her keel in the waters of the North Channel and Georgian Bay again this summer!!! This will be her 13th trip to these waters. We hope you are planning to join us.

The plan is very simple. We will rendezvous west of Spanish, Ontario, on Sunday, July 18. From there we will explore the North Channel: visit Gore Bay, the Benjamin Islands, as well as spending a few days in the newly charted McGregor Bay and at the full service marina at the Village of Wikwemikong on Manitoulin Island's eastern shore. We will be back in Spanish to pull out by Saturday, July 30.

On July 18th., we will rendezvous in an unnamed bay just northwest of Mulock Island along the Whalesback Channel (see attached float plan for directions). At this first rendezvous we are planning a "pot luck" get acquainted dinner on the bay's sand beach. Please bring food to share. Also, please bring a "prize" for the end of trip "awards banquet".

Finally, Bells Toil is planning to launch in the Midland area of Georgian Bay around July 6. Once the boat is in the water at Bay Port Marina, we will rent a car and use it to shuttle our truck and trailer north to Spanish. By Friday, July 9th., we plan to begin the sail north to make the rendezvous by the 18th.

Along the way, we hope to visit the white sand beaches of Beckwith Island as well as Giant's Tomb. If you have the time and would like to make the trip to the North Channel under sail, contact us. We will be glad to split the rental car with you. Dave and Heather Law as well as Dave and Joyce Craigie will probably be making the trip north with us.

Hope to see you in the North Channel!!

Fair Winds, Wayne and Debbie -----

### Bell Float Plan:

**Sunday, July 18** Anchorage: Unnamed Bay northwest of Mulock Island The unnamed bay is west of Spanish (46 deg 09.953' W / 082 deg 35.882' N), just off the Whalesback Channel. Exit the Whalesback at Berrypicker Rock (where the Whalesback narrows), pass north of Parsons Island and then Mulock Island (watch the chart for shoals). The bay is straight ahead -- white sand beach and all!!! This will be our first night "rendezvous and pot luck" on shore get acquainted dinner. Dinner is planned for 6:00 p.m.

**Monday, July 19** Anchorage: Turnbull Island This will be a short trip west through the Whalesback, about 10 miles. For those needing ice/fuel/water, a side trip into Serpent Harbor and the Spragge Yacht Club is an option. Last summer Trailer/Sailors' Gwen and Brian Meredith spent two days in the Turnbull anchorage watching a nesting pair of Bald Eagles.

**Tuesday, July 20** Anchorage: Gore Bay On Tuesday, weather permitting, we will get a chance to cross the North Channel to the wonderful town of Gore Bay. This trip is about 25 miles. Once in Gore Bay you can either tie up at a marina or anchor out in the usually protected bay. Someone else is cooking tonight!!!!

**Wednesday, July 21** Anchorage: The Benjamin Islands

What can one say -- South Benjamin Island!!! Pink granite, clear water, heights to climb, even a booming rock. Distance for the day will be about 14 miles.

**Thursday, July 22** Anchorage: lay day at the Benjamin Islands

This would be a perfect spot for a communal "blueberry pancake shore side dinner". Plan to bring pancake mix and syrup and a container for picking blueberries.

### Bell Float Plan continued

**Friday, July 23** Anchorage: Heywood Island  
(Continued on page 6)

This will hopefully be a 20 mile spinnaker run through the swing bridge. If anyone needs supplies or a chart for McGregor Bay, Little Current is the great place to stop before pushing past Strawberry Light to the large anchorage at Heywood.

**Saturday, July 24** Anchorage: The Village of Wikwemikong

The new marina at the village of Wikwemikong, in Smith Bay, on the eastern end of Manitoulin Island, was recently featured in Great Lakes Cruiser Magazine. This day will see us cover about 24 miles. When visiting in 1997, we had the wonderful opportunity to see the De-ba-jeh-mu-jig Theater Group present a traditional story in native language (with English translation) and costume. The production is done in a tipi that seats almost 100, pitched inside the ruins of a Mission. Great event!!!!

**Sunday, July 25** Anchorage: lay day at Wikwemikong

The staff at the marina in Wiki are very helpful. Their van will be available to transport those who wish to attend church services. The service is presented in both English and the Native Language. Laundry services are available at the marina, restaurants are a short distance away.

**Monday July 26** Anchorage: McGregor Bay

We will sail to McGregor Bay, about 25 miles away. (The first charts for McGregor Bay were released last summer. Make sure you pick up a copy of Canadian Chart #2206) We visited McGregor Bay last summer and cannot wait to return. Empty anchorages, loons, and mile after mile of small channels to explore by dingy.

**Tuesday, July 27** Anchorage: lay day at McGregor Bay

More exploring this newly charted area. Another great chance for a Trailer/Sailor dinner ashore.

**Wednesday, July 28** Anchorage: Sturgeon Cove

After looking at the wreck of the India off West Mary Island and "stocking up" in Little Current, we will head around the corner and slip into Sturgeon Cove for the night. 20 miles will take us from McGregor Bay to Sturgeon Cove.

**Thursday, July 29** Anchorage: Fox Harbor

Beautiful spot, about 14 miles from Sturgeon Cove. Along the way we can stop at Fort La Cloche at Notch Bay for lunch and a walk through what appears to be an almost enchanted forest.

**Friday, July 30** Anchorage: Shoepeck Bay

This will be our last night together, and after a short 8 mile sail, we will celebrate our time together with a final dinner ashore and awards banquet.

**Saturday, July 31** Anchorage: Spanish

Pull out and head home -- sorry that the trip has ended so soon.

## CHARTS & BOOKS FOR SALE

"Cruising Guide to Coastal North Carolina"  
by Claiborne Young  
3rd Edition 1994

Chart # 11545  
Beaufort Inlet & Part of Core Sound  
56th ed. May 14 '94

ADC's Chartbook of North Carolina  
7th Edition

Entire N.C. package: \$40. Cdn funds

"Cruising Guide to Western Florida:  
by Claiborne Young  
3rd Edition 1996  
\$30 Cdn. Funds

Prices include shipping

Please contact Al Janusas or Carol Pears  
(416) 769-7024  
324 Kennedy Ave. Toronto, Ont.  
Canada M6P 3C3

E-mail: Pearfect@netcom.ca

## A Visit with Gitchie Manitou

*Richard Wellington*

Departing Baie Fine we are hard on the weather. I am looking for the turning buoy, a green buoy. I have spotted the red one and know I must leave it to starboard but have not yet found the green. The waters of the North Channel are dotted with shoals, most of them charted, and the chart shows a lot of hard water in this area. Turning at the wrong time can mean a very bad day and a vacation, planned for over a year, ruined. There it is off to port, closer than I expected, and I fall off to a reach. Suddenly the sound all skippers dread. That grinding thump and bump as the keel finds bottom. Gitchie Manitou must have overheard last night's conversation with my brother when I spoke irreverently of some Indian cultures. Fortunately "Alissa" is a swing keel and Joy asks if I want the keel up. Bring it up five or six turns I respond. Up comes the keel and the boat, now stopped, is pushed higher on the shoal by wind and water. I drop all sail and reach for the radio. "PAN PAN PAN" I announce. "This is the Alissa, I am a 25 foot sailing sloop and am aground on Caroline Rocks." As I release the mike key I hear two other boats holding a conversation and I quickly check to see if I am on Channel 16. I am. No time to transmit again because Alissa has swung broadside to the sea and I hear the rudder bump the bottom. It must be saved if I expect to be able to sail after I get off this rock. I quickly spin the wing nut holding the tiller. Once more should do it. Now it is off and I watch the wing nut slip from my finger and drop onto Caroline Rock. With no time to worry about lost hardware, I drag the rudder into the cockpit. Fortunately it is not damaged.

Our venture to the North Channel began on June 21 1998 when we departed Las Vegas with Alissa our Catalina 25 in tow. 3500 miles would pass under her keel before we reached our ultimate destination --- Spider Bay Marina, on Manitoulin Island, Ontario, Canada. Manitoulin Island is the largest Island in the world completely surrounded by fresh water and separates Lake Huron from and dominates the horizon of the North Channel. Where ever you go in the

North Channel you cannot help but feel some reverence about this handiwork of the Creator. One hundred miles long, up to 20 miles wide, dotted with uninhabited islands, and from 0-250 feet deep. The area is young by geological standards, filled by the melt waters of retreating glaciers. It was the home of the Ojibway and Ottawa Indians and it was here their sages told them that, Gitchie Manitou gave the Ottawa the secret of growing maize from seed-- a gift of life. It is on Manitoulin Island that Gitchie Manitou is said to live.

Along the way we would visit relatives and friends, some we have not seen in years. Alissa would be our camper, a fact which caused some excitement when we pulled into campgrounds as we crossed the country. Alissa stood out among the various Recreational Vehicles styles and at a KOA Campground, the Manager apologized for not having an ocean to launch our "ship". I politely replied that I only expected to be here for one night and the swimming pool would be adequate.

We visited the town of my birth and by a chance encounter, found two cousins whom I had not seen for over forty years and believed they had died in an aircraft accident. Thru them I was able for the first time to visit the farm where my father was born. The house and Barn have long ago burned but foundations are still visible. Gone were the chicken coop and equipment buildings however the most important building of all was still standing; a small lone structure set apart from the house with a bench seat with two holes--- the outhouse.

When you take a trip of over seven thousand miles there are always incidents which make it memorable and this trip is no exception. Those stories do not lend themselves to this article and so must wait for another time. We visited the "Shining deep sea waters of Gitchie Goomie" (read the legend of Hiawatha) and Pic

**A visit with Gitchie Manitou, continued**

*(Continued on page 8)*

tured Rocks state park. We put in at Escanaba in the upper peninsula of Michigan and sailed on the northern reaches of Green Bay.

We rendezvous at Spider Bay with my brother Roy and his Wife Vicki who sailed their Island Packet 32 "Seascope" from Lake Erie. We stepped Alissa's mast in winds of 15 knots and put our provisions aboard. We launched on a beautiful Sunday morning with winds blowing from the west at about 10 knots.

We depart for Sturgeon Cove on the north shore of Great La Cloche Island. The entrance to Sturgeon Cove is protected by a sizable reef on the north west and the charts have a + mark in the mouth of the cove indicating a rock. As we arrive the winds have increased to the 15 - 20 knot range and it is difficult to make out the reef among the whitecaps and so I give its charted location a wide berth. Joy goes up on the bow to stand "rock watch" a procedure which is vital when operating close to land. We developed a procedure where my wife Joy would use the hand held radio on the same channel as the main VHF and she could talk to me without having to shout over the wind. A zig zag course thru the inlet avoids the rock and places us inside the cove where the waters are calm. We anchor in the north east corner, and after securing the boat we signal "Seascope" that hors d'oeuvres and cocktails are at the ready

This same scene is repeated for ten days and nights, alternating the duties as the evening host. We cruise from one beautiful anchorage to the next. Each one with it's own personality and each one more beautiful than the next. From the Benjamin Islands which are made of pink granite rocks to the secluded limestone encircled Covered Portage Cove, picking wild blueberries for morning cereal at some, enjoying the camaraderie of fellow sailors at others. Just past dreamers rock a sacred place to the local Ottawa, is Birch Island Lodge, a fishing camp with cedar cabins and wooden boats. It is accessible only by boat. Dinner is served at 6:00 p.m. by reservation only, and the choice of menu belongs to the cook. The meal is superb as are the service and the surroundings. Gary and Margo Schroeder are gracious hosts and will motor out to your anchored boat to invite you to visit and will provide taxi

service at meal time. We visited the wreck of a steamship at West Mary Island, and stopped at the government docks to visit Little Current, with her fine restaurants, shops, museum and the monument to their war dead "—Men who now lie in Flanders Fields" reads the marker. And of course "The Pool".

"The Pool" is totally isolated from all winds and lies still and reflective at the end of a magnificent fjord called Baie Fine. During the two days we anchored there we hiked to Topaz, Cave and Artist Lakes. Very scenic and beautiful lakes in Killarney Provincial Park. My favorite, Topaz Lake sits in a bowl of limestone and its depth reflects the sky with a beautiful blue hue. Some of the trails in this area are actually part of a system of canoe portage trails in the North Channel area, making hiking fairly easy.

The North Channel is a favorite place for the cruising sailor. I spent two weeks there, but two months would not be enough time to see it all. Many sailors return time and again. The North Channel can easily become a state of mind and is by far the best cruising area on the Great Lakes.

Once the rudder was aboard I started the motor and swung the stern to the direction of my approach and asked for keel up. Once the keel cleared, the motor pulled Alissa off of Caroline Rocks. Once clear I reattached the rudder (without a wing nut). I can wish you nothing better than a chance to cruise in the North Channel and visit the home of Gitche Manitou. When you do, if you find yourself close to Caroline Rocks and have the time, I wouldn't mind having that wing nut back.

### For Sale

CS22 Sloop, 1974, white, fully equipped, 6HP o/b, dual axle trailer. Excellent condition, mostly dry-stored.

Contact Jack Beggs,  
2586 Cheswick, Troy, MI 48084  
(248) 646-5082  
E-mail: jarobeggs@juno.com

## Cruising and Cursing on the Big E

*Frank Weeks*

It all began in an innocent enough manner. After months of endless crowing about the fine sailing qualities of Skipjack, my Macgregor 26, (and my own abilities as a skipper), I was finally able to recruit a couple of hardy souls to go cruising with me on Lake Erie over Labor Day weekend 1998. My shipmates were my brother Stormin' Norman and my buddy Rick, known in navigating circles as "el chummo". Both stalwarts are in their 40's like me and old enough to know better! The following is a brief account of the battle:

9/3/98 We arrived at Erie, Pa. at 4:00pm and launched at Lampe Marina. This is a fine place to launch with first-class ramps and free overnight parking, restrooms, and fuel. (No, the fuel isn't free!) We motored several miles into the lake and then bent on the sails for a little shake-down cruise. There was a mild West breeze and we had a good time and some good laughs as the guys fumbled with the gear and generally got used to the ways things work on a sailboat. Norman had good sailing experience but was a little rusty as he had been off the water for several years. Rick had sailed on the Skipjack only once before. Everything was new to him.

After a fine time we sailed up to the channel leading into Presque Isle Bay and struck the sails. We headed the "Skippy" straight to Rumrunner's Restaurant for food and drink. Rumrunner's is located right on the water so you can tie up and enjoy yourself and keep an eye on your boat at the same time! After supper we motored a short distance to Misery Bay located near the Commodore Perry Monument. It may have been miserable in 1812 but it's not that way anymore. The park there has restrooms and picnic tables and a cement jetty with good cleats. Overnight docking is not allowed but you can anchor out in the small bay as long as you are showing an all-around white light. We had a fine evening. There was a soft South breeze puffing across the water. The city lights and the stars were both beautiful and we relaxed and drank a toast to our imminent departure for Port Dover. log 7.8nm

9/4/98 After loads of hot coffee and several bagels we set sail for Canada. We hoisted the main-sail and the genoa to a South wind and made our course for Long Point Lighthouse 30 miles to the North. I say we hoisted the genoa because I don't have roller-furling. I don't like the loss in performance versus a hanked-on sail and I guess I'm just a little old fashioned because I like working the headsails on the foredeck! After about 20 miles the wind started to shift Southwest and then West and pick up. I struck the genoa and raised the working jib. Soon it was necessary to reef the main. The breeze kept rising and we sailed hard to within 7 miles of Long Point. I've heard it said that when you're out on the lake things can change suddenly. Well...In less than a minute the wind pulled a 180 degree shift to the North and picked up to 15 knots. We flogged around for about 2 hours but seemed to make very little headway. After a long discussion (about 10 seconds) we said "the heck with it", struck the sails and motored over the bar. You need to stay away from the lighthouse a distance because of shoaling. The water was only 6 feet deep where we crossed the bar but it soon dropped to 60 feet in Long Point Bay.

Long Point is a deserted sandspit with no facilities. You are not supposed to go ashore there because it is a wildlife preserve. Another 15 miles across the bay to the Northwest brings you into Port Dover. There are numerous underwater gas wells in the bay some of which are marked by bouys, whips, or posts. Keep a sharp lookout because those babies can sneak up on a guy! They are fairly well charted. The Canadian Government has just printed a beautiful chart of the bay which is a work of art in itself. There is now one in the Skipjack chart tube.

As soon as we crossed the bar that big bad North wind just.....died! Nothing. Nowhere. OK. Once we motored the whole 15 miles from the bar to Port Dover. It was a clear day and absolutely calm. So much so that the water was as liquid

*(Continued on page 10)*

### **Cruising and Cursing on the Big E, continued**

glass with no ripple or disturbance whatsoever. Janie and I could see the water tower at our destination, but progress seemed to be excruciatingly slow. I did not want to repeat that experience. Motoring just isn't as much fun as sailing!

Slowly a breeze started from the West. After an hour there was enough to go on so I raised the genoa and the main. The wind blew steadily stronger. Now we had to shift down through the gears again. Down with the genoa, up with the jib...Reef the main....About 5 miles South of the harbor the wind went North all at once and blew to 20 knots. We tacked and tacked against a stiff chop and then motored the last several miles in. This was a demanding 12 hour trip with lots of sail changes. We were beat.

Port Dover is a good place for a weary mariner to tie up. We got a slip at the Port Dover Harbor Marina (519-583-1314). Canada's small boat harbors are absolutely first class. We could take a lesson in the States from our neighbors. They do everything right up North! The Marina is clean with excellent docks, clean hot showers, and friendly staff. The natives are friendly too! We were immediately invited onto the yacht Time for a beer with Dave, the owner. The town is a commercial fishing center and also a resort. There are plenty of restaurants, gift shops, and watering holes for the sea-weary. There is even a nice local museum if you like that kind of stuff. I do. If you don't care to walk the 1/2 mile to town you can ride the "Dover Rover" which is a cute little tram that goes all over town. The Board of Trade will even lend you a bicycle free of charge to pedal around on! No kidding! log 52nm

9/5/98 We went daysailing on a gusty 15 knot SW wind, seas to 3ft. There were some super windsurfers out. How do those people do that? Some other boats came out for awhile but I guess they became despondent at the lack of perfect conditions and headed back in like a posse was on their heels! This was a good day to train my crew as up until now I had been doing most of the sail handling myself. My cohorts had feigned ignorance once too often to remain credible and I now saw through their clever little smokescreen. After some verbal "encouragement" they became

somewhat more interested! They were really good sports and outright threats of a flogging turned out not to be necessary. log 12.2nm

9/6/98 This was the day when things became very interesting. Stormin' Norman had started to have withdrawal symptoms because his missed his new puppy dog. No kidding. It was at his request that we entered the belly of the beast. Overnight the wind had shifted SW to 20 knots. Every American boat that could move had cleared the jetty by 7:00am in hopes of beating the deteriorating weather conditions on the way back to the States. Every boat but one. The Skipjack and her hearty crew were moving a little slowly that morning after a night on the town. Now Long Point Bay is sheltered somewhat from the open Lake when a SW wind is blowing. Our plan was to sail to Long Point and assess the situation. If conditions looked bad, we could anchor overnight behind Long Point or Bluff Bar and be protected from the seas, if not the wind. We sailed under reefed main and jib across 3ft. seas toward long Point. We made good progress and dropped the hook about 2 mi. E of the lighthouse to catch our breath. By this time the marine forecast was "SW winds 15-20 kts, seas 4-6ft." Now I had just taken delivery of a storm jib and storm trysail from Atlantic Sail Traders of Sarasota, Florida. They were not cheap. On first examination they looked to be impossibly small and stiff. Like cardboard and about the size of the top of a picnic table! My first reaction was "How are these things going to do any good?" I had only used them once before just to be sure I could rig them if needed.

We had a conference and planned our strategy as follows:

1. We had made it this far OK on reefed main and jib, only 30 miles to go.
2. We could set the storm sails, cross the bar and see how it went.
3. We could always return and anchor in sheltered water if need be.

And so the Skippy and her crew set out across the bar at Long Point and into the open waters of

### **Cruising and Cursing on the Big E, continued**

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the big E. At first there was little difference in the sea conditions. After we had gone about 5 mi though, things started getting rough. The forecast was now "Small craft advisory, SW wind 20 to 30kts, seas 4 to 6 feet". Those weather guys need a new yardstick. About 10 miles out we were in 6 to 8 ft seas with some running 10 and even 12 feet high. I have crossed the Atlantic Ocean Twice and crewed on a 1000mile yacht race in the Pacific and it looked just like the open ocean to me! My crew by this time was looking somewhat nervous and I don't blame them a bit. It wasn't necessary to order them to don their life vests as we had been wearing them all weekend. I was also wearing a safety harness even though I had no plans whatsoever about going on deck.

The remarkable thing was that the Mac 26 was behaving like a baby. We were close-hauled heading South on a Southwest wind. It was blowing a good 25 to 30 kts and gusting higher at times. As far as I could tell the maximum angle of heel due to wind conditions alone never exceeded 10 degrees! We were going diagonally into the waves, up and down, up and down, just like a roller-coaster. There was never a time when the boat felt loaded up, or wrong, or anything like that. Due to the excessive wave motion it was hard to keep a steady heading. I was constantly correcting and over-correcting to extract the highest course possible. We were making a steady 5.5 kts to windward but I knew that we were also sideslipping. In addition we couldn't be making a proper course to Erie anyway because the wind direction was about 8 degrees into the realm of impossibility for this.

So there we were; bouncing around but still feeling quite safe. We were getting hit by a lot of spray from the bow but it was a very hot sunny day and it felt cool and refreshing. The wind was blowing so hard I couldn't keep a hat on and so I got a burn on my forehead. We only put the bow under one time all day and I missed it! I was watching something else. I was sitting on the starboard side of the cockpit with the tiller in my left hand and a stanchion in my right. My crew was coping as best they could. Rick was seated just ahead of me and holding on with a most extraordinarily tight grip. From time to time he would look back at me somewhat mournfully but

he never lived up to his nickname. Stormin' Norman on the other hand wanted to eat some sandwiches and candy. After that he decided it was time to smoke a cigar. Then he announced that since nothing was happening he was going to take a nap! What a nervy guy!!

This was the wildest sail I've had on inland waters and I can only commend Roger Macgregor on the fine sea-keeping abilities of the Mac26. This boat can really take it. Also Atlantic Sail Traders deserve a lot of credit for their fine products which allowed us to safely navigate in such harsh conditions.

On deck everything was OK. Below decks was another story. Even though my instructions about stowing the gear below had been quite specific, certain deficiencies had become apparent. A quick glance confirmed this. The cabin floor was by now an indecipherable mish-mash of clothes, sleeping bags, bottles, broken cookies, smashed sandwiches, spilled drinks, shoes, hats, condiments...you get the picture! Then, the nadir came with a mighty crash and a stricken cry from below! Fearing the worst I allowed myself a quick look below decks. Horrified, I saw that the worst had actually happened! The "Big Boy", our largest and stablest cooler had done a somersault and ejected it's entire soggy contents on top of the already disgusting mixture. Now the mess was wet and cold and sloshing around, milk spilling, pepperoni rolling about, dollar bills in a potato salad lake...Sometimes even I can get depressed. Stormin' Norman was by now in a state of shock. A sodden cigar can do that to a man!

At last we could see land through the haze. We were about 8 miles off course to the NE of Erie. As we neared shore the seas moderated quickly and we were soon back to the mainsail and jib again. We made Lampe Marina just at dusk at 8:30pm. We were dog-tired after 13 1/2 hours of action, but there is a special kind of feeling in having done something difficult in a good way. Tired or not, no one could face the 'monster' below decks so we hauled out and headed for home.... log49nm

## Notes on Cruising the Florida Keys

*Guy Hubbard*

The idea of cruising the Florida Key and visiting Key West, the southernmost city in the continental United States, had a romantic ring to it. This is especially true in the depths of a northern winter. So during February and March this year the idea was turned into a reality. Once again, I joined up with George Iemmolo of Lancaster, PA--also of Trailer/Sailors--and we headed South away from the cold of Bloomington, Indiana. About half way through the cruise, George left and I was joined by another friend, Bob Hamontre of Bloomington.

About the only worry when leaving the Middle West in February is being caught by a surprise winter storm. Happily, that didn't happen, and the 1300+ mile trip was uneventful. At any time during these two winter months, however, the prospect of hazardous road conditions is cause for concern, especially when hauling a 5600 lb. load, a Seaward 25, and having to rely on surge brakes to control the beast.

Deciding on a suitable launch site to start and end a cruise is important and always includes a certain amount of luck when going to an area for the first time. Marinas are not at all equal and neither are their ramps--or their staffs. In the end, I settled on Sea Bird Marina located at the NE tip of Long Key. I'd read several accounts of this marina on the Internet, mostly positive, so I gave the place a call and arranged to put in at their ramp, and also to store the Jeep and trailer.

Sue Bolick, along with husband, Joe, run the place and were very cordial. The marina turned out to have a well surfaced, fairly steep ramp. It's a small, working marina, however, so people looking for an upscale resort should go elsewhere. Since our needs were modest, it was perfect.

Another reason for deciding on Long Key was the key, itself. As I studied my charts, I was struck by the lack of protected harbors all along the Keys, especially if stranded by the many low bridges on either the Florida Bay or the Atlantic Ocean sides of the chain at the wrong time. The

large Long Key Bight is an exception in that it offers protection from almost every direction with the exception of the East. But a shoal draft boat like mine can still find shelter from even an easterly wind by tucking behind the southeastern hook of the key. The one drawback to this area didn't occur until later when a nighttime wind shift led us to drag our anchor almost on to a lee shore.

The water in the Bight is about 6-7 feet and the bottom is thickly covered with grass. When anchoring there, we usually tried to find a patch of sand for our CQR anchor, but this one time the weather was so quiet when we arrived that we were careless and didn't bother. A wind shift to the North during the night, together with a considerable increase in speed was enough to pull the anchor loose. The mat of grass then prevented the anchor from grabbing again so we dragged our way across the Bight. We were saved only by a routine check just before 5am, that revealed all visual references to be out of alignment. We then spent a brisk 20 minutes or so hauling the anchor and motoring upwind, all the while admiring the early dawn sky.

Another advantage to Long Key is the presence of the Channel Five high bridge at the eastern end. Before leaving home I had sensed that the choice of sailing on either the North or the South side of the Keys would likely be a function of the weather. And it was. But because of the bridge, Long Key offers the choice of sailing in the Hawk Channel on the Ocean side or on the Florida Bay side. The strong northerly winds that blew during part of our cruise often made the Bay choppy and uncomfortable, while the same winds in the Hawk Channel were just as good with minimal wave action. On several occasions, however, with a strong wind in just the right direction, we enjoyed exhilarating broad reaches on the Bay side in relative calm water when wave action on the Ocean side would have been

**Notes on Cruising the Florida Keys, continued**

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too much of a roller coaster for comfort.

As newcomers to the area, we soon discovered that for all practical purposes, there are only two useful high bridges on the Keys. Channel Five is one of them. Another is the Moser Channel Bridge, near Vaca Key (Marathon). Further West, the Niles Channel Bridge has a 40 foot clearance but it doesn't give access into Florida Bay--at least not to neophytes like us. To the East of the Channel Five is Snake Creek (East of Islamorada), with a bascule bridge, that also connects the Bay with the Ocean. The shallow sand bar at the northern entrance would not be a problem for most Trailer/Sailors but would certainly be cause for concern with deeper drafted boats. No more crossovers are then available until the far eastern end of Key Largo--not far from Miami.

We found that the two sides of the Keys--Florida Bay and Hawk Channel--each have their strengths as cruising areas. Except for fishermen's markers, the Hawk Channel is a broad, relatively deep, well marked shelf that tends to flatten ocean swells and is mostly free of hazards. When the wind was not in our teeth, the sailing was really excellent. Moreover, the water is a beautiful bright green. Farther out, the color changes to the almost unbelievable blue of the Gulf Stream. At first, we thought the blue was simply a feature of the much deeper water, but that cannot be. With anything but a southerly wind, we found the Hawk Channel to be green. With a southerly wind flow, however, blue water pushes closer to shore in areas where formerly it had been green. Regardless of the color, we delighted in the experience of sailing these beautiful, crystal clear waters.

Bay side sailing is a different experience. Huge shallow pools are linked by narrow channels. When away from the channel markers we often found it hard to tell just exactly where we were and how deep the water might be ahead of us. On one occasion, for example, we saw a large, handsome yacht that had been flying downwind suddenly stop, having gone aground only a short distance from the Intracoastal Waterway. The wind speed that day was somewhere between 25 and 30, and it was some time before a passing power boat could haul her loose.

The channels between the sand bars are well marked and do not present problems to sailboats. But headwinds can interfere with the pleasure of sailing the open spaces between the narrow channels. I'm sure that with greater local knowledge, these large shallow pools of water would become excellent sailing playgrounds. Our first impressions were somewhat different, however.

I've already described the Long Key Bight anchorage. Some of the others we enjoyed include the little harbor at Key Colony Beach Inlet, the Niles Channel, and the Newfound Harbor Channel. The last two are large, so it may be necessary to hunt around for protection. From what I could tell, only strong southerly winds would be likely to cause problems. During our time in the Keys, the strongest winds were from the East, North, and West so these anchorages were just fine. We also spent one night in Saddlebunch Harbor, a few miles East of Boca Chica. It's very small and is well protected from the East--which is what we needed; but I'd be very uncomfortable if the weather turned nasty from another direction. There's nowhere to go.

Another place we enjoyed was the northern end of Snake Creek. While we only stopped there for lunch it felt as though it was quite isolated, when it really wasn't. The constant flow of power boats made me think that it would be too disturbing for an overnight anchorage even with reduced nighttime traffic. A channel that resembles Snake Creek is Sister Creek. It lies at the southerly entrance to Boot Key Harbor, near Marathon. Boot Key Harbor, itself, was a zoo with over 300 sailboats at anchor. As far as we could tell, all the remaining spaces were either shallows or wrecks. Sister Creek, on the other hand, was another world. Beyond the heavily developed area on the southeastern shore of the entrance, it wound between mangrove-lined shores that were much like Florida must have been in earlier times. We accidentally took a wrong turn down one of the side channels. **FortuNotes on Cruising the Florida Keys, continued**

nately the Seaward turns a dime in calm conditions so we were able to escape before it became too narrow.

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Some mention of the weather we experienced should appear somewhere. The winds in February and March this year were generally moderate to strong for my boat, so sailing was good until we wanted to beat to windward. On those occasions, the combination of wind and waves--especially in the Hawk Channel--made progress slow and uncomfortable. As a consequence, we would often decide on a destination for the day just before leaving an anchorage in order to make the most of a favorable wind. Regardless of the wind, most days were sunny and nights were clear, with periodic fast-moving frontal systems moving through to provide excitement. However, we were surprised by how cold the air temperature was, especially during the first half of the cruise. We had naively expected conditions in the Keys always to be balmy; and they weren't. The sunshine was warming, but once off-shore we had to wear sweaters and wind-breakers.

I can't think of anyone cruising the Keys who doesn't plan on going to Key West at some time. I found myself there twice on this cruise, in part because of the wishes of my crew. As I mentioned at the beginning, I cruise with friends. Sometimes one of them is able to come for an entire cruise, but frequently that's not possible. What I do then is arrange for one to come for a period and another to join me as soon as possible after the first one departs. On rare occasions, as many as three people have come in sequence, although scheduling becomes complicated when more than two people are involved. In any event, that's how it was that Key West was visited twice.

The enormous cruise ships are undoubtedly the most astonishing spectacle when arriving in Key West by water. Watching them come and go provides constant entertainment. Some maneuver to the dock under their own power, while others require the assistance of tugs. On one day, three of these leviathans were in port at one time and thoroughly dwarfed the city. Of course, as soon as they dock, hundreds (it seems like thousands) of people are spilled out into the town and the merchants are there to satisfy their desires, from T-shirts and trinkets to paintings and sculpture. As you might expect, every kind of food and drink establishment is represented. We sampled

some of the eating places, concluding that our cooking was not quite as good as theirs, although the ambience of our cockpit was much superior.

While in Key West the first time, I decided that I needed a haircut. After the barber finished, it was evident from what he had done to me that he must either have learned his trade in the Marines or in a penitentiary. Luckily, by the time I arrived home my appearance no longer caused people who knew me to giggle.

Probably the best view of Key West is from the observation lounge of a cruise boat. A good alternative is go to the roof of the downtown Holiday Inn. It's an old building, but it's also the highest building in the city as far as I could determine. And the view gives a visitor an excellent sense of the city and its surroundings--including good views into the observation lounges of the cruise ships!

We also visited several marinas to get a sense of where to go the next time we were in Key West--and also to enjoy more frequent showers than were possible when at anchor. On one occasion, we stopped over at the Key West Oceanside Marina. It is on Stock Island and nowhere near the city of Key West, as we learned to our cost when trying to get into town. Although the marina staff were cordial, we found ourselves moored a few feet from the path of a giant forklift that carried power boats from a high rise storage shed to outdoor racks in preparation for launching (or vice versa) from 7am through 5pm. The silence after 5pm was cause for celebration, while sleep was out of the question after 7am. Close-by is another marina that is mainly for sailboaters. Perhaps we'll try that one next time: it's also less expensive.

The Key West Municipal Marina seemed to be a good destination until we had to get there. Power boats simply run under a low bridge between **Notes on Cruising the Florida Keys, continued**

Fleming Key and the island of Key West, but sailboats have to go the not inconsiderable length of Fleming Key before being able to turn toward Garrison Bight where the Marina is located. The Marina, itself, is fine; but with the wind out of

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the North we had to motor half the way there from Key West Harbor.

On another occasion, we tried one of the marinas in Key West Bight--in the heart of downtown. This place is quite an experience! In fact, if many more docks are built there, it will be paved over. To give some sense of scale to our situation, we found ourselves in a marina where all the slips were 50 foot long and correspondingly wide. Our 25 foot sailboat looked diminutive occupying such a large watery hole, not to mention being overshadowed by monster powerboats. Several times we wondered if it might have felt better had we moored alongside one of the cruise ships.

From my personal perspective, our pleasantest night in Key West was when anchored close under the western shoreline of Fleming Key, North of Key West harbor, surrounded by boats of more modest size, and watching wading birds silently hunt fish. This is a great place to anchor when the winds are easterlies; but it would not be so good with anything from the West. This and the roadstead separating Key West from smaller keys to the West is home to hundreds of boats in various states of upkeep. It looks like a community of its own and probably is. I suspect that once there for a while you'd get to know your neighbors better than the residents do in the more expensive marinas.

No cruise of the Florida Keys should end without reference to the pump-out services--or lack of them! I have cruised the upper Great Lakes and the Chesapeake Bay and also the Sun Coast of Florida, and in all of these areas are pump-out stations where waste tanks can be emptied. I should mention that I do not have an alternative means of discharging the contents of my waste tank. In the Florida Keys, we spent more time calling marinas as well as checking on arrival only to find pumps--where they existed at all--were broken ("The part is on order and should arrive soon"). In one instance, we were told that the pump was broken, only to discover that the dockhand just didn't like doing that kind of work--when it was really me who was handling the hose anyhow. Of the few marinas that had workable pump-out facilities, two of them charged \$25.00 for the service (my tank holds about 10 gallons!). This kind of extortion caused

me to consider putting in a diverter valve to my tank and doing what I'm told other boaters do in the area, namely, going off the coast a few miles and dumping into the sea. The comment made to me several times was that the cruise ships pump raw sewage into the sea so what difference does it make.

The treatment of boat sewage is a sore point, and Boat/US has taken it on as one its missions. All I can report here is that cruisers should think carefully about this problem before they visit the Keys, and if they still decide to go they should phone as many marinas as possible in advance to determine (a) whether pump-out facilities exist, (b) whether a facility is actually operational, and (c) what the charge is for a pump-out. The problem intruded significantly into our cruising plans and caused us to make VHF and telephone calls that frequently resulted in misinformation and frustration as well as clear evidence that numbers of marina staff really didn't care.

Grass and weed! Floating carpets of it. I don't know where it all came from, but we encountered lots of it on both sides of the Keys, often in great lines which compelled us to sail through it. It wraps itself around rudders and especially around propellers. At the outset we were naive about the problem, until on one occasion we decided to use the engine. Then it became of problem. The engine seemed to be working normally but we were stationary. My first thought was that the fault lay with the propeller (which, indirectly, was true), so we raised sail again. Not until my friend (with thicker blood than me) went over the side did we discover the mess that had wrapped itself around the prop.

On subsequent occasions, we solved the weed-prop problem by putting the engine into reverse  
**Notes on Cruising the Florida Keys, continued**

and spinning the stuff off. If that hadn't worked, the prospect of having to go overboard in difficult conditions would have been daunting. The floating vegetation can also clog water intake strainers on inboard engines and causing them to overheat. As it was, during our five week cruise the strainer had to be cleaned every week or so.

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This account of our cruise must not end without mention of meeting with two Trailer/Sailor members who were wintering in Marathon. Through Bob Hodgson I'd learned that Mike Collins had a slip at The Banana Bay Resort on the Bay side of Vaca Key. So on one of the days between the departure of, George, and the arrival of Bob, I went visiting. I found Mike relaxing on the dockside beneath a sunshade just inches from his personal refrigerator. It seems that he and his wife have been coming to this spot for years to escape the rigors of the Minnesota winter. We had an enjoyable conversation until he had to leave. I then went in search of another Trailer/Sailor, Gordon Lepley.

I'd met Gordon and his wife last summer while on a T/S A cruise of the North Channel led by Gordon Macdonald. Gordon Lepley is from Decatur, in my home state of Indiana. He sails the upper Great Lakes during the summer and then heads South to the Keys for the winter. I found

Gordon near his boat at Marathon Marina on the Ocean side of Vaca Key. Once again, we had an enjoyable talk before he was called away to help a friend with a newly purchased boat.

As with all good things, this first cruise of the Keys came to an end and we hauled the boat and headed North. Back at Sea Bird Marina, Joe Bolick made the task of retrieving "True Blue" look much simpler than when I do it. He told me that he didn't know much about sailing but he knew a lot about ramps. And I know that to be true.

## A Bahamas Cruise—Part 1

*Ray Davidson*

Call it a challenge or curiosity or maybe bit crazy, but I've wanted to sail the Bahamas since the late 80's when we owned our Hunter 23. In fact we made several attempts with our Hunter. Now with hindsight I realize that we had too little boat and too little skill/knowledge, mostly the latter. In 1992 with a new F 27 we, along with the Gecklers, did successfully cruise 350 miles of the northern Bahamas, but even before returning home we were told that we really didn't do the cruiser's cruise, that is, cruise in areas where sailors typically visit. We missed the Abacos as well as other areas depending on one's time. Obviously the trip had to be repeated. Dinah, my wife, did not quite see the need, however. But now it's 1999, and I'm retired, and the winters haven't warmed up that much yet so why not? The Gecklers were more than ready, and Dinah could probably be persuaded to go especially with the interest that Jack and Judy Johnson had expressed in going along too. The thought of three F 27's cruising the Bahamas together seemed a bit more appealing to Dinah, and in the end she would go again. Our plan was for all three boats

to meet at Stuart, Florida. Unfortunately the Johnsons had a bad accident in a snowstorm only three hundred miles into their trip down, and did a great deal of damage to their boat, and could not make the trip. Needless to say we were all very disappointed. Basically the idea was to go to a nice place and cruise the winter. I had no plans of writing about it. However I have had a number of people inquire about our 1992 trip, and upon reflection we did gather a great deal of practical experience. And it seemed like a shame not to share it. I then felt compelled to put something together for those fellow trailer sailors who are interested. So I thought I would emphasize planning, equipment and our experiences from a cruise's viewpoint.

Initially our thinking revolved around things like a long period out of the country (between two and three months), long (for us) open ocean passages, the Gulf Stream crossing, and fuel, water,

**Bahamas Cruise, continued**

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and food to be carried aboard. Crossings between islands typically would be thirty to seventy nautical miles. I purchased a new Johnson 9.9 hp sail-drive, and it's bit a of a gas hog – no room for any of the four strokes. Fuel consumption is at best 6mpg; I used 5mpg for my estimates. So I started out carrying 27 gallons and increased it to 32 gallons. Plus three gallons of two cycle oil. My concern was that in the Bahamas one may not find fuel at one's destination, and you may have to go a considerable distance to the next source of fuel. We carried approximately 30 gallons of water also. After a few weeks into the trip both boats experienced growth in the on-board water tanks. We added bleach and or peroxide, neither worked, and we ended up just buying bottled water for drinking, and using the other for washing dishes and people. Regarding food we were concerned about availability in the Bahamas as well as cost, so we bought some \$300 dollars worth before leaving Michigan. This included paper products, soaps and such as one would normally get in a grocery store and plenty of canned foods. We added to all this in Florida, once we got the boat in the water, with pop, juices, nuts and candies for, we hoped two months. Another concern was long term vehicle and trailer storage. I had found a couple of places by phone, but Ed did some excellent searching and come up with a place very close for \$1 per day. Both boats carried the Bahamas chart book, and I carried a full set of charts for backup. We had many redundant capabilities for the trip. We also had a number of cruising guidebooks. And I carried a copy of Florida's East Coast inlets which detail all the inlets from the open ocean, which could be very important should the sea kick up during the return crossing. Some inlets can become deadly under some circumstances of unusually high onshore wind and waves. I regretted not taking my Florida East Coast cruising guide, which details the Inter Coastal Waterway or ICW, as well as marinas and anchorages.

Dinah and I pulled into the parking area on January 1, 1999. We had been there before, but what a thrill to see Valkerie at anchor perhaps 200 yards out. The morning was bright and warm. I walked out on the breakwater to try and get Ed or Jesse's attention, and almost immediately Ed came out of the cabin and looked in my direction.

I waved, and they were in the dinghy headed in. Things were looking pretty good, two boats in Stuart, and the third due the next day. After a friendly greeting we got the bad news. The Johnsons had an accident and smashed the right ama. We were shocked. We discussed it, but in the end they were not going to make it, and we would go as two instead of three boats. Ed and Jessie helped us set-up and launch the boat, and we found a good place to anchor near the dinghy dock. We were in no hurry to leave Stuart; it's a nice place to visit. We tried several of the restaurants in the area, and added to our already burgeoning supplies, and just relaxed after our drive down from Michigan. On January 6, 1999 we set out. We planned on sailing south on the outside, weather permitting, or just trudging down the Inner Coastal Waterway to Lake Worth. Well the wind was up and so were the waves so we did the ICW with its' shallow water, boat wakes and endless bridges. We anchored the first night out at Hobb Sound, and arrived the next afternoon at Lake Worth. There is a large anchorage at the north end. We dropped anchor and joined the crowd.

I carried three anchors for the trip, and used my primary, which is a 23lb Danforth along with my lunch hook, which is a 13lb Danforth. The holding seems quite good, and it is well protected from all directions except south. At the northwest corner of the lake there is a shallow river that brings you to a bridge with access to shore. A cable has been provided so boaters can lock their dinghies up. Be advised to bring ten or twelve feet of small cable or light chain that can be threaded though motor and dinghy transom so as to be able to secure your equipment. I drilled a one-inch hole through my dinghy transom, near the top, so I can put a quarter inch chain through. Within a quarter of a mile walk there is large super market, a Publix, I believe, and several restaurants, as well as a gas station. A little further there is a West Marine and several additional restaurants. For a dollar bus ride you have access

**Bahamas Cruise, continued**

to a super mall about two miles away. Or you can walk it in 45 minutes. We found Lake Worth to be an exceptionally good place to stop. We had

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hoped that we would get a good weather window within a day or two, but it didn't happen so instead of heading across, we headed south again in the ICW. Our Bahamas destination was West End on Grand Bahama Island. Departing from Lake Worth would require a track of 95 degrees true. Once you figure in windward capability for a sailboat, and allowances for a Gulf current of two or three knots, you need a wind direction of south to west, which is rare except in prefrontal conditions. Winds out of the north are a no-go because of potentially dangerous sea conditions. So heading south was not all bad because it would give us a better wind angle. The down side was we had to go all the way to Fort Lauderdale. We could have conceivably left from a point north of Lauderdale, but we needed a staging area close to one of the inlets, and Lauderdale was the only practical choice. A staging area is a place where we could anchor for a few days' to gather our thoughts, follow the weather reports, and wait for the right window. In January the daylight is short, and so the timing had to be such that arrival at West End would be at least a couple of hours before nightfall. That would mean a departure of about 4 AM. Therefore a staging area had to be a place close to an inlet so we would not have far to travel on the ICW in darkness. So it starts to get complicated. In addition the authorities will not permit anchoring just anywhere. But Fort Lauderdale does give a very favorable angle of about 70 degrees true for the crossing to West End, so we had to make the effort.

We headed south out of Lake Worth, but the wind was still out of the north at 20 knots so we were confined to the ICW. We knew of an anchorage right on the ICW at Lake Boca Raton, and headed for it. It was still blowing hard when we arrived, but it's fairly well protected, and the holding is good. More importantly no one will bother you there. There is no place handy to get off your boat because it's heavily residential. The next AM we were southbound again. More bridges. We arrived in Lauderdale in early afternoon, and anchored at the Las Olas Bridge mooring right on the ICW. We thought it would be the perfect departure point, but so did a lot of others. The area was overfilled with boats, many like us, were Bahamas bound. After spending a night we

inquired, and were told that anchoring was not permitted there, and anchoring in the City of Fort Lauderdale was limited to two days. The fellow we were talking to was the manager of the city marina across the waterway, and was also responsible for the mooring area. He was kind enough to suggest, and even telephoned for a reservation at the city owned marina in the center of down town Fort Lauderdale on the New River. We motored south to the junction of the New River. And then followed it several miles to Colley's Landing, a city owned marina. It was adjacent to the newly developed downtown area. It was however, a bit far to the Port Everglades inlet. Fort Lauderdale has rebuilt much of its' downtown waterfront, and we were pleasantly surprised to find all sorts of interesting small shops, restaurants, Imax Theater, science museum, art museum, and a Boat US outlet all within a few blocks of the marina. We had a great time! On one of my many trips back to Colley's, I passed a boatyard and noticed a fellow painting an anchor with white paint. It was for a rather large yacht and for appearance no doubt. As I pondered this I realized that painting my anchors white would enhance their visibility especially in the Bahamas where one can almost always see the bottom. I could tell more easily if the anchor dug in. Anchors should always be checked visually if possible. I started thinking about what type of paint to use.

Suddenly, it seemed after a lack-a-daisy two weeks; we may have a weather window – the next day! Wow I'm outa shape for this kind of thinking. The weather looks good, but it always looks good when you're in downtown Fort Lauderdale several miles from the ocean. And speaking about the ocean its been kicking up out there for most of the last two weeks. Would it quiet down overnight, or more accurately over a half a night? What would it be like out there in pitch **Bahamas Cruise, continued**

black with no moon what so ever? But we agreed to give it a try. We had been following the weather in the newspaper, and on TV when we could see it, and on the VHF radio. Winds were predicted to be 10 to 15 out of the southeast and were predicted to swing around to the south with

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waves two to four feet, and as they say, higher in the Gulf Stream. That last part seems to be some peculiar affliction weather people have down there, they cannot give ocean wave heights without that bit about higher in the Gulf Stream. I must have listened to weather for two hours.

We awoke at 2AM, and by the time we got loose from the marina and unfolded it was 3 AM. We followed Valkyrie out the New River. We understood later that a railroad bridge almost clobbered us, and we touched bottom once on the way out. As we approached the Port Everglade inlet we could feel the much larger waves that had made it through the inlet. At about this point Valkyrie stopped, and we couldn't raise them on the VHF right away, so we circled for a few minutes then Jessie came on and said, they are on the way again. By then they were underway, and ahead of us, so we followed them straight out into the night. It was slow going, and the further out we got the slower we went as the waves were right on the nose, and getting bigger. Some of that is to be expected. When waves come in against the bottom in the relatively shallower water. They start to pile up and start breaking. After several miles it didn't seem to let up, some waves, when you could see them were eight feet high. The only time I could see anything was when a wave broke, and I could see a wall of water in the dark maybe a 100 yards long, but it wasn't getting any worse so on we went. There was another concern. Lights out there. And they appeared to be getting closer. We are equipped with radar as a result of lessons learned the first time out to the Bahamas. It's not essential but on occasion it helps. Tri-surf-n is equipped with a Raytheon model RL 9, 2 Watt, 16 mile, LCD model radar. In this instant I turned it on, and after it's 90 second warm up, it cleared the mystery right up. One set of lights were three miles away and closing. Obviously headed into Port Everglades. Valkyrie gave way to the south and we gave way to the north, and we both turned our steaming lights on. In time the vessel passed between us on his inbound course. Dinah gasped when Valkyrie's lights disappeared momentarily. It appeared to be a small freighter. The second set was actually two groups of lights four miles east of us, and northbound. It showed up as a single blip. It wasn't a threat, so we ignored it.

Our true course was 70 degrees magnetic and with the Gulf current factored in, our magnetic heading was 85 degrees. We steered 90 degrees initially just to make sure everything was working according to plan. All this was based on an assumed speed of seven knots. I've had people on occasion ask me if I was concerned about missing such a small island way out there. The truth is I'm concerned, but not much. Tri-surf-n has a Loran hard wired in which we regularly use in the Great Lakes, Maine and elsewhere. As backup we have two GPS' of the handheld variety. One unit I run directly off the boat's battery through the cigarette lighter. The second is strictly double "A" batteries for which I carry an abundant supply. These became our primary navigation instruments. Typically when we are making a crossing out of sight of land, I get an electronic fix on the hour every hour, and record and plot them directly on the chart. If we are with another boat I ask for confirmation. It seems to be a very good system as I can go to dead reckoning at about anytime with very good hour by hour history. In addition to just reading the numbers off the instruments I also pick up the distances between fixes' with the dividers and check against the latitude scale. If one of the instruments has a hiccup it will usually put you many miles away and is very noticeable. While in the Bahamas we used the GPS', as the Loran becomes unreliable 50 to 100 miles out. I might point out that so does my boat insurance, so we got a 90-day rider for \$50 to cover the boat throughout the cruise. As we continued northeast we were guarding channel 16 on the VHF, and overheard a request for assistance from the US Coast Guard by a solo sailor in a 60-foot catamaran. The boat was sinking, and he was in a raft.

**Bahamas Cruise, continued**

He gave his position as 60 miles north of us. We were intrigued for more than a half-hour as the Coast Guard was trying to track him down. The last we heard was that he had been spotted by one of their aircraft, and presumed he was rescued. Daylight at that latitude and time of the year was a few minutes after 7AM. So we continued on course in the darkness performing the timely fix ritual, and anticipating the first hints of

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sunrise. About 6:30 the eastern horizon started to brighten and by 7 we could see a not too friendly place. The boat was no longer getting the occasional slam, but the seas were still a choppy four-foot, and there was a scuddy overcast with curtains of rain here and there. Ed had put his sails up about an hour out. I wasn't having any trouble keeping up with them, so I decided to wait for daylight before raising ours. Our situation started looking pretty good. We were on course about fifteen miles out, it was daylight now, and so the sails went up, and the engine was shut off and raised. Now all we had to do was follow our routine and wait.

The boat was behaving well, and we getting seven knots so I turned on the marine weather just see if there were any changes. There were no changes except for a minor increase in predicted windspeed. It was not long after daylight when suddenly Ed's voice came over the radio (Ray! look behind you). I turned around and was nearly dumbfounded. Off to Valkyrie's port side, perhaps an eighth of a mile, was a huge waterspout picking up large gobs of water which had all the appearance of a land twister flinging pieces of debris around. I forgot to acknowledge I received their warning, and in seconds Jessie was on the radio screaming to watch out for the waterspout. We were ahead of them, and perhaps a quarter of a mile away. In an instant Ed had both sails down. He most probably set a new record. On Tri-surf-n we had a little more time to gather our wits. Although my knees were weak I realized it was downwind of both boats. I also realized that we were traveling at seven knots plus, and we can not do as well on the engine. I was not sure what downwind would do for us, however. Dinah and I had a minor dispute as to whether it was going away or coming at us. I told her we would just have to wait a minute to see. In the meantime I grabbed the camcorder for a brief shot of it. Eventually we could see it was getting smaller in appearance, which meant we were gaining distance from it. We later thanked Ed and Jessie for giving us the warnings twice because I failed to acknowledge their first warning.

I turned on the radar for most of the remainder of the morning to avoid all the areas of precipitation. The waterspout came out of the clouds, and

I wanted to steer clear of anything that may give birth to another one. The radar showed all the showers around us, and it wasn't hard to avoid them. On several occasions I tracked larger squalls upwind and ahead of us only to see them get closer but crossed our path behind us. I never thought to look at the waterspout with the radar. Latter Ed and Jessie told us they had seen a second waterspout. Now we wonder if any were lurking out there in the dark with no chance of us seeing them. Before noon the sun was out, and the waves were down to two or three feet, and we were holding the seven knots. By 1PM I started looking for our landfall, and spotted the water tower with the binoculars. By about 1:30 we were too far east, and almost due south of West End Grand Bahamas. With a five-knot tail wind we slowed down to only a knot or two. So the last two hours were on the engine. We arrived at 3 PM in bright sunshine. Eleven hours for 77 miles is easy to figure the average of seven knots. We probably never got wind over ten knots, but the stream helped some. We took a dock at West End for \$13, and checked through Customs and Immigration.

West End or Old Bahama Bay Marina, as it is now called, is currently under major redevelopment. All new docks, a new motel complex along with a new restaurant with the Customs located upstairs. I expect the cost of dockage will go up. We almost immediately experienced the shock of increased in fuel cost. It's more than twice you would pay in the US. The community of West End is definitely not geared for tourists. It is a 45-minute walk into "town", but there are no "real" restaurants although you will find a number of small plywood structures that serve conch and fish, mostly barracuda, on a take-out basis. In and around these take-out places there is the smell of decaying conch from the shells that are discarded over the adjacent seawall. There are a couple of very small grocery stores where some canned food as well as fresh bread and limited fresh fruit is available. On a more positive note, the Bahamas Telephone Company or Batelco have an office in West End where one can purchase calling cards in \$5, \$10 & \$20 denominations.

**Bahamas Cruise, continued**

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tions that allow you to call anywhere in the US for a dollar a minute. It is a very good and reliable system. West End is not a place where most cruisers would care to linger long.

On the second morning, after a near disaster, we departed for the Abacos. A 35 foot powerboat lost power in the predaylight, and drifted across the ends of both docks on either side of Tri-surf-n and another boat completely blocking us in. I was obliged, along with many others, to assist in removing the blockage to the other side of the marina before we could leave. The most direct route to the Abacos from West End is to cross the Little Bahamas Bank. The distance is approximately 80 miles. With a shallow draft boat you can enter a mile north of West End in five to six feet of water at Indian Cay and head across in 10 to 20 feet of water. Great Sail Cay is about 50 miles from West End, and offers good protection from all directions except south and southwest. We followed the Gecklers onto the bank as the route is somewhat critical for the first several miles, and they had done it before. Initially we were headed for Great Sail, but we had a light wind on the bow, and so we eventually decided to change course for Grand Islands thinking we could sail. According to our guide book there was a restaurant, and ice and fuel available. We found our way into the well-protected harbor and put two anchors out. We essentially motored the entire 50 miles. We spent two nights there, but with hindsight I now think we should have stuck to our plan, and went to Great Sail Cay. The Restaurant, a place called Rosie's, turned out to be a bar with half a dozen stools and a couple of tables with boxes piled everywhere. Meals require prior notice, so they can rustle up some help I guess. There was ice and a couple of very tiny grocery outlets, and we were able to get fuel. We explored the small island of Little Grand Cay with its small settlement by foot, and the rest of the island group by dinghy. It's a pretty wild place with shallow water and very fast currents running through the islands. One thing I especially didn't like was an otherwise beautiful beach completely trashed with broken beer and whisky bottles. It made no sense.

We departed at 9AM for Spanish Cay as there is good shelter there in the event we needed it. The

entire trip was on the engine in no wind conditions on an oily surface. Our trip log said 44 miles at 4:15PM upon arrival. For the entire time in the Abacos I used Steve Dodge's The Cruising Guide to Abaco 1999 Bahamas. This guide is the best guide for navigation I've ever seen. He offers depths, courses, and GPS waypoints on color chartlets. I highly recommend it. At Spanish Cay we found the place all but deserted. There is a marina there, but only two boats were in it. There was room for perhaps forty or fifty boats. We were told that summer is their busy season, and then it 's packed. In any event the weather was settled, so we anchored off the east end of the small island and dinghyed ashore. There was a restaurant in the marina, but like The Grand Cays, reservations were necessary and as we were the only people in sight we felt it wasn't worth the trouble. We were able to swim and check the anchors. The holding was not good at all though. Had there been nasty weather conditions we would have gone around to the natural harbor on the west end or into the marina. It is important to visually check anchors whenever possible. We usually back down on our anchors with a lot of power, and many times it will feel solid, but a visual check will sometimes reveal serious problems with chain wrap, single fluke penetration, caught on a rock or clump of grass ...you name it. An easy method for checking, short of diving in, is to get in the dinghy and using an underwater viewer or even a diving mask and just take look. Painting the anchor white is a great help too. In this instance I was only able to

**Bahamas Cruise, continued**

get both anchors about half-buried. We could hear the surf breaking on the outer reef as we drifted off to sleep that evening. The next morning Ed went off in his dinghy with his scuba gear, and the rest of us walked the beach and swam around the anchorage until his return. At 12:30 PM we were off for Green Turtle Cay. We were pleased to be able to do some sailing in light wind, not fast in overloaded boats, but pleasant all the same. We entered Black Sound in Green Turtle at 3:30 with 16 miles on the trip log. It was a bit tight for anchoring, and we could have anchored, but for \$5 a day why not use a mooring?

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Besides a Norther was forecast to come through in a couple of days. There are two well-protected harbors on Green Turtle, White Sound and Black Sound. Black Sound has a controlling entrance depth of four feet at low water, and is closer to town. Deeper draft boats use White Sound or anchor outside off New Plymouth.

New Plymouth is the major settlement on the island of Green Turtle Cay. It was founded by Loyalist and inhabited today mostly by their descendants. Population is about 300. It is a colorful cluster of houses and shops with narrow streets. We shopped and explored; we rented bicycles and rode around most of the island. We explored by dinghy, and even motored over to White Sound where we had lunch at the Green Turtle Cay Club ...very expensive. We investigated all the shops and stores, hardware, grocery stores (three), marine store and town museum, but in time we were ready to explore another island. The Norther came through at dusk while Ed and Jessie were visiting us. By the time they got back to their boat they were soaked...One of the few times we actually got rain with the passage of a norther. The guidebooks say that northers are never a surprise. Typically the prevailing wind is out of the east, as a front approaches, the wind starts to veer clockwise to the southeast, south, southwest and west. By the time it gets around to the west it can be blowing at 20 to 40 knots. That's why most sailors take them seriously. Usually they are dry. Eventually the wind will clock around through the north and settle back down out of an eastern quadrant. The greatest wind speeds will be from the west through the north. Clouds usually accompany the strongest

winds. The previous scenario has variations and they can behave quite differently. One such case occurred while we were on the hook at Marsh Harbor when a norther came at us from the southeast. It had at least one peak gust at 38 knots. Fronts usually pass through in a day or two and occur about once a week, but they can occur in very quick succession. These frontal systems start in November and continue well into March. They had a major impact on our planning as we traveled through the height of their season. Northers along with their prefrontal systems are major reason for such short weather windows available for Gulf Stream crossings. A north wind of any magnitude flowing against the current turns the Gulf into a nasty place.

**To be continued**

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### Coming Attractions Next Issue:

Bahamas, Part 2; Around Lake Huron, Part 2; Florida Keys cruise; Managing water while cruising; Launching big boats; Florida Panhandle cruise; Florida's St. John's river cruise; and perhaps more if YOU send in an article. More pictures next time, too.

