



Voyage 2010: Chapter 1

Preparing for the Voyage

12 Oct 2010, Heading South, [38 19.98 N/ 076 27.01 W](#)



After a few trips back to Wilmington and the Todd Thanksgiving (really kewl) a couple of days go, We finally left Herring Bay for our intermediary destination of Wilmington, NC. We left Shipwright Harbour without fanfare and had a light (10kt) wind on our nose (SE). Seas were OK and we were happy to be underway. Sadly it was another motoring event. We stopped at Mills Creek at Solomon's Island and were surprised that there was only one other boat anchored. We heard a lot of chatter on the VHF but do not know where they went. They are calling for some significant weather

Friday so we will hustle our way to Norfolk to hopefully dodge the worst of it. We will see.

14 Oct 2010, Weather less than good, [37 32.73 N/ 076 19.79 W](#)

We left Solomons at 0700 and faced winds NE@10-15 knots. We actually sailed for a while until the wind died a bit after we passed the Potomac. Still much of the day was sailing which is a bit unusual for us. We tucked into Fishing Bay near Deltaville and settled down to a nice evening anchorage.



Early in the morning, we sensed a swell out of the SE which did not bode well for today's trip. Nevertheless, the courageous crew left Fishing Bay and got the stuffing knocked out of them. So we turned around and headed into Jackson Creek. Three other boats took our lead but fortunately did not follow our grounding in the narrow channel leading to the anchorage. We logged the first grounding of the season. Fortunately, the wind blew us off and we secured a nicer anchorage,

The wind blew strong much of today so we did not venture off the boat. SV Fantasy Island was at the marina for repairs and we were invited for a birthday celebration. We tried but the weather was too rough for a dinghy ride to the marina. Guess we are not too brave. Weather tomorrow may be a bit rough with wind and sea predictions looking pretty nasty. We will see. Good practice for the rest of the season.



22 Oct 2010, Back on the Road, [35 14.67 N/ 076 35.47 W](#)



We sadly left the Pelican 0815 and continued our trip South. We sent a wave at Josh's house but we learned later that Josh was still in bed. Crab pots in the Pasquotank were not as bad as in previous seasons. We wonder if it is the economy or increased regulation or maybe just the crabs. The Albamarle was calm so yesterday was a lazy motoring day. The bridge tender at the Alligator River Bridge was prompt and friendly as always. At 1600, we anchored at our usual place opposite Deep Pt in the Alligator River.

Today was another lazy day as our day would be short to Hobucken. Wind was puffy and backed to SW due to the Pungo River making for a 'heely' ride for the leg to the Pamlico River. Trip up Goose Creek was pleasant for the most part. However, a sailboat cut the G5-R6-G7 a bit too much and got stuck for a few minutes. We arrived at RE Mayo at 1630 and their docks were empty except for a wintering Scallop fishing vessel and a transient sailboat. It is sad. The locals attribute the decline to increased State regulation which is crippling the industry. By the way, the mosquitoes beat us here.



[22 Oct 2010, The Last 24 Hours, 34 21.222 N/ 077 17.36 W](#)

We have not stopped in Beaufort NC for reasons that we discussed in a previous journal. What we do is plan the last leg of our trip to Wilmington to start at RE Mayo and end at Mona Black; a trip of 120 miles. So it is true this year. We left RE Mayo at 0830 and entered the Back River with a fresh wind on the stern. Wind stayed favorable at 15-10 knots through the Neuse River but had dropped by the time we entered Adam's Creek. We encountered only polite boaters in the Creek where we had one slow pass after another. We even had the current with us through the Canal. Very pleasant!



However, once we entered the Newport River, the current turned foul. No problems as we were ahead of schedule to arrive at the sea buoy at sunset (1813 LT). We entered the Beaufort shipping channel west of Radio Island where the current was flooding at 2.0 kts. However, we arrived near the sea buoy by sunset and changed our course to SW. Love a plan that comes together (A-Team). We were blessed with a beautiful full moon night with enough wind to dampen the 2-4 feet swells from the NNE. It was not until after midnight that the wind veered to the NE and sails were less effective for propulsion and roll dampening. Still no problem and the moon was still great! We added another item to our bad

list for the rigger at Herrington Harbour. The tri-color that they repaired needs repairing again. Our list is getting bigger and our patience smaller!



Voyage 2010: Chapter 2

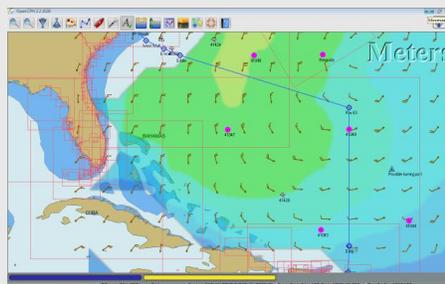
Plan A?

12 Nov 2010, We are still here in WILM, [34 02.502 N/ 077 53.51 W](#)



Julie III and her merry crew are waiting on repairs on the top of her main mast. Seems that the re-rigging job has a bit too stressful for her. She has a broken mast head wind unit, a broken tri-color light, and a broken windex. We have new bulbs, new windex, and are waiting on a repaired mast wind sensor. It has been quite a stressful couple of weeks. Hopefully, we will soon be on our way to meet our Sint Maarten timetable. Did we tell you that we have crew (Butch and Vicki of SV Legend)?

Not to worry. The conditions are not conducive for the passage. There has been, is and will be a lot of weather in the western Atlantic. The Caribbean 1500 delayed their start by a week and the conditions are now marginal at best. GRIBs show 5-6 m seas below the Tropic of Cancer by Saturday. Glad we are here and not there. The nasty stuff should settle down a bit before we are ready to leave.



15 Nov 2010, Our Bon Voyage Party, [34 02.50 N/ 077 53.51 W](#)



The gang at Mona Black decided to throw us a Happy Trails party today and it was very nice. Even the weather was moderate with little wind. Though we do not leave until next Sunday, today was the most convenient for all of us. Mo, Gene, and Wayne planned the event and Master Chef Wayne cooked the entrees. Mr. Dave provided the prayer for Julie III and the meal. The festivities started at 1500 ET and lasted until it got dark and cold around 1800. We certainly were honored. Weather has us out of here next Sunday at 0900 with a fair tide and light conditions. This is contrary to what the Caribbean 1500 have been experiencing last week. We will see.

22 Nov 2010, Off to St Maarten, we hope, [32 54.438 N/ 076 47.4 W](#)

We left Mona Black Marina at 0930 ET with a falling tide and a little wind. The day was nice and we motorsailed down the Cape Fear and towards the Gulf Stream. Weather deteriorated last night into today where the wind veered from the N to the NE (bad for the Gulf Stream) to now from the east (on the nose). We cannot keep using the motor as we will run out of fuel. Tomorrow, we should be able to 'just sail'. We will let you know of our progress.



24 Nov 2010, Leaving the Gulf Stream in our wake, [31 22.752 N/ 074 31.93 W](#)

Hard to believe that the Atlantic waters have been so calm the last several days. We had to use the motor the majority of the time since we left Wilmington. Tomorrow should be a good sailing day, and most of the days past Thanksgiving



also appear to be good. Crew is getting into the swing of things and 4 people for watch duty is great! Bob's watch will be over at 0200 ET. Not bad.

Gulf Stream was not much of a problem other than fighting the current until we were on the other side. The seas were a bit bumpy as the wind was just retreating from the NE. We had to use quite a bit of fuel. A pod of dolphins came by to visit last night and Ann and Vicki were quite excited. Bob and Butch couldn't see anything 'cause V&A were blocking the view. Bob saw a flying fish (one) and a green flash (nobody believes him). Other than that, he has been studying the GRIBs. It might be too rough on Thursday to celebrate Thanksgiving but we will see. We got the turkey but they are calling for 7-9 ft seas.



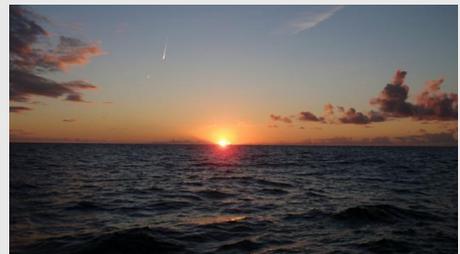
25 Nov 2010, East of the Stream and heading Southeast, [29 29.07 N/ 072 41.32 W](#)



Yesterday, the wind cooperated and on 0930 ET saw the engine turned off and Jule III was sailing with all three of her sails. Unheard of!! We sailed through the night with 6-8 foot seas and 10-15 kts out of the North. Everybody is having fun. The vee berth bed clothes are finally a bit dry after the ocean entered the forward hatch during the bumpier part of the Stream crossing. We since dogged down both hatches.

27 Nov 2010, More Southeast, [28 09.01 N/ 069 30.20 W](#)

Today, the wind stayed with us and we are still sailing on our SE course. Around 1500 today we heard a 'clunk' and then autopilot started to protest. We heaved to in 8 foot seas and swab Butch crawled into the cleaned out lazaretto and we discovered that the nut locking the ram to the tiller arm had loosened and parted. Within fifteen minutes we were back on our way. It is 1800 Et now, it is very dark and we are still maintaining about 4 kts under sail. Not too bad for such calm conditions. Today is Thanksgiving in the USA and we celebrated with hot dogs and baked beans. We had a little turkey in the refrigerator but it was too roly to prepare and eat.



28 Nov 2010, The day before the weather, [26 02.388 N/ 066 40.87 W](#)

NOAA is calling for a week beginning with winds in the 20-25 kt range and seas of 10-12 ft. Near the end of the week, winds will be light but the seas will stay near 10 ft. Not the best weather and we are nervous about the seas but that too will pass. Today we prepared the boat for heavy seas and developed a new watch schedule.



30 Nov 2010, The Worst of It, [23 03.65 N/ 065 24.20 W](#)

The 'girls' washed their hair on the poop deck. Bob suggest that they get the soap off the teak. They were not kind. We made water today to replenish the tanks as today is a motoring day and we have the power to make water. Tonight we continued our star gazing. Bob is providing invaluable discussions on the stars and constellations.



Tonight's program focused on the Pleiades. Weather should be here tomorrow at 1300 ET. Should get pretty roilly by 0100 on Tuesday and stay roilly through Friday. Oh boy!

02 Dec 2010, The worst is over, [20 36.76 N/ 064 29.56 W](#)

The last three days have exposed Jule III and her crew to 20-25 kt winds with 12-15 ft seas. Needless to say it has been a roilly ride. Sleeping was difficult and watch standing was no piece of cake. We changed our watch standing procedures for 2 on and 2 off. The seas were quite impressive, especially during last night's squalls where we experienced 30 kt gusts and seas that we could only imagine.



We have 180 nm to go and hope for a Sint Marten landfall around 1000 AST on Friday. It will be a great two weeks thanks to Butch and Vicki's help in sailing the good boat Jule to Sint Maarten. We think we will spend the Holidays in SM and then head to who knows where. The trip has been great but tiring and a bit tense. Soon it will be time to relax.

05 Dec 2010, Sint Maarten Landfall, [18 01.92 N/ 063 05.8 W](#)

At 0100 yesterday, we passed the extinguished light of Sombrero Island. We could see the indirect light from Anquilla and Sint Maarten lighting up the clouds. We have been motorsailing for nearly 12 hours. Everybody is excited in anticipation of the landfall. It will be good to stop for a while.



Lots of boats around here; a couple of cruise ships, a bunch of megayachts, and quite a few sailboats. By 0730, we were looking for an anchorage in Simpson Bay. We are new to these parts and not sure what the protocol is. We soon figured out that we had to dinghy to the Police Station where Customs and Immigration lived. After a couple false starts we got ourselves accepted into St. Maarten. We then dinghyed to Simpson Bay Yacht Club where we got a reservation for Saturday (tomorrow). Then we headed back to the boat to spend our first and last night at Simpson Bay. We were surprised by a visit from the St. Maarten Coast Guard for an inspection and a chat. No problem, mon.

We woke up early before sunrise where the air was cool, the sea calm, and just enough breeze to feel good. We scheduled ourselves for the 0930 transit through the bridge. At 0915, Anthony came by in his dinghy to give us escort to his marina. Promptly at 0930, the bridge opened and away we went with Anthony at the lead. About 15 minutes later, we were tucked in C-12. Not bad. Now we start to break all of our good eating habits by eating at the fine restaurants near the marina.



10 Dec 2010, The First Week in Sint Maarten, [18 02.448 N/ 063 05.65 W](#)



We arrived at Simpson Bay Marina around 1000 hrs and our escort dinghy became an emergency tug boat in case we missed the slip. No fears, mon, as we glided into the slip with nearly a scream. Pretty unusual. The marina staff was wonderful, the facilities were great, and the price was reasonable.

The four of us headed for a local restaurant and we found Jimbo's with a Caribbean style of Tex Mex. We discovered that the restaurants were a bit pricy pretty much everywhere we went. But here at Jimbo's, Butch decided to try his talents on consuming their hot sauce. Was it hot, Butch? Maybe.



Last Sunday, Moony arrived in St. Maarten. We looked for them in Simpson Bay to see if they would come into the Lagoon on the 0930 bridge opening. Yep, there they were. A small boat like Jule waiting with all of these really big guys (megayachts). We rushed to the bridge and were the first to welcome them to St. Maarten.

Things that break must be fixed and the top priority was the wind generator. Brave Bob went up the mast to work on the generator. Actually, poor Wolfgang went up the mast three times for us and 'Brave Bob' only once. You can imagine BB is not all that brave as he is afraid of heights.



Butch and Vicki had to leave on Tuesday so they did some sightseeing by bus and taxi. They told us about all of the cool places they saw. But before they left, we inaugurated our bridge watching tradition at Sint Maarten Yacht Club where we would watch the megayachts enter the lagoon. We heard stories about boats not always making the transit through the bridge without incident. Once an extra large megayacht crushed the bridge tender building (bridge tender was OK). No such excitement for us(so far).

[20 Dec 2010, Life in th Lagoon, 18 02.44 N/ 063 05.65 W](#)

After a week, we decided that it was time to leave the marina a get back to the anchoring life. Last week we said goodbye to the staff of Simpson Bay Marina and headed out for the anchorage. It was not long before we spotted Moony and found a nice area to drop the hook. Only problem with the place is so near the airport. It can be a very noisy experience; an experience that Sammy Jane can not grow accustomed to.



Here in the Tropics, stuff can grow on your boat quite quickly. Bob went down and cleaned the 'stuff' off of the waterline and scrubbed the prop a bit to be sure that the growth does not accumulate. The water here is not very hygienic as most people 'dump' here in the lagoon as there are few other options. Even the dinghy has growth problems. At night we haul her up by the mizzen halyard to keep her bottom out of the water. Speaking of dinghies, we have a bit of a problem with the dinghy motor propeller. We have something called a spun hub where the prop will slip on the shaft at moderate RPM's. We are waiting on a new prop but we can live with this one for a while.



We were sitting at the Sint Maarten Yacht Club watching the megayachts come through the bridge into the lagoon (a near daily pastime for us). This is a favorite sport of ours as it coincides with Happy Hour. We saw flashing blue lights escorting a rather small ketch through the bridge heading for the Yacht Club. All of a sudden, a series of moored megayachts sounded their horns in honor of Laura Dekker's arrival in St. Maarten. Miss Dekker is completed her first leg of her circumnavigation where she hopes to be the youngest to do it. Miss Dekker is 14 years old. She is only three years older than Collin, our grandson.



When we need to provision or visit the stores in Cole Bay, we usually stop at the dinghy dock at Simpson Bay marina. There is usually room and most folks share the available space. Of course, there are those who are not very considerate but that is life. The area around the marina has restaurants, a business center, several markets, and a newly opened Burger King. In addition to the marina, most of the marine stores on the other side of the bay also provide dinghy docks as does the yacht club and Barnacles, the new restaurant that is in operation where Shrimpy's used to be.

Speaking of Shrimpy's, Mike, the proprietor, opened a new enterprise in Marigot where he is trying to replicate his Simpson Bay operation. Everything looked nice and new but dinghy space was limited. Mike is the net controller on the morning net here in the lagoon. Something happened to him and he was in the hospital. Someone else has been managing the net in his absence. Hope he feels better soon. There is not a lot of information about his condition or cause.



Marigot is the largest town on the French side of the island and they speak French (they are very accommodating and speak English if they can). On the Dutch side, most of the local conversations are in English. Marigot is very picturesque but quite 'touristy'. They have their equivalent of the straw market where you can get anything from tee shirts to jewelry. Marigot has the second bridge where boats can enter the lagoon. New Shrimpy's is less than 200 feet from the bridge. We went to Marigot once by dinghy, and once by bus as the second trip was required for Ann's routine blood tests. Quite a (good) experience seeing the clinical side of the island.

We also took a bus ride to Phillipsburg, the biggest town on the Dutch side. Phillipsburg is a large cruise ship hub so you can imagine that it is very 'touristy'. Much of the surroundings reminded us of Nassau and their cruise ship district. Traffic everywhere on the island can be difficult, especially right after a bridge opening. We explored some of the less tourist oriented places, walked the marina, and had a casual lunch and the Green House restaurant.



[31 Dec 2010, Holidays at St Maarten, 18 02.44 N/ 063 05.65 W](#)

The Christmas holiday snuck up on us quite suddenly. Before we knew it, it was Christmas Eve and Moony invited us and SV Patron over for dinner and celebration. Denise made a pasta salad, Ann made here famous sausage dip, and Ted and Honey of Patron brought a smoked tuna platter. It was good time but poor Bob had to leave as 'real work' was calling 'cause he broke one of his client's computers. Folks were not pleased but it had to be done.



Early Christmas Day, we opened presents on Jule III. Ann got a little angel pin and a Christmas card and Bob got lots of tee shirts, candy and a Christmas card. Later that day, we went over to SV Plane to Sea for some SSB help and a great Christmas dinner. Connie and Jim were very gracious to include us in their Christmas day plans. Sadly, the lame pictures we took were too lame to display here. We'll do better next time. However, we will have to wait for them to get back from St. Barts as they took a short weather window to go there.



Back to our routine; watching boats and ships go through the bridge during Happy Hour at the yacht club. This time we had the crews from Jule III, Drifter, Patron, and Moony. There were some hefty megayachts going through. Earlier that day, we talked to the bridge tender and he had some stories to tell. He showed us all of the repairs performed on the bridge when some former captain banged into his bridge. He also gave us a short tour of the 'guts' of the bridge.

We spend a bit of time at Barnacles getting water, WiFi, great food, and of course a Presidente (local beer). They recently started Barnacles and they, like many on the island, are working hard to overcome the effects of the global economic downturn. The picture shows Alberto, Kalli, and their daughter Ellie, in front of their restaurant. We wish them the best!



Wolfgang's sister (Barbara) has come to visit so we all decided to explore the island by car and the only car was a very small Hyundai but we did get 5 people in it. The first stop was on the side of the road to take a picture of Simpson Bay Lagoon. Jule and Moony are down there somewhere. Can you find them? The roads are not the best in the world but they are not too bad. They love speed bumps here. Not sure why.

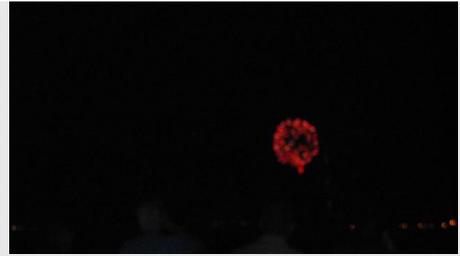
The 'girls' pose at another overlook of Simpson Bay. The guys were not interested in posing. After this photograph, the gang drove all over the place and amazingly never got truly lost. We went Phillipsburg, Oyster Bay, Oriental Bay, some pretty steep side roads and a la-de-da resort in Anse Marcel where we went drove up (and down) the steepest hills just to be sent packing back where we came. Then we drove to Marigot, crossed their blue bridge, drove around the lagoon, and arrived back at Barnacles in time to get ready for New Years Eve.



Did we tell you some of the roads are really steep. They do not use guard rails too much either. Bob was a little concerned that he might die. He didn't. The trek back and forth to Anse Marcel was especially 'exciting'. Wolfgang was our driver and he never faltered. However, we were afraid our very little car might have some problems with the terrain but the Hyundai Getz did a great job.

We had dinner at Barbara's hotel suite where everybody (except Bob) did some cooking. The food was great. We then

watched a movie and then proceeded down to the beach to view the end of year festivities. It was a nice setup where there was live music but the conditions were not crowded. At 2400 hours, we saw at last 4 different firework displays on the island. Not bad. Soon afterwards, we headed back to the dinghy dock to meet up with Jule and Moony. Ann had to stay up another hour until 1 am to call her brother Roy and wish him a Happy Birthday. She does this every year.





Voyage 2010: Chapter 3

Cruising the Caribbean

5 Jan 2011, The new year in St Maarten, [18 02.478 N/ 063 05.62 W](#)



The beginning of 2011 was very quiet in St. Maarten. The law states that most businesses must be closed on 1 January and they were. The Chinese markets are normally opened but not this day. Fortunately, the Yacht Club was opened and one of our favorite people, Michele, was working that day. Turns out that she is assistant director for the St. Maarten Heiniken Race, and will be working it full time until after March. Nice person!

Our anchoring partner, SV Foro comes and goes. At first we did not get along too well, as we thought he anchored too close and he thought we were jerks. Slowly we accepted each other. He liked more anchor rode than we are accustomed to but we never banged into each other so that is good. It is taking us some time to understand the customs and attitudes of our fellow cruisers.



Our difficulties with our dinghy engine continue. Apparently, we have a 'spun hup' propeller so that we can not go very fast before the prop starts to slip. Our dinghy is our 'car' and we can not get a new prop for over two weeks. So Ann gets her wish and we buy a bigger dinghy engine. Winston of Budget Marine delivers it to us and we are happy to have it. Now we have two dinghy motors and one dinghy. Hmmm.

Time to do some traveling. We picked up our new canvas as the old dodger extension had pretty much rotted away. We left today at 0930 and we noticed that poor Jule was not moving very well. We struggled at very slow speeds till we reached Phillipsburg, a mere 10 nm away. Our first anchorage was nixed by the ferry operators as they said that we were in their channel. Our second anchorage was not very good as we were too close to a big boat, This anchorage will work or so we thought.



Ann was fixing our meal before Brave Bob was to dive and clean the hull and prop of Jule. The boat experienced a serious roll and Ann received severe burns from boiling water and Bob's vodka spilled. We discovered that MV Yellow Bird (from the Yellow Water Taxi Corporation) chose not to follow the channel but rather go full throttle through the anchorage. Of course, the coward would not respond to our VHF calls and there is no marine law enforcement presence in Phillipsburg.

Brave Bob had to clean the bottom and so he did. Everything was fouled so maybe it is time for a new type of bottom paint. The hull was a mini ecosystem and the prop has grown a beard. Armed with minimal stuff, he spent 4 hours cleaning the prop and the hull. He tore off some flesh as the barnacles were quite sharp. Are we having fun yet?



7 Jan 2011, Visiting the Surrounding Islands, [18 03.294 N/ 063 00.95 W](#)



Finally left Phillipsburg at 1230 with their crazy water taxi drivers and headed for Oyster Pond on St. Maarten's/St. Martin's eastern shore. Boat moved much better now that the calcium laden hitch hikers were no longer with us. The scenery was quite outstanding as it is in most places here on the island. We called ahead to get reservations at Captain Oliver's 'Resort' as there is no place to anchor or take a mooring. We arrived at the entrance to the channel at 1440.

Not sure that this place is a resort. Their idea of two slips was that that we raft together at one of the t-heads. Power? Not really. Most pedestals did not work. We found one that did have power but the polarity was reversed. Jule was afraid to use it. They did have showers but no hot water. We were brave though. We did find the 'Dinghy Dock' restaurant and bar to be nice and we spent several evening there.



We had to rent a car to drive back to Phillipsburg to check out. The customs and immigration folks were very nice and most interested in 'Yellow Bird'. They took a full statement from us so maybe the 'bird' will have its wings clipped. We finally said goodbye to Oyster Pond and began our journey to St. Barts.

10 Jan 2011, St Barts and Gustavia, [17 54.372 N/ 062 51.60 W](#)

We left Oyster Pond at 0800. We were heading for Anse de Colomber which is a nice bay on the north side of St. Barts. Nice and crowded. Moony decided that they wanted to stay as they secured a mooring but we wanted to see Gustavia. So we weighed anchor and drove the 3 nm to Gustavia. The anchorage was a bit rolly but we decided to anchor with the big boys in 35 ft of water. Not bad. Only problem, is we had several boats anchor really close to us during the evening. Not good.



We cleared customs the next day and found the process to be quite friendly and efficient. Most things we done by computer. Sadly, no stamp on the passport. Oh well, at least we can fly the French courtesy flag. We were told that we missed Martha Stewart and Julia Roberts by only a week. Or did they miss us?

Most of the crowd left us so we were pretty much by ourselves. The anchorage continued to be rolly. Even the mega yachts were taking their fair share of the roll. Apparently, the super yachts come to the anchorage to work on their boats while the owners are away. Here as in St. Maarten, dinghy etiquette is pretty much non-existent.



The harbor of Gustavia is very picturesque and is very dinghy friendly with at least 4 dinghy docks in the harbor area. Some of the mega yachts find dockage in the harbor but that seems to be a rare treat for most of them. We enjoyed the town by visiting shops, eating at a great Vietnamese restaurant, and of course getting ice for Ann. Tomorrow we will head for St. Kitts and see what we find there.



15 Jan 2011, From St Barts to St, Kitts, [17 17.556 N/ 062 43.48 W](#)

We left the Gustavia anchorage at 0640 and soon encountered 20-30 kt winds and seas of 8-11 feet. As the wind and waves were on our quarter, it was not too difficult. However, once we rounded the northern tip of St. Kitts, we turned towards the south east, we found the wind and waves on our nose. We were getting little protection from the island. We had difficulty stopping the wind generator and the regulator was getting dangerously hot so we turned on everything we could to increase the load. It worked but Bob damaged the generator in his haste to stop it.



The waves were a bit of a problem now as we were heading into them. A 'rogue' wave dumped a bunch of water in the cockpit which set off one of the inflatable life jackets. Great. And we did not bring backup cartridges. Oh well, at least we have spare life jackets. Now we will remember to care spare cartridges.

We saw what looked to be an old fortress about halfway from the northern tip and Basseterre. We would learn later that it was the Brimstone Fortress, which as you can imagine has a very rich history. All along the coast, we could see small and colorful settlements. Of course there were the universal fishing floats that we had to avoid even though we were in 100 feet of water.



We arrived in Basseterre at 1630 where the swells were entering deep into the harbor. We decided to head for the marina where the folks were able to find us dockage but only on a lee concrete dock. Lots of fenders came out. We headed to the customs and immigration to clear in but found the process a bit lengthy. First we checked in with the captain of the port, then to customs. However, the immigration officer had left for the day so we had to go back at 0630 the next day. Whole process took nearly 4 hours. It was good that everyone was nice and friendly.

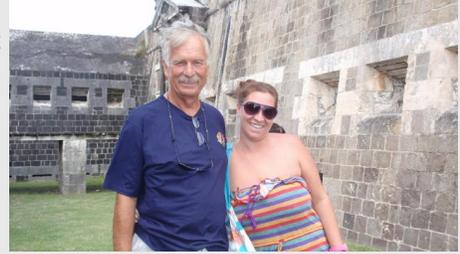
As the weather was not favorable for a return to St. Maarten for a few days, we decided to take a taxi tour of the island. The gracious marina guard contacted Randolph and we arrived with 5 minutes. He agreed to take us around the island and show us the sights and tell us of the history. We 'did good' by getting Randolph. Sadly, we did not get a good picture of him, only his cab.



Our first stop was the arboretum which give us a glimpse of the rain forest on the island. We saw many native plants including a really big and old Samon tree which they claim is over 350 years old and a canopy of nearly an acre. On our way to the arboretum, we passed through many towns, including Ranolf's home town of Champion.



Next on the stop was the Brimstone Fortress which was quite high up. Brave Bob was not too brave as the roads were steep, narrow and without the benefit of guard rails. Still, we got there. The last hurdle was climbing the last 100 yards to the top of the fort. Somehow Bob got up there where we met several of our marina mates, including Erica and her family, delightful folks from the UK. Bob was rewarded for his bravery by a nice picture with Erica.



16 Jan 2011, More St Kitts and Sint Maarten, [18 02.49 N/ 063 05.64 W](#)



Randolf then drove us to the Roland Plantation, a former sugar cane operation that had been converted to something like a bed a breakfast. We had a great lunch there and then had the opportunity to view on of the cottages. This one was a converted windmill. Then we visited the local artist on the premise. We left the plantation with full bellies and brains.

Next stop was an area called Black Rock where one of the lava flows from the now dormant volcano left eerie sculptures which remain today. Wolfgang took a keen interest in these formations as did we all. As we left the area we noted that many of the road side settlements were quite poor. No doubt the fall of the sugar cane industry left many in St. Kitts without work.



Next Randolf took us to the other side of the island where the 'la-de-da' people lived. No poor settlements here. Very beautiful scenery with lovely houses and resorts. All good things come to an end and so our tour with Randolf ended around 1630. Great time! We certainly were lucky to get Randolf for our tour.

We went to Basseterre one more time for one more visit to their 'Piccadilly Circus' where we saw many interesting people. But the self proclaimed 'town crier' was a highlight of this day. Afterwards, we headed for the Fisherman's Wharf where we had great meals at reasonable prices. If you are ever in Basseterre you should look up the Fisherman's Wharf. The next day, we warped our of berths at 0630 and headed back to Sint Maarten. We sailed with a bit of help with the motor. The seas were still pretty high at 7-9 feet so we got tossed a bit. Bob noticed that the vacuum gauge for the fuel was near the red zone again. We had a project when we got back to Sint Maarten.



29 Jan 2011, Our last week in Sint Maarten, 18 02.49 N/ 063 05.64 W



When we got back to the Lagoon, Bob discovered the one of the pumps was clogged with goo. The goo almost certainly came from the diesel tank. On the advise of Yanmar, we stopped using biocide several years ago and started using their recommended product for total fuel protection. We started taking samples of the fuel near the bottom and our hypothesis that we had 'critters' in the fuel was confirmed. Bob manually pumped over 50 gallons out the tank and Ann poured it back in the tank via a Baja filter. Project took almost 3 days but the fuel looks much better now. Manual fuel polishing is not a fun thing.

After this latest crisis, we again headed for the 'bridge' at the Sint Maarten Yacht Club. Since Michel(le) was working full time on the Regatta, we saw much more of Lucy. We really enjoyed the times she was on duty at the 'bridge'. Here we have a picture of rose between two thorns. Everybody at the 'bridge' has been great to us, including Brian (aka Sam) and Christina.



Did we tell you that we are anchored near the end of the runway of the Juliana International Airport. At times it could be very noisy. We all learned to talk between take-offs. Sammy Jane was particularly not fond of the noise. When a noisy one was approaching, she would head back to the safety of the cabin. You never get used to it.



Princess became the love of our life. We saw her many times with her owner at different places in Sint Maarten. Finally we sat down with her at Barnacles. She seems to be a mix between a Golden and a Husky. She is a very lovely dog.



04 Feb 2011, Leaving Sint Maarten, arriving in the BVI, [18 27.642 N/ 064 31.7 W](#)



As we readied for departure, we checked the Jule III's bottom and it was getting nasty again. Not sure if it is our bottom paint or the rich environment of the Lagoon. You know they have no pumpouts or regulations concerning dumping. That is true of everywhere we have been except the USA. Of course, we are not known for our number of pumpouts, just our regulations. Alberto and his team did an excellent job on cleaning the bottom. Roy from Simpson Bay Marina contacted him for us. Bob's earlier work was apparent so that was good also. Alberto is a very industrious fellow from Peru who also opened a hair salon/barber shop next to Simpson Bay Marina (Bob's barber). Everybody here is so

nice and we are sad to go.

But go we must as it is a long way back home and there are many things to see. We caught the 1630 bridge opening on Monday and we were the second boat out. As we passed the Yacht Club, several of the folks said 'bye Jule'. We waved and they waved back. Moony already had her sails up in the Bay and was heading for the BVIs. We brought the mizzen and jib up as fast as we could and tried to catch up with them. Thought we were doing this trip together!



The coastline of Sint Maarten slowly gets smaller as we progress well on a northwesterly heading. Wind is around 10-12 knots with 5-7 foot seas, mostly swells. Before dark, we decide to bring up the main and then Jule starts to move. At 1900, Moony was about 2 miles ahead of us. By 0200, we were about 2 miles ahead of them. Only one problem; we would arrive at Round Rock in the dark. So now we had to slow her down. Dosing the jib brought our ETA to 0745. Not bad.

At 0800, we passed Round Rock and got a great view of the BVI's. Our first stop would have to be Spanish Town on Virgin Gorda as it is the closest port of entry. Anchorage was quite roly as there was a lot of commercial traffic in the vicinity. We had to anchor in nearly 40' of water so a lot of chain and rope went out. The water was so clear that you could see the anchor set. The water was as clear as in the Bahamas. Customs and Immigration was the most formal so far but that was what we expected of a British territory. Not much to do in the town so we left for Gorda Sound on Wednesday.





However, Moony was having problems making their way North to the Sound and they suggested that we head for Marina Cay. Oh well, we wanted to go to Gorda Sound but Marina Cay was on our wish list also. This is one of the Pusser rum islands where their famous 'Painkiller' was invented. Before we went to shore to see the evening entertainment, we turned on Mo-Gene, our LED lantern given to us by its namesake. With so many anchor lights, it always easy to find Jule when Mo-Gene was lit.

Eric Stone (from Lats and Atts fame) was playing at the Happy Hour Bar on the top of the Cay. As Bob Bitchin has said, he is really good. But so were the painkillers and (believe it or not) Bob became the voice for moderation. But nobody did listen. After all pain was killed, we stumbled down the hill into our dinghys, found our boats, and secured Jule for the night.



10 Feb 2011, Cane Garden, Tortola, [18 25.632 N/ 064 39.60 W](#)

We left Foxy's a couple of days ago and headed for Cane Garden Bay on island of Tortola. Have we mentioned that it rains almost every day here, even in the dry season. Most of the times it is a minor drizzle. But cruisers close all hatches before they leave their boat. We do also! Occasionally the drizzle changes to a downpour. Not good! We have learned the hard lesson to close the hatches any time we are away.



We arrived at Cane Garden Bay a little after 1100 local time. The areas was quite beautiful, much greener the Yost Van Dyke. Wonder why? The Bay was well contained with views from every direction. Our cruising friends, Jim and Karen said that we would not be disappointed and we were not.

Lots of wildlife here including lots of strutting roosters and their byproducts, even more little chickens. You can hear the roosters day and night doing their rooster thing. We also saw the mama hens and their chicks everywhere. Very neat as the roosters/hens/chicks were not afraid of us.



Poor Bob. Real work is always a 'blessing' but there is a schedule. Still we are happy that we can satisfy our obligations while we are underway. It costs the company quite a bit to secure the communications facilities but so far we have been successful. Not bad!

They talk about the old distillery in Cane Garden and how neat it is. Well, we found it and it is old but we were not

impressed. There was someone there watching over it but was not very useful in describing the place. He was listening to his iPod. Nevertheless it was interesting and was free. Still we expected more.



12 Feb 2011, Cane Garden to Sopers Hole, Tortola, [18 23.15 N/ 064 42.22 W](#)

Time to leave this paradise, so two days ago, we slipped past our mooring ball and headed for Sopers Hole which is near the west end of the BVIs on Tortola. We had the trade winds at 15-18 kts with seas 6-8 feet. However, as we approached the West End of Tortola, we had to turn 180 degrees to make the approach to the settlement of Sopers Hole. My, it was windy. Still we picked up yet another mooring ball and ready to explore the place.



Moony wanted to check out Road Town in case they had to go there for repairs or medical help. Wolfgang is sick again and is struggling with his cough, fever, and chills. Still he says everything is 'perfect'. Road Town did not impress us much as it was crowded, rather dirty, and full of rude waitresses. Still, it was interesting to see the charter boat capital of the world. We got a great taxi driver to bring us back to Sopers Hole who gave us the scoop on the place. Turns out he was originally from Nevis. We arrived back on the boat in time to see a nice sunset.



Today we discovered the Jolly Roger Inn that was less than 500 meters from our mooring ball. We had both lunch and happy hour there. People were friendly, prices were right, and no one tried to cheat us. This was a far cry from our experience with Pusser's restaurant at Sopers Hole. Our experience was so negative in so many ways that Bob used up some of his precious WiFi minutes to write an email to the Pussers folks. Appears it was wasted minutes.

13 Feb 2011, On to the Bight at Norman's Island, [18 19.08 N/ 064 37.00 W](#)

Yesterday, we left Sopers Hole around 0730 and headed for Normans Island which is about 8 nm away. We had winds mostly on our nose with seas around 5-6 ft. Why are we going to windward anyways? As Capt. Ron said, "nobody knows". We left early before the winds and waves picked up so the trip was not uncomfortable. We picked up a mooring ball near the Bight at 1025. We pick up moorings rather than anchor as most of the anchorages are in 30-50 feet of water. Though we carry 300 feet of anchor rode, only 100 feet is chain. That coupled with the fact that Bob did the chain to rope splice, we will take a ball in deep waters.



There is this floating restaurant called the Willie T. which is a landmark at Norman's. We attempted a Happy Hour there but it was so crowded and so noisy, we went to the Bight Restaurant instead. Waitress alert there too. We did have chance to explore the bight a bit and walked one of the few roads (dirt) in the area. We saw the restaurant's generator, the watermaker, lots of termite tunnels and mounds, and hermit crabs. The greenery was not very green as even these trees know its winter.

We gave the Willie T another try today, but this time for lunch. First we had to go to the Grub side (bow) and order the food, then we had to go to the Grog side where we ordered the drinks and tea shirts and had to pay for everything. Food was good, folks were very friendly, and the boat was quite interesting.



15 Feb 2011, On the North Sound for the Bean, [18 29.994 N/ 064 23.22 W](#)

We left Norman's at 0700 at daybreak today as this would be another windward passage. Though we thought it would be on the nose, we could do sailing and motor sailing for most of the 22 nm trip. Lots of big boats out here; and a gazillion charter boats. These guys are everywhere. Once we got in the lee of Virgin Gorda, the seas settled down but the wind would gust, veer, and back due to the mountainous terrain.



We passed Mosquito Rock at 1100 which begins our turn into the Sound. The rock looks bigger on the chart, but it signals the beginning of a really big reef. So the reef and the rock get a lot of respect. After the rock, we found the well marked channel through the reef. Then it is open water as we approach the mooring field at Leverick Bay. Yep, another mooring ball.



Tonight Michael Beans will be performing at Jumbies, so we dinghied to shore in plenty of time to get a good seat. His show was much like we remembered his earlier performance at the Annapolis Boat show a couple of years ago. He really gets the crowd excited. Not bad but maybe two hours is a bit too short. And the happy hour was only one hour!

The marina and resort at Leverick Bay are first class acts with reasonable costs and courteous people everywhere. Not since Sint Maarten have we been so pleased with a place. We will stay here for another day and just relax. Maybe a hike around the area also. We will see.



21 Feb 2011, More Time in North Sound, [18 30.114 N/ 064 21.67 W](#)

Three days ago we traveled 1.2 nm from Leverick Bay to Saba Rock where we took another mooring ball. Moony anchored in 40 feet of water and used most of their 330 feet of chain. We were envious of their chain until we noticed their pitching motion while going to windward several days back; it was significant and Wolfgang attributed it to the weight in the bow. Maybe mooring balls are not so bad after all. Anyways, Saba Rock is a small chunk of rock (maybe 0.5 acres) where a restaurant, hotel, and full environmental facilities were constructed. Pretty neat place!



We frequented the Bitter End Yacht Club which was a 5 minute dinghy ride from our mooring. It was more like a sports park than a yacht club but was a great place to walk. Like most places, it was rather expensive but the people were friendly and there was much to see. We visited Bitter End many times during our stay at the North Sound.



Sunsets here can be quite impressive. The water is clear; the terrain is typical of the Virgins, and the area is protected from the ground swells. Not bad. Boat traffic is mostly charter boats and they stay only one night. If a boat stays more than a day, chances are it is a cruiser. We talked a lot about chartering and decided it was not for us; trying to cram too much in too little time; plus you have all that writing on the boat!



On our many walks at the Bitter End, we came across a rock 'bridge' where underneath was a place to sit. We were relaxing when a kind young lady offered to take our picture. Turns out the lady is the wife of the room manager. The picture turned out pretty good and it may well be the last picture of Jule and Moony together for quite some time. But that is another story.



Bocce time. We got the plastic bocce balls out of storage and played several games on both Saba Rock and Bitter End. We chose to continue the guy/gal duet that we started in Fort Pierce 5 years ago. So the outcome was the same. Guys 3; gals 0. The games were very close but

Wolfgang's masterful bowling brought the guys their victories.



Poor Ann always takes the pictures so she is not usually in them. Today she attempted to remedy that by taking a self portrait with her Blackberry. It actually turned out pretty good. Not bad, Miss Ann. The weather at North Sound was usually quite good. However, we always had to prepare for the occasional rain shower. We always closed the hatches before we left. Cat litter and a closed boat were not always the best combination.



Saba Rock has a pretty good Happy Hour so we spend many evenings at the Rock. On weekdays, they would have fish feeding where restaurant scraps were fed to the waiting tarpon. Tomorrow, we will head for Peter Island which is about 13 miles south of here. Should be fun. But we had to first say goodbye to the local pirate at the Rock. An impressive fellow but a little rigid.



25 Feb 2011, On to Peter Island, [18 21.402 N/ 064 35.08 W](#)

Three days ago, we left for Peter Island which turned out to be a 17 nm sail (jib and jigger) with winds out of NE at 15 knots. The predicted 10 foot ground swell did not materialize in the Virgin Gorda area so we only had to deal with 4-6 ft seas driven by the wind. We arrived in Great Harbour on Peter Island around 1300 with the usual exercise of tasking a mooring buoy. This getting kinda expensive as the moorings everywhere usually are USD 25 per day.



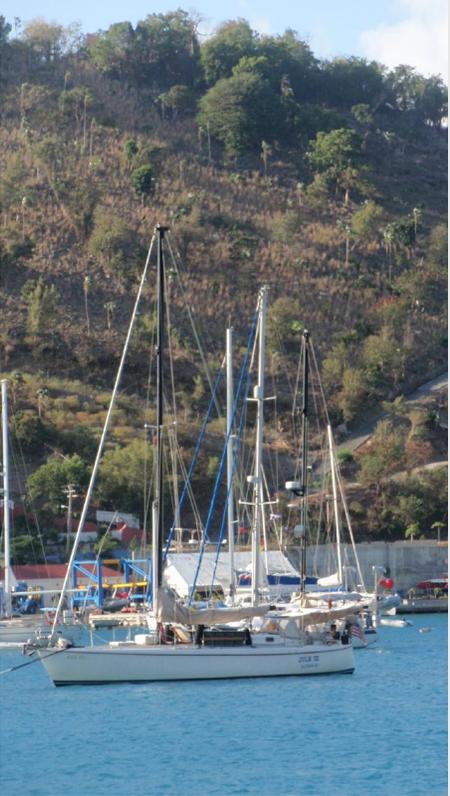
We came upon this critter while hiking around Peter Island. He was heading for the resort also. When we came ashore, we met by an older gentleman named Conrad, who appeared to be blind. He helped us with our dinghy and gave us some local knowledge. We saw him several times during our visit. He had a 'tip jar' so we contributed to the cause.

This is very pretty island but much of it has been acquired and locked down by the Peter Island Resort. They discourage cruisers by the extreme rates for dockage, power, and mooring. However, they open the grounds and restaurants to visitors so we had a chance to check it out. Nice place but out of budget range.



There is this boat called Deliverance that visits Peter and Norman Islands and picks up your trash and provides ice; both for a fee. Ann loves these guys! She can get her ice fix every day. We first encountered them at Norman's but discovered them at Peter's today. Ann is happy.

Yesterday we left for Soper's Hole to provision and check out of the BVIs Our stay here in this wonderful territory has to come to an end as we have new places to go. Plus our stay here is limited to a month and that is almost over. We got a great mooring ball near the ferry dock but as we are east of the dock, we get no wakes. We visited our new favorite restaurant, the Jolly Roger Inn and completed our provisioning. Tomorrow, we head for St. Johns in the USVI, a trip of three nm.





Voyage 2010: Chapter 4

More Cruising

02 Mar 2011, Leinster Bay in St Johns USVI, [18 21.93 N/ 064 43.35 W](#)



Our trip from Sopers Hole to St. John's was a whopping 1.7 nm and took less than 30 minutes. We used our 'Local Boater Option' card to check in so we did not have to go to Customs at Cruz Bay. Leinster Bay is beautiful with all shades of color that the water can produce. As much of St. John's is a National Park, there is little development here. Not bad!

There are beaches everywhere here and we chose the eastern beach to land our dinghy. There were many people visiting the area by car as it was a weekend. This is one of the favorite hangouts for the locals; Leinster, Maho and Francis Bays. we will certainly explore them all or ... Is it too far?



On the next day, we decided to hike to Maho Bay and see what there is to see. Along the way, we came upon an old Danish (ca. 1730) sugar mill. The mill used wind, horse, and slave power. It would only be a couple of years after the mill was built that the slaves revolted. It took 6 months for the Danes with the help of the French to suppress the rebellion. Not a pretty part of the area's history.

Today we set sail for Maho Bay under calm conditions. This voyage was much longer as it was 3 nm away. We went through a narrow cut to enter Francis Bay and continued to Maho Bay. We saw Moony and took a mooring ball near them. This area was also beautiful but not as nice as Leinster. However, there was Maho Camp which was an eco campground that caters to the 'green' crowd. They were very friendly to the cruisers and provided rest rooms, water, a general store, and a very nice restaurant.



In fact, the restaurant was so nice we spent Happy Hour there several nights in a row. We all had a great time. However, stuff here is not very cheap. Yesterday, we all decided to hike to the sugar mill. It was a bit more crowded as the folks from Cruz Bay came to visit. Wolfgang and Bob received some old fashion bread and drink from one of the volunteers there. Quite nice.

Today, we took Mr. Frett's shuttle to Cruz Bay to do some provisioning and fun. Cruz Bay is a quaint and compact town which is by far the largest community on St. John's. As we mentioned, much of the island is a National Park so development is severely restricted. The cab ride to Cruz Bay (and back) was quite an adventure as this land is quite mountainous. Still Mr. Frett got us there and back safe and sound. Tomorrow, we will head for Coral Bay which is on the eastern side of the island.



05 Mar 2011, On to Coral Bay in St Johns, [18 20.382 N/ 064 42.68 W](#)



We left Maho Bay at 0700 for the southeastern part of the island at Coral Bay. It promised to be a place like none we had seen before. Sammy Jane was ready as she was on post on the coach roof. However, as we approached the Narrows, the seas picked up a bit and she headed for the cabin. We were going against the Trades so we left as early as we could. We managed to 'round the bend' before winds and seas picked up.

We arrived in Coral Bay around 1200 to be greeted with a lot of masts. This is not the Park so there are boats everywhere, many homes for liveaboards. We found out that 'proud' boats were owned by transients and the less than bristol vessels were local. Jule played it safe further out in the Bay. A bit more roll with a bit less worry.



Caramba! This is a scary dinghy dock. It is full, everybody has their engines up, and it is in pretty bad shape. There is a sign posted soliciting donations for the betterment of the dinghy dock. As there was no other place to go, we braved the dock and headed to shore.

Our first stop was Coral Bay Marine where we asked for local knowledge on trash, water, and restaurants. They were very helpful there and offered to dispose of our trash. People would come and go and CBM would assist them where they could. The folks there were quite resourceful and were a resource to transients and locals alike.



This is the bus stop. You are never sure when the bus will come as bus 108 broke down yesterday. But this is the bus stop. And yes, the legs move. Pretty neat. When the bus finally came, we were admonished by one of the passengers that we were on the wrong side of the road and that we should pay NOW. Local knowledge never hurts.



They got all sorts of critters here. We had seen the goats, chickens, sheep, and iguanas but what is with the donkeys? Turns out they have feral donkeys here. Not a mean bunch unless you bother them. Capt. Bob is not bothering them. Hope they believe him.



As we were walking the area, we saw the local school boat. We did not see it in action but can only imagine how it is used in this community. There is a rather large elementary school here but we were told that the high school kids had to go to St. Thomas. Those lucky one had to catch a ferry at 0500.

Our last night in Coral Bay was spent at the Skinny Legs restaurant (we had breakfast at the Donkey Diner). This place is quite famous and is always crowded. Not sure where the people come from as this is a very small town. The waitresses are friendly and the food is good. Of course, they are St. John's prices which are a bit high.



[29 Mar 2011, Charlotte Amalie, 18 20.262 N/ 064 55.83 W](#)



Last week, we left Coral Bay and headed for Charlotte Amalie in St. Thomas. Trip was uneventful as it was only 22 nm and the trades were out of the east. Swells were minimal. We anchored in the harbor at 1130 in 18 ft. We are told that the city was originally built by the Danes and the USA bought the Virgin Islands before WWI.

The next day we dingy-ed for Crown Bay to get a new washdown pump. Crown Bay marina was a nice marina but their dinghy dock was awful. It was harder to get out of the dinghy dock area than to get into it. Some had to struggle for 10-15 minutes to escape. When we returned to the boat, Bob immediately start the installation. Then the nice people from the harbor asked us to move as we and a dozen other boats were restricting the ferry boats. After we were assured that the bottom was sand (no washdown pump installed), we dutifully moved.



The following day, we took our laundry to the Washboard then headed for Hooters for lunch. Bob actually watched CNN more than the girls working there. Food was good, news was bad (beginning of Japanese earthquake and tsunami), but life was comfortable for us. After Hooters, we returned to Grande Harbour marina to get fuel and water. While their dinghy dock was not bad, their method of dealing with dinghies was awful and dangerous. Management would not permit you to walk on the docks so you had to dinghy to a fuel dock which was 2 meters above the water. There was nothing to stop the dinghies from getting sucked under these concrete docks. We survived but it was not fun. Next time we will bring our megayacht.



Next day was Bob's birthday and were going exploring ;so we started by dinghy-ing to Frenchman's Marina. The young lady who greeted us was very nice and gave us local knowledge of the area. However, the owner of the facility was apparently not so nice. We had to pay USD 5.00 for the dinghy dock but did not entitle us to the use of any of the facilities. Afterwards we walked to Crown Bay (to avoid their dinghy dock), did some shopping then headed for downtown on the local taxi for USD 1.00. That night we went to Fat Turtle's for Bob's birthday dinner. We had a great waitress named Molly that made the meal a delight.



We read about the so-called '99 Steps' and our mission was to find it. We dinghied to town and tied up on the concrete wharf near the Coast Guard area. This was the nicest dinghy dock here. Armed with a pamphlet we got in the Danish district, where we finally found the steps. We hiked up the steps while the 'girls' sat in the shade and chatted. Didn't seem right. Poor Bob was seeing his life before him as he hiked up the 99 (really 103) steps.

Wow. What a great view of the harbour. Can you find Jule in there? We waked down the 99 steps which was much easier. All of the la-de-da stores in the Danish district closed at 1330. Good! No more shopping. We will leave tomorrow and head for Culebra in the Spanish Virgin Islands. Hoever, we spent a last happy hour at Fat Turtle's where sadly Molly was not working that night. We said goodbye to Wolfgang and Denise with the sadness that we would probably not see them again, but that is another story.



We left at 0817 right after a sea plane left the Frenchman's area. During cruise ship days, these sea planes land dozens of times a day. Ann is always worried that one is going to land on us when we are in the dinghy. Weather was settled and the course to Culebra was uncomplicated. Wind and seas were quite a bit heavier than predicted. A squall laid on our heads much of the way there. We were lazy and did not put up main or mizzen (only jib) and we paid by experiencing quite a bit of roll.

24 Mar 2011, Culebra to Cabo Rojo, 17 56.67 N/ 067 12.01 W

Ten days ago, we arrived in Culebra at 1230 hours and anchored behind Cayo Pirata. Anchorage was not bad in 7-8 ft. This was our first Spanish language landfall so we were not sure what to expect. We were pleasantly surprised about the folks in Culebra. We have two places to land the dinghy; the town dock and the Dinghy Dock Restaurant.



One of the landmarks is a smart looking lift bridge that has not worked for decades. However, it was recently reconditioned and is a handsome historic landmark. It is a shame it doesn't work as it would be neat to see it lift. All of the guide books talk about it. The bridge crosses over a canal that links Bahia Ensenada Honda with the Atlantic Ocean.

Ah, the Dinghy Dock Restaurant (DDR), the cruisers refuge. It has an acceptable dinghy dock that all can use but it would be helpful to have a stern anchor. In fact, your dinghy would benefit from an stern anchor in any of the docks. Wind is always on the wrong direction. Our first tie up to DDR was eventful. We tied up, had breakfast, then went to tour the town. When we got back our dinghy was tied up in a different cleat. Turns out the dinghy tried to escape but some folks in the restaurant rescued it. We thanked them a lot.



Happy hour at the DDR is always an experience. Whether it be the unfriendly Germans, the talkative liveaboards, or the Wayne-like guy with the long hair. We enjoyed talking to 'Wayne'. He was not a cruiser but a frequent visitor to Culebra. He calls Israel home. And then there is the bartender. She is a senior lady who does not appreciate bar humor. She makes great drinks but don't get on her wrong side.

There is this lady (Island Lady) who runs a little stand on the south side of the bridge. She has nice stuff in her portable store. We bought a ton of hot sauce from her and some trinkets for the grandkids. She was a great source of local knowledge on the island. We did walk the town for tee shirts; Chinese food, and stuff. The people were friendly and language was not much of a problem as most knew enough English to talk to us. Sadly our Spanish was totally wanting.

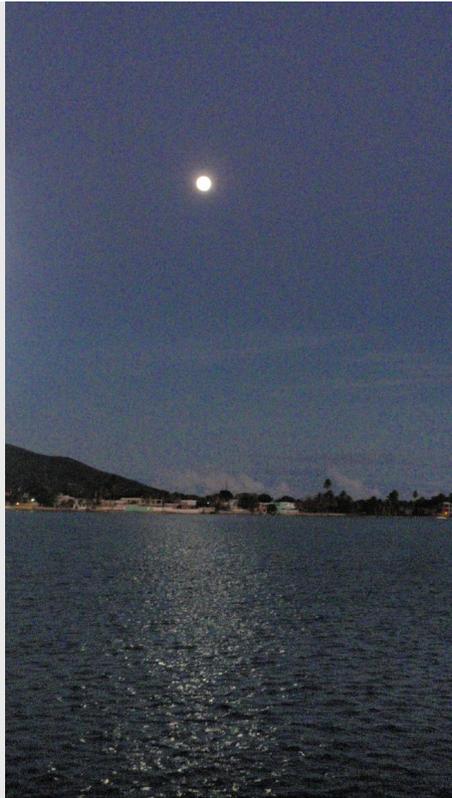


Not sure that Sammy Jane liked Culebra. She would stare out to the town to listen to the roosters, goats, and cows. Not sure she ever heard a cow before. Tomorrow we will leave and travel the Southern coast of Puerto Rico. We hope to be in Salinas in a couple days and eventually arrive in Cabo Rojo for our Mona Passage crossing.

A week ago, we left Culebra at 0620 for Puerta Patillas as an overnight stop to Salinas. We experienced light winds and not so light seas. We discovered lots of floats for fishing pots so we had to be alert for most of the trip. Ann got her fill of dolphins as they greeted the boat and crew with a 10 minute show. Ann was in dolphin heaven. We tucked in behind the reef at Patillas for a nice comfortable anchorage.



The night was clear in Patillas and the moon provided a nice backdrop to the town. If we can move fast enough, we may have a bit of a moon for the Mona Passage crossing. The next morning we left Patillas on our way to Salinas. Conditions were still a bit light but there was a strong SE swell. So of course we rolled. This leg was 47 nm so we received a broad view of the Puerto Rican coast. The south coast is beautiful!



We arrived in Salinas four days ago. The guides say it is a bit tricky getting into the harbor but is marked in the skinny places. We anchored in 8 ft. with good swing room. We headed for the marina to see what we could see. The marina is quite nice but you can not buy showers. What is that all about? They have a nice restaurant and snack bar and the folks in the office are very friendly but no shower.



The town of Playa Salinas does not mirror very closely the reports from the cruise guides (Van Sant and Pavlidis). The economy may not have been to kind to Salinas. Many of the businesses mentioned in the guides no longer exist. Playa Salinas is mostly a weekend marine retreat for the local population. The people are very friendly and the courtesy is reflected on the water.

We rented a car from Sydney (a small KIA) and decided to indulge ourselves with a Walmart and Sam's Club visit. We traveled on Route 52 and headed for Santa Isabel where we found Walmart. Yes, their signs were in Spanish and English. Then we headed for Sam's Club in Ponce. We hoped for our favorite cheese and wine. We could not find it! We found a Home Depot and asked Joseph (the greeter) if he knew the way to Sam's. He was most helpful and his guidance brought us to the door of Sam's. Not bad. Of course Bob had a pizza and Ann had a hot dog, just like at home. We headed back to Salinas later and enjoyed the great views of the surrounding landscape.



The next day we headed back in town to check out the local restaurants. Everything was closed. What is this all about? Apparently most of the stores close on Monday. In fact many of the tiendas close Monday through Wednesday. Sorry we did not go into Drake's. Looked like a challenge.

The anchorage here in Salinas is quite wonderful. It is protected with little risk of dinghy butt. We noticed a French

boat drag their anchor badly when they were playing with their jib. As they were near to us, we decided that maybe we should move. At our new location, we saw SV Drifter, a boat we buddied up with at Sint Maarten. We dingyed over and said hi. We promised to get together before we left.



And so we did. The next day, we met Mike and Karen at the marina's snack bar. We chatted about the town, our voyages, and our plans. They are hoping to head for Guatemala unless they have to spend too much time in Puerto Rico. Later that day, they invited us aboard Drifter for Happy Hour. They have a fine boat, a '68 Columbia, which they have kept in wonderful shape. Enjoyed the visit!

The next day we headed for "Gilligan's Island", located in the Bahia de Guanica. As usual, winds on the southern coast of Puerto Rico were anywhere from 5-15 knots from the East. Swell was 6' with 2-3' wind waves. A bit roilly. We arrived at Guanica around 1630 and anchored in 7 ft of water. The reef that protects the eastern side of the Bay eliminated any roll from the swells. Not bad.

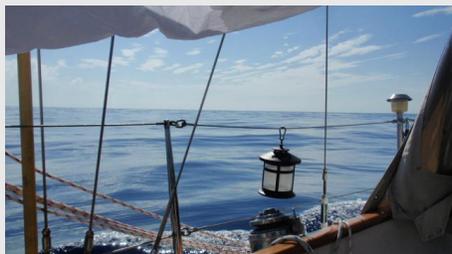


Today, we left for Cabo Rojo which marks the SW corner of Puerto Rico. Weather was the same so we continued our motorsailing to the Cabo. It was not long before we saw the cliffs and lighthouse that marks 'Rojo'. The SE swell was a bit more than previous days so we were a bit worried that the anchorage might be a bit roilly.

As we entered the Bahia, the waves and swell did diminish. We would experience a bit of roll, but nothing that was uncomfortable. Small fishing boats and the lighthouse made us welcome in a 7 ft. anchorage. The water was crystal clear and we could see the anchor and its chain. The night was beautiful and we were ready for the Mona Passage. On a sadder note, poor Ann has turned the big '60' here in this beautiful bay.

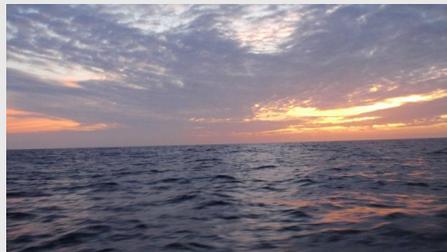


27 Mar 2011, Mona Passage and on to Luperon, 19 53.94 N/ 070 57.10 W



Two days ago, we departed Cabo Rojo at 0645 and were greeted with no winds and glassy seas with NE swells. We dropped the jib as it was just a flapping. We sheeted hard the mizzen which reduced the roll a bit. Bob routinely monitored the fuel vacuum and noticed it was climbing again. As we were rolling, he re-installed the electric pump but after 12 hours the vacuum was dangerously high. We think that there is a screen in the tank that is contaminated. Bob blew into the hose in the hopes that it would temporarily clear the filter. It seemed to work.

The first night treated us to a beautiful sunset as we left the Mona and continued our passage up the coast of the Dominican Republic. This is a big country! We have another 36 hours to Luperon. Fortunately, the wind picked up a bit from the East but the swells were stubbornly coming out of the NE. At 0330, Ann spotted the cruise ship, Seven Seas Navigator. AIS and MARPA had a very small CPA so Ann called the vessel on the VHF. The operator indicated that he saw us and was altering his course to starboard with an estimated CPA of 0.5 nm. And 30 minutes later he was 0.50 nm off our beam.





The next day greeted us with continued light winds out of the E with the same annoying swells. But it was really, really hot. So clever Ann built a 'tent' under the mizzen held up by boat hook. It worked but it really would be a mess if we had to jibe. During the second night, the winds shifted to the SE (on our stern) at 10-15 but swells still out of the NE. We jibed as soon as we could and moved the boat in a more westerly direction, and everything calmed down as the swells were more nearly behind us.

Today at 0930 we turn to the south and head for the Luperon harbor. The Garmin charts are awful here but the CYC charts on openCPN chartplotter are great. There are a lot of lumps and bumps entering and traversing the harbor so we were cautious. No problem, mon. As we were looking for a place to anchor, a local boat came up to us and asked us if we wanted a mooring. We were a bit reluctant until they said they were Handy Andy and Papo. These guys are recommended in the various cruise guides for the area. We have to clean up and go to customs.



06 Apr 2011, Ten Days in Luperon, [19 53.94 N/ 070 57.10 W](#)



We arrived here in the harbor and waited for the Commandante's representative to start the check-in process. Sure enough a uniformed man and his driver arrived for our pre check-in inspection. The uniformed representative was a member of the DR Navy assigned to the Commandante's office. Both were very friendly and we managed to communicate with each other without too much difficulty. As he left, he recommended that we continue the check-in process ashore the next day. So we did.

Our first unofficial visitor was a very long, very thin, very green snake. He was contemplating a slither up our main mast. Bob would have none of that and encouraged him to take a swim instead. The boat hook prevailed and off he went to find another boat to visit.



We hopped into our dinghy the next morning and headed for the dinghy dock next to the Government dock. !Caramba! This dock is in worse shape than the one in Coral Bay (USVI). Walk only where there are new nails. Never navigate the dock at night. We soon adapted to the new challenge and now it doesn't seem quite as bad.



We were told that the town of Luperon suffers from a bit of neglect from the central government. For instance, the roads were torn up a couple of years ago for a new drainage system. The roads are still torn up and the drainage system is below the high tide mark. People have grown accustomed to the dust and dirt but still hurts the town.



The Catholic church is near the center of town and it is quite a place. It seems to be fairly new. The lady attending to the garden allowed us to enter and we spent some time in the church. When Sunday came, Bob was having a bout of Gringo fever so we did not participate in the celebration of the mass. Sad.

We had lunch in one of the local restaurants (Letty's) where we met Renaldo and his daughter. Renaldo is the brother of Letty so he helps out from time to time. Children here only go to school for half a day so the daughter had finished school for the day. Renaldo told some of the history and politics of the town. It was quite fascinating.



Every Saturday at 1130 there is a baseball game at the town field. The gringos (aka cruisers) play the locals. When we do not have enough gringos, the locals lend us some players. This day the gringos lost the first game but managed to squeak by on the second. Afterwards, the younger children were bribed to clean up the field, funded by the gringos. We get the impression that gringos and locals really like each other as they are always helping each other out.

Our amigos Papo and Handy Andy also clean bottoms of boats for USD 1.00 per foot. So last Wednesday, they came by armed with dive equipment and scrapers. Lots of crud came off and soon Jule's bottom was black again. And her

prop again was devoid of marine life. After Jule, they headed for another boat near us. They are braver than we as we saw stuff floating in the water that you normally see in a toilet. Ugh.



We discovered the cruiser's hangout and it is called Captain Steve's Place. We were greeted by Steve and his esposa, Annie. Steve told us about his place, the RD 100 (pesos) specials, the free WiFi, the free shower, and the free swimming pool. Plus they have two neat kids, Stephanie and Coral. We do not have any good pictures of them as they moved too fast.

We went to the Puerto Blanco marina for the Sunday swap meet. Bob went to the 'dumpster' to get rid of yesterday's trash. Oops! It looks like the dumpster was ocupado. The cow has discovered a gold mine in the 'goodies' in the dumpster. She managed to stay there most of the day. Not sure the cow is organic, but maybe.



The swap meet was quite nice. We got tee shirts, trinkets, a couple of books, and other miscellaneous stuff that will remind us of this place. We met several cruisers that would be heading north about the same time as we hoped to go. SV Wild Cat is a Dutch boat that will slowly be heading to the Chesapeake. SV Another Adventure is an American boat heading for Key West where they hope to do some chartering work. Good day!

We have been watching this guy almost every day making fishing nets. Every day! One day, Ann approached him and asked him how many he makes. Sadly we didn't know enough Spanish and he not enough English so we just smiled at each other. Oh well, we should have used the Rosetta Stone.



Luperon has a rich local culture. We see people in cars, scooters, and horses all sharing the same roads. The horse seem to belong here more than the scooters but the scooters are becoming more important as fuel and food prices accelerate upwards.

Soon we will be leaving Luperon for the Bahamas. We will miss the anchorage as most folks are friendly and helpful. For instance, Sarah was playing some music on her boat. Ann mentioned that she liked it and Sarah subsequently made a copy for us. Yep, we are going to miss this place.



We leave tomorrow so we need one more time at Steve's Place where we had our last 100 peso meal. We said farewell to Steve, Annie, Coral and Stephanie. We know that they will continue to be a success even with new



competition from JR's. There are other cruiser places but they seem to complement Steve's operation rather than compete with it.

While at Steve's, we met up with Frank and Tini of SV Wild Cat. We planned our departure with SV Another Adventure where they planned on stopping at Turks and Caicos while we would continue through the Bahamas. We planned a 0730 departure. We had to check out and get our despacios. That was quite a process but everybody was friendly and helpful. Winds tomorrow will be light and pretty much on the stern.



07 Apr 2011, Luperon to Mayaguana, 22 19.69 N/ 073 01.90 W



We left Luperon Yesterday at 0730 and slowly weaved our way through the harbor in a hazy morning. We motorsailed most of the way the first day while the other boats did a bit more sailing. By dusk, we were all motorsailing. During the night Wild Cat decided to go with us to Abrams Bay and Another Adventure confirmed that they would stop in Provos. So we left them off of West Caicos and the two of us headed for Mayaguana.

More light winds greeted us today. Wild Cat was about two miles ahead of us as they entered Abrams Bay. They did not have good charts of the area so they took advantage of the high sun to read the water. We entered the bay about a half hour later and anchored nearby. Abrams Bay is somewhat protected by a coral reef where the larger waves are attenuated. Still the smaller ones sneak in so it was a bit rolly but not too bad. Tomorrow Jule will head for Georgetown while Wild Cat will explore some of the smaller islands.



11 Apr 2011, Mayaguana to Georgetown, 24 10.704 N/ 076 28.83 W



We said farewell to Wild Cat and headed to Georgetown. Wild Cat had a brief emergency as their boat was overheating. But Frank discovered a slipped hose on the heat exchanger. Emergency canceled. On our way to GT. we passed the Plana Cays, Acklins Island, and Long Island. We entered Elizabeth Harbour via the North Channel entrance on midday, 9 April. We went to town to check in but found that Customs was closed and no telephone number. We will have to wait until Monday to check in. Oh well.

We did manage to go to church on Sunday at St. Theresa's. We remember this church well as we attended services here many years ago. The old pastor was not there but they had a 'loaner' priest who was excellent. The small church was packed with locals, cruisers, and tourists. The service was perfect! Afterwards, the people gathered outside to chat for a bit then headed home. We walked back to town for a quick lunch at Two Turtles.



On Monday (after the Cruiseheimers SSB Net), we headed to town to check in. First we visited Customs which is now next to the Shell station, and then we had to go to Immigration which is near the east of town past the roundabout. Process took about 2 hours. We tried to get ice at Exuma Market and the Shell station but there was no ice. This is not good. Next we headed for Volleyball Beach on Stocking Island. Chat-n-Chill, popular bar and grill, had ice but did not sell it.

They pointed us to St. Francis resort. We dinghied there but noticed a sign indicating that they were closed. Jill, the owner of the place said that they had a bit of ice that they could spare. While they were bagging the ice, we chatted with Jill and gave us an overview of the place. Nice lady! Good drinks, too.



17 Apr 2011, On to Nassau, 25 04.524 N/ 077 18.77 W



We are in a hurry! Emily's First Communion date is approaching and we will not miss it. So we have to hustle. We left George Town at 0700 on Tuesday and entered the Exuma Sound at 0815 heading for Galiot Cut. We had a nice motor sail but the wind was definitely light. We entered the Exuma Banks at 1430 and dropped the hook off of Big Majors at 1850. It was a pleasant but long passage. The next day, we left for Shroud Cay (no wind) to stage our arrival at Nassau on Thursday. We arrived at Shroud on 1445 under calm condition but had more boats than we expected. We took a mooring and enjoyed the sunset.

We left Shroud at 0630 hoping to take a slip at Nassau before dark. We diverted from our rhumb line a bit to miss the Yellow Banks but that only cost a couple of minutes. Winds we again light so of course we motor sailed again. We were making good time but not much real sailing. We arrived at Nassau Harbour Club at 1515 in a less than an ideal slip; not what we were promised but we had nice neighbors.



On Friday we cleaned the entire boat inside and out as this was the first wash Jule received since the first weeks in Sint Maarten. She was happy. We were happy. The marina has not changed much since last year though Peter was a



bit grumpier than last year. Still, he is the best at getting boats tied up in the marina.

Ben and Don are our immediate neighbors who are young Irish crew for an Irish owner on a Irish boat. They were very helpful assisting us to complete our tie up. They were good musicians who provided delightful music around sunset most nights. Don has been on the boat for 17 months and has traveled nearly around the world. Ben has been with the boat only 7 months.



On Sunday we headed for Sacred Heart Catholic Church for Palm Sunday. The service was very moving and the church was full. The congregation mirrored the ethnic mix of New Providence. The picture here was taken 30 minutes before the beginning of the service. We hope to be in Vero Beach for Easter Sunday.

22 Apr 2011, Almost Home in Vero, [27 39.504 N/ 080 22.27 W](#)

We left Nassau 0740 day before yesterday with more light winds and a favorable current. If the Gulf Stream is not kind to us, we may have to enter Ft. Pierce in the dark. Not a nice thing, especially if wind and current are opposing. But we are getting ahead of ourselves. The Northwest Channel was not bad as we approached Northwest Light. The banks were nearly flat. We did not see many cruisers on the way nor did we hear any VHF chatter.



But it was getting very hot with little wind and a cloudless sky. Ann broke out the umbrella to get some relief. Bob was hiding behind the dodger. Helmer, the autopilot was doing all of the hard work. Jule's Yanmar is not very thirsty so under normal motorsailing conditions, she uses less than 0.5 gallons/hour. Still we have been doing a lot of motorsailing.

Yesterday at 1910, we arrived at the Ft Pierce after 35 hrs underway from Nassau. The Stream was disappointing so we ran out of daylight for the final push to Vero. To make matters worse, our normal anchorage near Harbourtown was

a bit crowded and very shallow. It has shoaled considerably in the past two years. So we headed back towards the inlet and anchored in the turning basin with two other sailboats. Nice anchorage!



Yesterday, we hauled anchor at 0745 and headed for Vero Beach. We motored slowly to enjoy the waterway and the cool breeze. We have not experienced such coolness in a long time. The local boater were friendly and courteous. We were happy it was not a weekend as it would be much more congested. We arrived in Vero at 1100 and got one of the best mooring balls (#21) all to ourselves. The mooring field had no double moorings and maybe 12 free mooring balls. Never saw this before.

Our plan is to stay here until after Easter Sunday and move towards Wilmington before the late week weather sets in. So we have three days to provision, meet our friends from Orlando, and enjoy Easter Sunday. Today (Friday), we see Bella and the crew of SV Sirius Endeavor heading for shore. They were are mooring mates last year. We promised ourselves that we would contact them tomorrow. However, that would not be. Tonight, our son, Chris called and informed us that Gina (our remaining dog) was dying and that we should head home as soon as possible! Gina had days not weeks. Twelve hours later we left Vero.



[24 Apr 2011, Rushing to Wilmington, 31 13.02 N/ 079 28.60 W](#)



We left Vero at 0815 yesterday hoping that we could get to Carolina Beach before Gina passes. Chris volunteered to drive her down to us and we agreed that Monday (tomorrow) would be the best time if we could get there in time. Wind was light to moderate from the East, seas were a bit rolly, and we did not meet the stream until 1400. For the first day, we hugged the western wall as it was squally near the axis of the Stream. The rainbow was a pleasant reward.

[25 Apr 2011, Landfall and Carolina Beach, 34 02.538 N/ 077 53.53 W](#)

Yesterday, wind and seas continued to diminish so we had to increase our engine speed. Chris and Gina would arrive around 1700 and we had to enter the Cape Fear before 1600 or would face foul currents all the way to Carolina Beach. Nuevo Chirpy came to visit us and we were afraid that he would be the latest casualty of birds stopping on Jule. Happily, NC left after checking us out for a half hour. We are happy and hope that he made it back to shore.



Today finds us nearing the Cape Fear around 1500. Remarkably, the wind picked up and the current improved so that we could motorsail through the Cape Fear before the current turned foul. Chris and Gina arrived at the vet around 1600. We entered the Carolina Beach Harbor at 1645 and we were greeted by several of our marina friends, our son Chris, and granddaughter Lilli as we approached our slip at 1715. Thanks to everyone that was there to help us. More to follow about Gina.

[29 Apr 2011, Loss of a good friend and companion, 34 02.502 N/ 077 53.51 W](#)

Our loyal dog, Gina, has passed away and our granddaughter Lilli said "Levi and Gina must be playing in the sand by now". Lilli was very close to her and would often 'dress her up'. She was a good mate until her arthritis made it difficult to board the boat and dinghy. She was always a great companion no matter where we dragged her. We will miss her!!





Voyage 2010: Chapter 5

Where is Homeport?