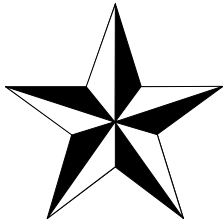


PDQ Owners Association (POA)

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2005



COMMODORE'S CORNER

The saga of *The Cat's Aweigh* has reached a milestone. After moving to Punta Gorda on March 1, 2005 Pam and I have dreamed of the day that we would have our PDQ tied to the dock behind our house. "Charlie" took care of both delaying *The Cat's Aweigh* move from the Hudson to Florida, and also removing our home. But we now have the boat tied to the dock, and the contractors are just about ready to



This swallow noticed the cat is not home, so she perched on the dock line and stayed for a visit during our trip from the Chesapeake to Florida.

rebuild the house.

The trip down the ICW was pleasant and very enjoyable with the exception of the gale force winds we rode out for 28 hours in North Carolina. Pam and I are beginning to think that we are a magnet for strong wind. Mark and Diana Doyle, *Semi Local*, are writing an ICW guide that we were asked to critique on the way



Georgetown, Exuma Bahama's: *Lead Free Too, Allez Cat, Distant Music, Tanah Keeta, Prairie Dream, and Second Wind* at the Annual Cruiser's Regatta.

down. We are not sure when it will be published, but when it comes out all who plan on taking the ICW should pick up a copy. Even if you just read all the background facts they have included it will make owning the guide an enjoyable addition to your library.

We passed Roger and Bonnie Ford, *Kokomo*, on their way back from the Bahamas, and had a nice catch-up phone conversation. The Sasines, *Starlight*, were taken aback when they spotted their old boat heading south as they were making their way back to Baltimore. Bob and Louise also called via cell phone to bring us up to date on their adventures. Probably one of the greatest assets to owning a PDQ and belonging to POA is keeping in touch with so many wonderful people. Terry Green and Bob Stein, *Second Wind*, called to welcome *The*

Cat's Aweigh to Florida. Pam and I want to offer a huge "Thank You" to Larry and Joy Linn for helping in our move.

Just a short story... as we passed through a bridge opening in South Carolina we got a radio call from a northbound monohull. The skipper wanted to know if we knew there was a boat out there named *Mice Will Play II* (Harvey and Sue Griggs). Of course we are very familiar with the boat and the owner. The skipper went on to tell us how Harvey and he had taken some boating courses together. What a small world.

Just a heads up, next New Year's Eve the POA party is in Punta Gorda. Pam and I will be hosting the get-together. We are shooting for AT LEAST 15 PDQ's (sail or power) so let us know if you are coming.

Colin and Ruth Swithenback, Larry and Joy Linn, Rick and Pam Kilmer (Pam is behind the camera), enjoyed a feast of crabs at Colin and Ruth's home on Still Pond. Rick and Pam stopped in on their way through the Chesapeake Bay.



(RHKILMER@earthlink.com) We need to do some pre-planning.

We are organizing the annual meeting in October at the Naval Academy this year. We will publish the notice soon.

Rick and Pam Kilmer
Commodore/Vice Commodore

BAHAMAS CRUISING 2005

Bob Stein and I crossed the Gulf Stream on Feb. 3, 2005, aboard s/v *Second Wind* (36040) on our extended cruise of the Bahamas; through the Exumas, and down to Georgetown. Chet and Sharon White aboard *Allezcat* (36010) joined us for the cruise. Our route in Florida, from Punta Gorda was via Naples and Marco Island where we anchored overnight, and enjoyed the hospitality of Lee and Dottie Henderson (*Brigadoon*). Then to the Shark River, north of Flamingo, FL, Islamorada, and near Key Largo on Card Sound behind Pumpkin Key to await our weather window for crossing. As with any Gulf Stream crossing we awaited an approaching cold front so that the wind shifted to the south.

Second Wind and *Allezcat* left the Florida Coast on Feb. 3rd from Angelfish Creek. We motor-sailed across the Gulf Stream arriving at Cat Cay, south of Bimini, where we cleared customs and entered the Bahamas. We spent two days at Cat Cay due to a cold front passage, with 25-30 knot winds out of the North.

Our next destination was Chub Cay in the Berry Islands, across the Oh-so Blue waters of the Bahamas Banks. This was a long day, with 83 nm to go, so we left at 5 A.M. to reach our destination before dark (never sail the Bahamas without daylight).

From Chub Cay we left for Nassau, where we stayed at Nassau Yacht Haven for 5 days, in order to perform some maintenance, and to do some sightseeing.

Second Wind and *Allezcat* departed for the Exumas on Feb. 12th, with our first stop at

PDQ Owners Association (POA)

Normans Cay, where you can see the remains of an old DC3 airplane awash in the harbor, and where you can get a great Angus Burger at McDuffs. We anchored at Pipe Cay in the most crystal clear water that you can imagine, with a 1-knot current sweeping past like a babbling brook, and then headed to Black Point.

From Black Point after a delicious lobster dinner at Lorraine's Café, and after buying a loaf of her mom's delicious bread, we headed to Prime Cay for some snorkeling on an island

only accessible by very shallow draft boat. There we met up with *Distant Music* with Mike and Marya Martin (36075), and *Lead Free Too* (34017), with Sharon and Larry Duhaime. It is very interesting to glide over the sand with only a few inches to spare, but you can see it clearly, and the navigation is all by eyeball.

By Feb. 18th we had arrived at Lee Stocking Island, where the Caribbean Marine Research Center is located. We were treated to a tour of the facility, which is quite impressive, and encompasses the entire island, plus several other Cays, and a large amount of ocean. Evening found us aboard *Kokomo* (36080), with Bonnie & Roger Ford (Having hors d'oeuvres and drinks, of course) and swapping sailors tales for the rest of the evening.

We arrived in Georgetown Harbor on the next day and joined *Next Exit* (36028) with Don Wilson, *Mice Will Play* (36093) with Harvey & Sue Griggs (We passed *Dream Catcher* (36041), Tom & Amy Gillespie, who were northbound as we approached Elizabeth Harbor.

Georgetown, Exumas, Bahamas is a cruiser's destination. Located on Elizabeth Harbor, which is surrounded and filled with numerous islands and cays, Georgetown hosts the annual Cruiser's Regatta each winter. Many folks arrive by boat in November and spend the entire winter until April anchored there. Stocking Island, about a mile across the harbor from Georgetown, has numerous sugar sand beaches, including Hamburger Beach (Yes, you can get a hamburger there), Monument Beach, Sand Dollar Beach, and numerous others. There are two large reefs within the harbor, where you can dive or snorkel, and numerous others around the cays. Crab Cay to the south, still within the harbor, offers three anchorages (some for shallow draft boats), which is protected in any weather. Hiding in Red Shanks, behind Crab Cay becomes a twice-weekly event, since the wind clocks every three or four days, and the anchorages become rough on the open harbor. The Red Shanks Yacht Club meets on a sandbar, which uncovers at low tide, with drinks

and hors d'oeuvres, giving the cruisers an easy excuse to hide from weather. There we also met up with *Prairie Dream* (36048) with Merle and Jan Larson aboard, and *Tanah-Keeta* (36089), with Ron and Susan McDaniel aboard, and *Duet* (36027) with Bill and Barb Nicholas aboard. So as you can see, it was not only a cruiser's regatta, but a PDQ regatta as well.

Using Georgetown as a home base, we traveled to the Jumentos Cays in the Ragged Islands, joined by *Kokomo*, *Allezcat*, *Next Exit*, and *Y-Knot* (an Endeavor Cat), where we snorkeled reefs on Water Cay and Flamingo Cay. The visibility underwater exceeded 300 feet, and the coral and fish were abundant. These islands are not populated, are extremely remote, and any vessel sailing there must be prepared to be entirely self-sufficient. Our sail back from these cays was in 8-10 foot waves with 25-30 kt. Winds. With a beam reach we were cruising in excess of 10 knots. Passing through the cut at Hog Cay we entered protected waters along the Northeast edge of Little Exumas where we had an exciting sail in flat water back to Georgetown. We spotted whales spouting as we entered Elizabeth Harbor, but were unable to identify the type of whale.

A sail to Long Island, where we rented a car, gave us an exposure to the non-tourist Bahamian life. Twenty-Four cruisers got together here for a Bahamian meal, served family style. It is a miracle that our dinghies were able to float that night. Long Island is filled with quaint villages, and friendly people. There are two major resorts on the north end of the island, but they are self-contained, and do not seem to spill over to the rest of the island, although I am sure that they improve the economy.

We left Georgetown, sailing to Barreterra, a small island attached to Great Exuma, where we visited a general store for supplies. The ninety-four year old farmer took us to his five-acre plot to pick the fresh vegetables we wanted from his pothole garden. Every possible vegetable and fruit grew in the rocks of this island, where it appeared that nothing could possibly grow. Lloyd Norman, the farmer, suggested that he would probably give up farming this land in a few years, since at his age (94) it was becoming too hard on him.

From Barreterra we went to Little Farmers Cay to wait out northerly winds, returned to Black Point for another lovely dinner at Lorraine's Café, and headed to Staniel Cay to snorkel the Thunderball Grotto. This is the cave made famous by the James Bond movie Thunderball. Staniel Cay is an Americanized Island, with a nice Yacht Club, rental cottages, a good airport, and some well-fed sharks. We left Staniel Cay for Shroud Cay, where we dinghied across the island on a mangrove lined river. Allen Cay to the north was our last stop before returning to Nassau. Allen Cay is home to brightly colored Bahamian Iguanas, numerous

sea birds, and at least one manta ray, which was ten feet from wingtip to wingtip.

We spent eight more days in Nassau waiting out weather and playing tourist. Riding the jitneys (buses) was exciting for \$1.00 per trip, and gave us the opportunity to see New Providence Island native style. We returned via Bimini (where we encountered a huge current at Alice Town), crossed the Gulf Stream to the Lake Worth Inlet, and returned to Punta Gorda via Lake Okeechobee.

Obviously there is much greater detail than we can include in this short article. We will have a DVD movie to show at the next PDQ event.

Terry Green & Robert Stein
SECOND WIND

ALLEZCAT IN THE BAHAMAS

February 27, 2005

Hello all stations: We arrived at Georgetown, Exuma yesterday after a wonderful motor down Exuma Sound on calm seas. Hooked a nice fish about halfway down from Lee Stocking Island but lost it before getting it to the boat. The trawler next to us landed a 38 lb. grouper!

There are lots of boats here (275) and 6 PDQs, *Duet*, *Distant Music*, *Next Exit*, *Second Wind*, *Tanah Keeta*, *Allezcata*, and the power PDQ *Leadfree*.

Dreamcatcher left the harbor yesterday headed north. Nice weather so far.

March 3, 2005

We are anchored behind Ferguson Point riding out a cold front passage. Last night the winds were SW at 25 but during the night we had heavy rain showers and the wind is now NW at 15 to 20Kts and building. The sky is gray, the weather decidedly cooler, and we are all reading books. This anchorage is very well protected but the entry to it prevents any deep draft boats from getting in or out. There are 15 boats most of which are catamarans or trimarans including 5 PDQs. The only negative is the mile dinghy ride to town. By the way, we hear that PDQ is ceasing production of the 36 sailboat.

We had a great time in the Jumentos visiting Water Cay & Flamingo Cay. The weather was so settled and calm we were able to anchor in the North Bight of Flamingo and snorkel the wonderful reefs there in calm seas. The water is unbelievably clear and you can easily see the bottom at 40ft. The bright corals of the reef and fish are breathtaking. We were in the company of *Distant Music* and *Tanah Keeta*. There are no people or services in this island chain except Duncantown at the southern end which is a small settlement of 75 people. No gas, no water, and no groceries. Beachcombing and cave exploring are great fun. There is little protection from Westerly Winds

so one has to be aware of approaching cold fronts.

We were lucky to have great winds for sailing down and back with a beam reach of 15-20kts giving us boat speeds of 7 to 9kts under sail. We crossed paths with a couple Haitian boats carrying their wares to Nassau. They carry a distinctive "crab-claw" lateen sail rig.

March 13, 2005

As I write this on Saturday morning, I look over the stern of the boat at the sun glistening on the turquoise water and the hundred or so boats anchored across Elizabeth Harbor. What a beautiful sight and how lucky we are to be here. The days seem to fly by and are consumed by trips to town for laundry detail, fuel, propane, groceries, and email. Then of course there are the boat maintenance tasks; oil changes, fix the anchor light, housekeeping, make water, and charge the batteries. Of course there are fun things to do also; plan the next voyage to a remote island, go snorkeling, visit a town restaurant, or just read a book. The Cruiser's Regatta is this week with a multitude of activities. Tonight is the variety show which is always a hoot.

We have not entered the boat (our house) in the races this year and there are no PDQ's entered so instead we plan a trip to the Jumento Islands, Long Island, or Conception Island in the company of *Kokomo*, *Next Exit*, and *Second Wind*.

March 17, 2005

Happy St Patrick's Day: We are anchored in Red Shanks (a protected bay near Georgetown) after a boisterous sail yesterday from Flamingo Cay in the Jumentos. Apparent winds were 25-28kts with boat speed 9-10kts. We covered 55NM in just over 6hrs. I was glad to have new sails and rigging! It was exhilarating but we were glad to be in a quiet anchorage last night after all the motion. The seas were flat calm (unusual) in the Jumentos which made for great snorkeling and beachcombing. The glasslike surface was like looking into an aquarium. At anchor in the North Bight of Flamingo we enjoyed watching a large stingray cruise under the boat. Swimming just above him was a large fish which stayed with him wherever he went. We also climbed to an old lighthouse on Flamingo Cay, dinghied into a big cave, and Chet learned how to clean a lobster. Just before sunset all the cruisers anchored in the bay (8 boats), gathered on the beautiful sand beach for cocktails and hors d'oeuvres to watch the sunset and enjoy each other's company. We had planned to go further south in the Jumentos but another approaching cold front with strong winds and showers convinced us to return. There are very few protected anchorages in the Jumentos from NW winds.

Sharon is really into basket weaving using local palm fronds. They are a special palm

which only grows on some islands. She even made a hat adorned with a couple colorful seashells.

We have not heard a news report now for several days. However, it seems that life goes on without CNN!

March 24, 2005

Happy Easter: Just sailed back to Georgetown from Long Island, a large island (by Bahamian standards) located just 35 nautical miles East of Elizabeth Harbor (Georgetown). The island is about 60 miles long by about 3 to 4 miles wide. The north end is sparsely populated but hosts two exclusive resorts; Stella Maris Resort on the Atlantic deep water, windy, hilly side, and the exclusive Cape Santa Maria Resort on the calm shallow water west side. The rest of the island consists primarily of fishing and agricultural settlements. There is a high ridge along the eastern side with some spectacular home sites. The island is adorned with beautiful beaches on both sides, numerous coral reefs, several caves, blue holes (deep holes to the ocean floor in shallow water bays), and numerous ruins of plantations dating back to the 1700-1800's. There are also large shallow ponds that provided salt from evaporated seawater. It all makes for great exploring and the friendly people and local restaurants are an added bonus.

After a 3 day visit, we had a great sail back with 20kt winds 20deg off the port stern and following seas pushing us at 7kts under jib alone.

Everything here closes down for the Easter weekend so we will re-provision tomorrow and perhaps start our slow return north this weekend.

April 12, 2005

Allezcata is anchored in Lake Worth (West Palm Beach) just south of the inlet as we relish the beautiful Florida sunset. We arrived here at 3:15PM after leaving Bimini at 7AM this morning. The 2 to 3kt push through the Gulf Stream current is a definite plus as *Allezcata* motors at 7kts and the distance is 75NauticalMiles. The winds were light SE at 10Kts which provided no help with sails. Seas were confused at 2 to 4ft. with an 8ft NE swell which gave the catamaran lots of "ocean motion" but a nice crossing overall. Otto, the famous German autopilot, was able to steer all the way. On arrival, a cell phone call to customs was all that was required to check in. However, immigration requires we go in person to the port tomorrow. I guess this is supposed to make our borders safer but just how escapes me, as I'm sure the bad guys would have no part of this. Incidentally, on this trip to the Bahamas we made our first visit to Alicetown, Bimini. The town was exceptionally clean and the people very friendly. We hope to spend more time there in the future. The marina charge was only \$.70/ft and it was a welcome rest after a

horrendous night before, anchored on the Bahama Banks with 20kt winds and 4ft waves bashing the boat. So now it is on to Stuart, FL and across the Okeechobee Waterway to Ft Myers and home. Hope all is well with you.

Chet & Sharon
ALLEZCAT

A PDQ SAILOR CRUISES THE 2005 MIAMI BOAT SHOW

The Miami Show promoters helpfully provide lots of factoids on the endless tape loop which they play on the shuttle buses which run between venues. Since it takes a half hour to get through the horrible city traffic from the Convention Center to the Strictly Sail portion of the show at Bayfront Park you will get to learn the tidbits by heart: the industry grew 5% last year, the first Miami show in 1941 displayed 61 boats under a tent, now there are over 3000 boats on display, Miami is the largest boat show in the world, and so on. The Saturday Miami Herald is happy to fill in any blanks: the boat show has an economic impact estimated at 682 million dollars and draws more people to Miami than any other event during the calendar year. As you sit in the bus, stalled in traffic, you can admire the half dozen shiny new super-sized cruise ships arrayed bow to stern, jammed into every linear foot of space along the passenger terminal in Government Cut, floating testaments to the resourcefulness of America. Leave the boat show and Miami's streets seem like a foreign country. Spanish is spoken everywhere on the sidewalks. Scan the FM radio band, which you will do frequently sitting in your car while waiting for the traffic, and you will discover a wonderful blend of both Spanish and English: the announcers are Spanish, the ads are mostly spoken Spanish with many English words mixed in, and the pop songs played can be either in Spanish or English: a "spanglish" blend of cultures confronting you right from your own radio.

At the waterfront the sailboats fly their bright flags in the lovely warm sea breeze. This year catamarans absorb 60% of the display space. They can be divided into two categories: the new boats with the latest innovations, and boats now several years old which are fast becoming relics. The pace of innovation is astounding. Lagoon offers a 44 foot catamaran sailboat with a fly bridge, it comes with an inside steering station containing not a steering wheel but instead a techno cool joystick, the boat has a front cockpit, and 5 zones of air conditioning powered by an 11 KW generator. The Onan generator sits in its own private engine box where the steering station would be in the cockpit of a non-fly bridge boat. Those of us who lived through the hurricane season from hell this past Florida summer now regard an 11 KW generator with an entirely new perspective: I could power my entire house, plus run

hundreds of yards of power cords to all my neighbors' refrigerators! Of course I rested my tired feet in the Lagoon's front cockpit, which is located just aft of the trampoline. You can sure sit comfortably and watch the watery world go by. There is easily enough room for myself and the helpful salesman. I noticed two small drains in the floor which I could have easily plugged with my big toes (we won't even consider stray strands from the first mate's long hair, dropped tissues, stray suntan lotion caps, etc). When I observed to the salesman that I had put waves completely over my entire PDQ on four separate occasions he started opening the lockers to show me where water could drain out of: my thought was "Wow, even more volume to hold water! I wonder if that nifty windlass will work after it gets submerged in an anchor locker full of sea water?" The Lagoon's flying bridge is going to revolutionize exploration of the Bahamas bank. Sit up there and you can simply see more: locate the deep water, find the lobster havens, avoid the coral heads, and of course it will be the place to enjoy your sundowner while lording it over the lowly monohulls sharing your anchorage. I expect its rapid spread to more cats. My friendly salesman promised me that despite the fly bridge truncated mainsail the boat sails fast, and he claims it is much quicker than the model it replaces: sounds like faint praise to a PDQ sailor.

All the new boats have the mainsheet track on a wing or hard bimini. Voyage shows a brand new 40 foot design with a creative sliding hatch in the hardtop above the steering station. All the sail control lines terminate at a pair of winches outboard but next to the steering wheel. I tested the winch handles on the outermost winch: they clear the combing but you better remember not to have your second hand around the bottom of the handle. The boat also has a clever engine arrangement: the motors are aft, hence easy to reach, with the drives legs forward. There are no more engines buried under the aft bunks. The twin rudders are connected by a flat cross beam which rides back and forth under what I gather from the chocks is the dinghy storage deck. I did notice that the nice flat aft deck runs all the way forward to the main entranceway (should I call it the "grand entrance"?). Since the sterns seemed a little short and stubby to me I wonder what will happen when an overtaking sea breaks over a stern and washes completely into the boat on that lovely flat floor. I did like the anchoring system: the anchor is collected then stored by a windlass at the base of the mast (right where the Lagoon had its neat cockpit) so that it no longer teeters on the front beam.

Diesel/electric drive boats are becoming more powerful and more popular. You can now walk down the docks and meet sailors with hands on experience running diesel/electric catamaran sail boats: Mike Houghton reports that they cruise under power about 1-2 knots slower than a sister ship and the controls are

now debugged (at least he hopes). He thinks the overall concept will be practical if you can get past the \$25,000 in extra costs and the 800 pounds of batteries spread around the boat. I can vividly recall the all morning effort it cost me to extricate two dead 4D batteries from the innards of *TechnoCat*. I engineered wood plank levers, plywood slides and ramps, and then finally finished the job using carpet skids. The physical effort required to remove merely 250 pounds of lead acid cells ended my productive day (I hazily remember a "Painkiller" rich afternoon). I suggest we all make a mental note to be far away when the time comes to remove and replace 800 pounds of batteries from the bilges of an electric boat.

Although it isn't a sailing item I wanted to examine Volvo's new forward facing propeller outdrive (shall we rename it a "frontdrive"?). The display makes the case for fascinating technological wizardry: an electronic steering motor swivels the drive leg, the turbocharged diesel engine is also electronically controlled, the forward facing counter-rotating twin propellers are computer designed to pull the whole works forward and look more like high tech worm gears than the traditional propellers which push my boat along. Actually I am reduced to mere oars currently, and this thing might as well be a spaceship drive compared to those. All you express cruiser captains with the need for 310 shaft horsepower should pay attention to Volvo's claims of large efficiency gains. We'll soon see how good their patent protection turns out to be (are forward facing counter-rotating marine propellers "non-obvious"? can you think of any prior history?). By now you should be used to my meandering sailor thoughts: at least my oars still work if the bilge is half full of sloshing sea water, and I have to wonder how all those electronic components are going to enjoy the salt water bath when the first water hose breaks.

At the power boat venue more boats are on display than ever before: three big new temporary docks bob in the choppy bay. Here the catamarans are just starting to make their presence felt. It will be interesting to see if ten years from now they control 60% of the display space the way they have conquered the sailboat world. Most of the catamaran sailboat makers are now selling power cats and I understand from PDQ they can't keep up with demand and are losing sales because of the long delivery times (are you willing to wait 2 years?). Cats can now be found spanning the range from skiffs to a huge motor trawler displayed in person by Ted Hood.

Oh, I should report that inflation is alive and well on the waterfront. If you want a new boat bring at least a bucket more money than last year. My friends at Maine Cat report that their price of resin went up 50% last year. No prices are firm, everything petroleum derived is constantly adjusted, always upwards. Currently all those high tech coring materials

they use are jumping in cost (do I foresee a return to balsa coring?). I should commend Maine Cat for showing a nice new 41 footer with nothing complicated or radical: an open deck catamaran from chilly Maine for sailors who prefer the outdoors to the latest internet download (tracking internet dishes where big at the electronics booths). A fellow next to me in one of the lines, who is at the show selling closed cell foam seat cushions, tells me his cushions are now running \$21/ linear foot. The depreciating dollar has reduced the number of foreign boats displayed to some extent, but the South Africans seem to be increasing their presence despite the rand/dollar exchange rate. My South African sailor acquaintance tells me he couldn't get citizenship in the U.S. and is now a happy contributor to the Bahamas economy. He is delighted to report that the lovely 50 foot St. Francis he was displaying hit 26 knots on her Atlantic crossing.

And there are plenty of simple bright ideas being displayed which make you stop and think: why didn't I think of that? My favorite gee-whiz product featured a boat hook re-engineered to double as a pump: stick the tip over the side six feet down into the flooded dinghy, and then pull the handle to suck up the water. No more bending over. I didn't ask for a demonstration but it immediately occurred to me that a six foot long 1 1/2 inch pipe full of high pressure water would make a terrific squirt gun. Proof, I guess, that it takes a little boy at heart to enjoy a boat show.

Rick Gordon
February 21, 2005

VINDAND – HOMEWARD BOUND

Well here we are again on the move. We took most of April to drive the van home to see snow and get the lawn mower ready for spring as a gift to Stephanie. We flew back to the boat on the Okeechobee Waterway half way through Florida on April 17th. We are now almost on the ICW and will head north with the sun and back to Bayport Marina in Georgian Bay. We have decided that after 2 or 3 months cruising we miss the kids, home and the grandkids and want to travel to different places as well as sailing. So we will cruise in the summer (hopefully with the grandkids and friends) and then travel to different places in the winter. Right now we are excited about sailing up the East Coast and we will take our time and visit all the neat spots up to New York City and up the Hudson River.

Month or so later: We are now at Elizabeth City which is 18 miles from the Dismal Swamp Canal. We will be going through it tomorrow. Since we picked up *Vindand* at the Glades Marina in the Okeechobee we basically have been going up the eastern coastline via the Inter-coastal Waterway. What a ride!!! From

exploring old St. Augustine to Jekyll Island which had been the summer playground of the "rich & famous" during the late 1800's & early 1900's to spending a couple of days at Charlestown, SC and absorbing lots of the War of Independence and the Civil War history. We moved on to charming and friendly Beaufort (pronounced Bewfort). In fact as we were coming into the marina there we heard the woman on the radio patiently correct a fellow cruiser's pronunciation. He just wasn't getting it & she got really testy with him. You see "Bewfort" is in SC. while Beaufort (Bowfort) is in NC. So we Canadians got clever really quickly and said Bewfort!!! We took a guided walking tour of this pleasant town. Our guide had quite a history. In 1992 he was air lifted from his sailboat off the SC coast in mid January during a winter storm. The Coast Guard dropped him off in Beaufort and he has been there since then. Quite a character. He made the town's history come alive. The rest is a blur of wonderful anchorages in side creeks, small towns and friendly people. Also with those memories are ones of shallow depths (thanks to the recent hurricanes) unmarked shoals (also thanks to the previously mentioned hurricanes) and unmarked inlets that were on the charts but had shoaled badly again because of the hurricanes and were now unmarked. Thank goodness for a shallow draft catamaran and our guardian angel. We saw a few boats stranded waiting for the tide. We experienced a bit of a steep learning curve!! We are looking forward to the swamp tomorrow and then it's on to Norfolk, Virginia. What's been great is that we are now meeting up with friends we had made before. It's like "old home week" at Elizabeth City

Cherel & Jon Hains
VINDAND

RIGGING REFURBISHMENT

Allezcats' rigging was 14 years old this January and I became concerned as to its reliability for our annual trek to the Bahamas. The loads on a catamaran's rigging are substantial, particularly in heavy air. Since the boat does not heel, any wind gust in the sails must be transferred to the boat by the rigging. For every doubling of the wind speed the force increases by a factor of four. I was particularly concerned about the headstay bridle, which on this boat was 3/8" wire with swaged fittings. Being continually deluged by seawater, I worried about corrosion inside the swage joints leading to failure in a blow. I am not aware of any way to inspect these swages.

I came upon a great fix at the Annapolis boat show for do-it-yourselfers. Carl Hayn of Hayn Enterprises markets a new line of mechanical terminals called Hi-Mod. They are manufactured by Petersen Stainless in UK and are similar to Norseman using an inner cone and

outer body. The big improvement is a crown ring with 13 slots to hold the 1x19 outer strands in place while you assemble the components. It really is easy and provides a strong terminal which can be opened for inspection or removed and reused. Extensions are also available if you wish to cut off the old lower swage terminals and reuse the existing wire. I did this on some of the stays. All of the stays on this boat are 5/16" 1x19 wires. The stud diameter on the outer stays is 5/8" with the inner stays and back stay studs at 1/2". The bridle pins are 3/4" using 3/4" eye fittings on 3/8" wire. All wire is 1x19 stainless 316. Fittings are available from West Marine or Defender and run around \$60 depending on size and type.

Changing subjects, the moorings at Stuart Southpoint Anchorage have been renewed and are now available at \$10.00/night plus \$.60tax. Call Buzz or Mike on 16 or 772-283-9225 from 7AM to 6PM.

Chet White
ALLEZCAT

BOAT COVER

In the Caribbean it is not unusual for the interior of *Algoma* to reach the high 90's even if the outside temperature is mid-80. We have always had covers on the windows and hatches and also had added a bimini to the rear of the



hardtop to keep the sun out of the cockpit, but it was not enough. While we were in Bahia Redonda Marina in Puerto La Cruz we talked to the people there at Orient Canvas who worked with us to design a more effective cover. We decided we didn't want the normal over the boom cover as that would not allow us to move the boom to the side to expose all the solar panels so as you can see we went for an under boom design. The rear of the cover is attached to a track fitted across the front of the hardtop, zippers are fitted to enable the cover to go around the standing rigging and a strop is used to tension the cover to the forestay. We did not use Sunbrella as this is too heavy but used a waterproof material normally used for awnings. So far it has stood up well to both wind and rain. Not only has this reduced the heat inside

the boat but it also means we can leave the salon hatches open in the rain. Now the only problem is where to store it when we go sailing!

John and Mary Knight
ALGOMA

FUEL TANK SENDER UNIT

Do you have problems with your fuel tanker sender unit? I have replaced mine 4 times, but no more. I have replaced it with an



electronic unit that has no moving parts. This unit is a direct replacement using the same mounting screws (although you will need longer ones) and the same 2 wire connection. The sender has a center rod surrounded by an outside tube and senses the fuel height by changes in capacitance. The senders are made in different lengths but the company will cut and recalibrate the unit to any length, for *Algoma* ours was cut to 5.5". The part number is GSFLC12. Further information at: www.livorsi.com/catalog/waterproof.htm.

John and Mary Knight
ALGOMA

FORT LAUDERDALE TO HOPE TOWN, BAHAMAS...

Background

After buying a previously owned PDQ 36 through a broker in Fort Lauderdale, 2 friends and myself sailed the boat back to Hope Town, Abaco, Bahamas, where I live with my wife, Trish, close to the world famous candy striped lighthouse (in the photo below).

Being an older boat chartered previously in the BVIs, we had bought her knowing that we would face some minor and major fix-ups before the journey back to the Bahamas, and had spent almost 2 weeks working on a list of repairs to satisfy the insurance company, and more importantly, satisfy ourselves that the boat was in shape to cross the Gulf Stream, especially since we were still in hurricane season – just after the infamous September 2004 when 2 Category 3 Hurricanes had swept through the Bahamas.

PDQ Owners Association (POA)

My help came in the form of Tony Rothschild of Toronto who had grabbed at the opportunity to help sail across; he and I had chartered a PDQ 36 several years before out of Hope Town. My 2nd helper was Dr Ken Ness of Jupiter Florida, a good friend with little sailing experience.

Prior to our crew rendezvous in Fort Lauderdale, I looked at the charts and as per the satellite shot below, had set out 2 Sailing Plans, with Plan A being the preferred one as it would have us traversing the north shore of Grand Bahamas Island with many cays along the way to break up the monotony of the 200+ mile journey.

Both plans would involve crossing the Gulf Stream onto one of the Bahamas Banks, which are rarely more than 20 feet deep and often much less than that.



The Stream can make a very tough journey in any kind of northerly winds, as the current drives the stream northwards at about 4 knots in its axis, and creates square shaped or boxcar waves which can pound a small boat to a standstill.



Once across the Stream and on the shallow Banks, typically the waves are much smaller but of course, you need to navigate quite precisely to avoid the real shallows. So in more detail, our Plans would be as follows:

Plan A Primary Route

- Depart Fort Lauderdale at 1st light Friday Oct 22 and cross the Gulf Stream at a shallow NE angle heading for Indian Cay, just off West End, Grand Bahamas - 70 miles approx/

- Then head for Mangrove Cay north of Grand Bahamas and overnight anchor – 28 miles approx.
- Depart 1st light Oct 23 for Green Turtle Cay, Abaco – 82 miles approx.
 - Head east across the north side of Grand Bahamas
 - Head east across the north side of Little Abaco
 - Head SE down Great Abaco to Green Turtle Cay
- Clear Customs at Green Turtle Cay morning of Oct 24 and then head south to Hope Town – 28 miles approx.

Plan B Secondary Route

- Depart Fort Lauderdale at 1st light Friday Oct 22 and cross the Gulf Stream heading to enter the Bahamas Banks just north of Bimini and anchor by the Great Isaac Lighthouse - 50 miles approx.
- Then head east to Great Harbour Cay in the Berry Isles for overnight and clear Customs at the Great Harbour Cay Marina Oct 23 – 60 miles approx.
- Head north east to Hole in the Wall for overnight anchor Oct 24 - 40 miles approx., possibly stopping at Sandy Point if one the crew had to get back early.
- Then head just east of north for Little Harbour, Abaco, enter the Sea of Abaco there, and then head north to Hope Town – 40 miles approx.

Crew Rendezvous

Our planned departure from Fort Lauderdale was early on the morning of October 22nd, so Tony flew in from Toronto the day before, equipped with a Honda Generator for the boat (doesn't every tourist travel with one?) as Florida was running low on these after the 4 hurricanes of September had cleaned out the local stocks.

Ken was driven down from Jupiter by his wife, and we all met up in a bistro on Las Olas Avenue in Fort Lauderdale about 8pm on the night of Thursday the 15th. After a pleasant dinner (last supper?), our wives drove us to the east side of the Las Olas bridge, where we took our dinghy across to *Catalyst* which was moored on one of the few public moorings in Fort Lauderdale on the Intracoastal Waterway.

After stowing all the gear, we agreed to be ready for a 6am "Engine Start" next day as we wanted to leave the Port Everglades Exit of the ICW around dawn.

The Gulf Stream

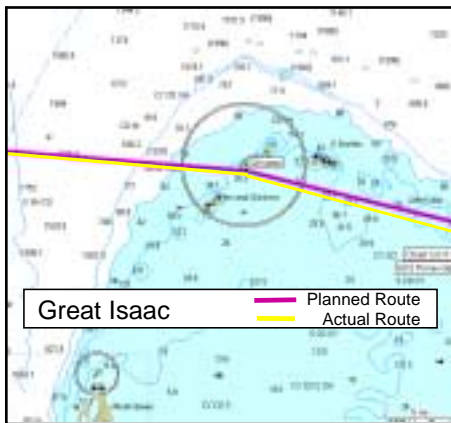
The weather forecasts were calling for a NE 10-15 knot winds, but when I awoke at almost exactly 6am and went above deck, the wind seemed to be from the northwest, which would be ideal for our crossing using Plan A.

After making tea and waking everyone up by simply starting the engines, we huddled in

the cockpit prior to casting off the mooring and turning gently down current into the Intra Coastal Waterway headed for the Port Everglades Exit, some 4 miles away.

With Nav and Steaming Lights on we chugged past the Bahia Mar Marina in the early morning half light and then went under the 17th Street Causeway Bridge; in fact I slowed the boat right down as I was very aware that we had little clearance between the bridge and our masthead.

Fortunately, we did not hit the bridge and proceeded to port exiting Port Everglades by the wide Channel with several large Cruise Liners to our starboard. Ken was on the wheel as we left, passing the outer markers of the channel. where I asked him to hove to before raising the sails.



We assessed the wind as north west 10-15 knots and so we confirmed to follow Plan A, heading up the Gulf Stream for the west end of Grand Bahamas Island, before turning east across the top of this 50 mile long island until we reached the northern end of the Abacos.

By now we had realized the value of one of our recent purchases, a Garmin 172C color chart plotting GPS. In the Intracoastal Waterway, it showed every detail of markers, buoys etc. In the open sea, we could head out into the Gulf Stream and it even had the axis of the stream clearly marked so we could judge when we were in the strongest currents.

Our thinking was to head NE until we were in the axis of the Stream and then just follow this until SW of the western end of Grand Bahama Island, where we would turn NE again. This should give us the maximum "push" from the Gulf Stream, which should equate to an extra 3-4 knots for 3 or 4 hours.

That was our thinking, but about 1 1/2 hours later it became obvious that, unfortunately, someone above us did not go along with this since the wind veered by about 40-50 degrees as we approached the axis of the stream.

So when it became obvious that the wind was not going to back, we changed to the route of Plan B, and used the GPS to go straight for the Great Isaac Lighthouse, now some 36 miles

away. The good news was that the wind was around 15 knots, giving us some 7+ knots, and even better, the Gulf Stream was not too bad, with 10-15 foot swells with few breaking waves.

So for the next several hours we tracked along beautifully with our starboard hull leaving a strong wake behind us. Ken and Tony were feeling a little upset in their stomachs with the motion, but both held together well as we crossed the stream and started to become used to the motion of the boat.

Around 4:30pm we started to pick up the Great Isaac Lighthouse on the horizon, and soon after, the depth gauge started to register again, coming up swiftly from some unknown depth to 300 feet and reducing quickly as we came onto the Great Bahamas Bank.

Away to the right a few rocks appeared as the Lighthouse grew in size, and about 5:30 pm we were getting close enough to see that it was perched on a rock about 1/2 mile long, with a few small houses at its base.

With the wind still from the northeast, we noticed a small Bahamian fishing boat moored in the lee to the south of the rock, and took our cue from this, moving into about 100 yards off the rocky shore and dropping an anchor in 18 feet of water.

As soon as we had the sails down and secure, the 3 of us leapt into the crystal clear water and were pleased to find that it was almost warm. Since it was coming up to 6pm and darkness was drawing in quickly, we only stayed in the water for 5 - 10 minutes, but we all felt considerably refreshed by our brief swim.

Back on the boat, our chef extraordinaire, Dr Ken, prepared a gourmet meal whilst we all consumed a few beers and reminisced about the days' experiences. After dinner at the inside table, with a glass of wine in our hands we all went outside to marvel at the night sky and our ability to see layers of stars that you would never see close to cities due to the dust in the air and ambient light levels there.

As we sat and thought about this lack of ambient light around us, it suddenly occurred to us that something was wrong with this scene: the Great Isaac Light was not working – ah well, we must be back in the Bahamas.

So by about 8pm, we all turned in for bed with just a slight rocking from the swells to help us sleep, which we all did very quickly.

Great Isaac to Great Harbour Cay

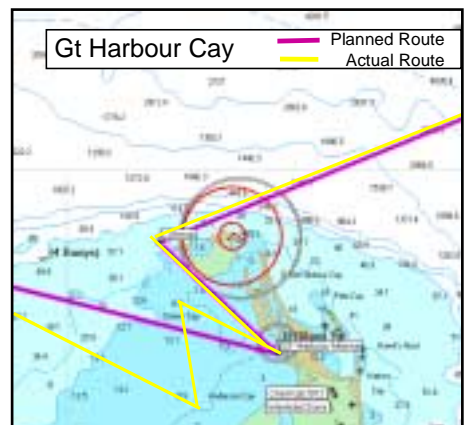
Day 2 saw us all up and ready to go by 6:30 am, with our GPS showing 60+ miles to our destination.

Leaving the anchorage in the early morning light, we followed the fishing boat out to the open waters clear of the Great Isaac and headed 120 degrees with about 15 – 20 feet showing on the depth meter, for we were now traversing the northern edge of the Great Bahamas Bank now.

For the next 8 hours, apart from seeing a few pimple sized pieces of coral as we sailed past the East Isaac Rocks, the only other things we saw were a few fishing boats and some large cargo carrying ships in the deep waters of the North West New Providence Channel, just a mile or so north of us.

Our faithful yacht held 6.5 – 8 knots during the day as we cut through the turquoise waters of the Bahamas Bank, which were relatively calm allowing Ken and Tony to feel much better as their feeling of sea sickness went away.

Unfortunately the NE wind would not allow us to point right at our Great Harbour Cay Marina, about half way down the island, which lies at the northern end of the Berry Islands. The best we could do and maintain any speed was about 120 degrees which was taking us about 5 degrees right of our desired track.



Unfortunately this small deviation to the south headed us right into the shallows which lie to the immediate west of the Berries, so we determined to proceed on present course until the water depth went down to 8 feet, and then tack to the port until we could be sure of making the Marina entrance. In fact this worked quite well because we found ourselves only about 2 miles off the cays when we had to make our tack, and had already picked up the distinguishing Batelco Tower that lay just to the north of the Marina entrance.

With Ken at the wheel, we tacked once to the northwest for about 45 minutes and then turned in for the Marina. Even though we had not tacked quite far enough to make the entrance, we simply furled the genoa and motor sailed in the last mile or so with just the main up to give us some pull and stability.

The faithful GPS proved itself again by getting us right to the narrow Marina entrance which was a slim cut between 2 dark cliffs that was quite difficult to see in the already fading light after 5pm.

Inside the cut, we wended our way into the Marina itself, which lay opposite a bank of condos. Nobody had replied to my several VHF calls for a slip, but as we entered the final turn, a man in a powerboat waved munificently and

shouted, "Just tie up anywhere, there's lots of room."

Sure enough, although several of the slip jetties were pretty broken up (by the hurricanes Jeanne and Frances), there were many vacant, long jetties to choose from.

Once tied up, I called for Customs on the VHF and a kindly taxi driver replied that he would ensure they knew we were there. So we busied ourselves with tying up the boat properly, tidying up, and using the washrooms ashore whilst waiting.

Just before darkness finally settled on us, a car parked at the end of our slip and a uniformed officer came aboard to complete the immigration paperwork. A customs officer soon joined us, and we completed his paperwork for a Cruising Permit for our boat.

After paying the money, we realized that all this only took about 30 minutes and we were now legally entered into the Bahamas.

Tony had spotted a bar within walking distance just outside the Marina, so after the officials left, we walked 100 yards up to a lovely open air bar and restaurant, where we had beer, wine and truly fresh fish dinners. Finishing these by about 8:30 pm, we all looked at each other and decided it had been a long day and it was time for bed.

Great Harbour Cay to Sand Point, Abaco

We all woke early again on Day 3, and pulled out of the marina slip just before 7am, way before any marina staff showed up.

Our plan for the day was to drop Ken at Sandy Point on the southwestern side of Abaco Island, as he needed to fly back to be back in his medical practice by the next day. Tony and I would then take the boat down to the southern tip of Abaco, Hole in the Wall, before heading back up the eastern shores of Abaco to Hope Town.

After powering down the half mile channel that leads from the marina to the open sea, we raised the sails close in to shore where we could use the cliffs for protection, and then set a NW course to go around Little Stirrup Cay, before heading almost due east for Abaco.

As we followed the marked channel that goes west of Little Stirrup Cay, we could already see a cruise liner alongside the cay that was dwarfing it.

After about an hour on our NE tack, we judged we could turn east and just miss the northern side of Little Stirrup. In fact we ended up going about half way between the cruise liner and the cay. The liner was a hubbub of activity with its tenders taking groups of tourists off the ship and over to the beach, where presumably they could swim, snorkel and grab some refreshments.

As we sailed alongside, we too were dwarfed by the ship, which resembled a long apartment block with a pointy end. A number of people on the liner and her tenders waved at us as we cruised by at about 7 knots.

In about 15 knots of wind, maintaining a direct heading for Sandy Point some 33 miles away, let us maintain about 7 knots with Ken at the wheel steering like a pro.

The next few hours passed without incident, with just a few freighters passing by as they headed up the NW New Providence Channel bound for US ports, until we picked up the Batelco Tower at Sandy Point, standing tall way before we could actually see the low lying shoreline of Great Abaco Island.

Although I had studied the cruising guide about visiting Sandy Point, I was still a bit unclear about whether the town dock was on the western shoreline, or whether you entered the channel that starts just north of the village and headed a few hundred yards up the channel in a southeast direction.

So as we headed into shore, about 2 miles out the depth meter came live again and we went from "off the clock" to about 15 feet indicated depth in almost no time. We made sure that we stayed west of Rocky Point and headed a little east of north, aiming for the northern tip of the village.

As the depth fell off, and fell off, and off, we realized that maybe the town dock was on the western shore, and just headed east towards one of the two docks that were clearly apparent as we closed into this shoreline.



Taking down the sails, and heading in slowly on our engines, we closed with the end of a dock bearing a Texaco sign whilst showing only about 4 feet on our depth indicator (thank goodness we were in a catamaran that only draws 3 feet). The wind was gentle and from the northwest, so the relative calm made it easy to tie up, and since we were planning to drop off Ken and then head further south east ASAP, we only put out the minimum lines needed to secure the boat.

Walking off the deserted dock into the village in the early afternoon sunshine, Ken and I went looking for anyone to ask if there was a bus service to Marsh Harbour, but there was nobody on the fuel dock or nearby that we could see. Thus we walked northwards up the beach towards the next dock where we did find a helpful local inhabitant.

In asking about bus services to meet the ferries from Nassau the good news was that we were at the ferry dock. The bad news was that the ferry service to Sandy Point had ceased due to damage in the recent hurricanes with no scheduled date for resumption of service.

So our next question was how to get from Sandy Point to Marsh Harbour, some 60 miles away. Again there was good news, as not only did the friendly local affirm that there was a lady in town with a taxi, but also he would also go and find her, and ask her to come down to the dock where we had tied up.

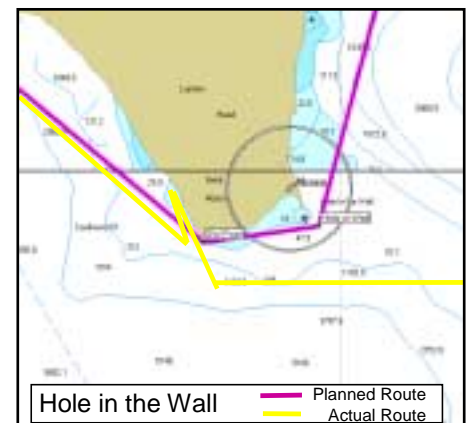
So we walked back down the beach, jumping out of reach of 2 vicious looking dogs that were fortunately tied to a pole, and back to the boat. Less than 5 minutes later, a very nice lady arrived in a smallish car and asked who wanted the taxi. Ken told her that he wanted to go to Marsh Harbour and she said, "No problem, that will be \$135", at which Doctor Ken nearly had a heart attack.

Anyway, it seemed there was no other alternative, so we helped Ken get his bag off the boat and waved farewell to him as he drove off in a small cloud of sand and dust, bound for the mighty metropolis of Marsh Harbour.

Sand Point, Abaco, almost to Hole in the Wall

So Ken's departure left only Tony and myself to cast off the dock and head south around Rocky Point and before heading southeast for Hole in the Wall, aided by a gentle 15 knot following NW wind which allowed us to bumble along at about 7 knots in the warm afternoon sunshine.

Casting off at about 3pm, I estimated we would round the SW Point of Abaco at about 5pm, after which we could pull in close to the southern shore, drop the anchor close to the point of Hole in the Wall which should be sheltered from the NW Wind, have a swim and then BarBQ some steaks.



The afternoon sail running before the wind was delightful as we could stay close to the shoreline, and even if the scenery was a little boring, it was more interesting than just the open sea.

As we closed in on the SW Point though, Tony at the wheel spotted something unusual in the calm off the late afternoon. About a mile short of SW Point, he spotted spouts of water and spray rising from the point, which I light heartedly attributed to be a blowhole of some kind. Well, as we got closer, it certainly was a kind of a blowhole in the coral of the SW Point itself, but more important was what was feeding the blowhole, which was spuming water 50+ feet into the air.

As we came to the point itself, it became obvious that the cause of the waterspout was the 20 foot waves and rollers coming in from the east.

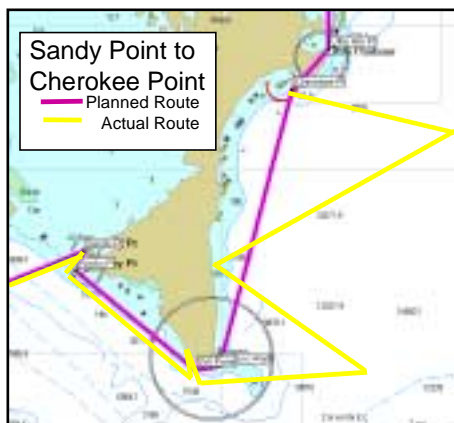
We had had no inkling from either the weather reports or the winds up until now that such large swells were coming in, presumably from some disturbance out in the open Atlantic, which lay just around the next headland of Hole in the Wall.

Tony and I looked at each other and since it was just after 4:30pm and we both agreed that facing the large swells and rollers was best kept for tomorrow, we turned our catamaran around and headed back up the shore of Abaco about a mile to anchor 200 ft off a sandy beach in almost calm conditions.

After a brief swim and ensuring the anchor was in good holding, we lit up the BBQ to enjoy a great dinner of steaks with red wine soon after sunset. Although we couldn't see the lighthouse itself, we could see the sweep of the light from the Hole in the Wall lighthouse passing over us every minute or so. After a glass of scotch to wash down dinner, we went to sleep knowing that tomorrow would probably be a tough day unless whatever caused the large rollers decided to calm down by tomorrow; an unlikely eventuality.

Almost Hole in the Wall, to Cherokee Point

Dawn broke to reveal a relatively calm sea, still with about 15 knots of wind from the north west, so after a quick coffee, we "upp'd anchor and away'd" heading for the South West Point again, about 1 mile away.



As we closed in on the point, Tony spotted the same water jetting upwards from the rocks that we had seen the previous night, and sure

enough, as we rounded the point we encountered large rollers coming in from the southeast, i.e.: rollers between 15 and 20 feet high from the open Atlantic.

We realized that the wind had shifted to northeast, which supported our sailing almost due east to pass just south off Hole in the Wall with its Lighthouse about 2 miles east of us, but which was not going to help us much with the 30 mile transit of the southeastern shore of Great Abaco Island, where, north of Hole in the Wall, there are no harbors or other protection until you reach Cherokee Settlement.

Although the seas were quite rough, our faithful catamaran seemed to handle them quite well, even though we had water coming up and around the bottom of the mast from some of the waves that we penetrated. Making about 7 knots headed due east, we soon came out from behind the lighthouse to the open Atlantic and realized that we had a long day of tacking to do in order to make home as not only did the wind now look just east of north, but it was a healthy 15-20 knots.

Close inshore, the waves and large swells were quite steep with lots of chop on and around them, but as we moved offshore, the choppiness reduced and we rode smoothly over large swells with long amplitude between each one.

Facing the reality of upwind sailing, we made 2 large tacks out into the Atlantic and back towards Abaco Island, coasting in the first time around Crossing Bay where we went in close to shore until the depth gauge showed 9 feet in turquoise water and then went about to north of east on a long 16 mile tack out into the Atlantic again.

The color GPS was just great as we could clearly see from our "track made good" exactly where we could make when we tacked next in towards Abaco. So by about 3pm we found ourselves coming in on a heading of about 290 degrees towards the coastline just north of Cherokee whose sawn off Batelco Aerial became plainly visible as we closed in to about 5 miles.

At this point, Tony and I discussed whether to try to make Little Harbour which would require 1 more smaller tack, or settle for Cherokee Point tonight, which we could make by about 4pm. After a long day of sailing, we took the easier choice and decided we would have a couple of hours of play time before it got dark, and face the rest of the trip back to Hope Town next day, only now some 20 miles away.

So just before 4pm, we fired up the engines again, lowered the sails and approached Cherokee Point, just a low lying strip of black coral that stretches 300 yards into the sea, with a shelving sandy cove behind it. Having been here before, I knew we could just motor in until the keels almost touches bottom, drop the anchor and then let the wind drift us back as the sandy bottom had excellent holding.

So as soon as we were safely anchored, Tony and I donned our swimsuits and had a late afternoon swim around the boat. Tony even had the energy to swim ashore to the beach.

We listened to the radio and some CDs and then cooked up what should be our last dinner aboard, at least for this trip, as the sun set over Cherokee Settlement just west of us, in a blaze of orange and yellows.

Cherokee Point to Hope Town, Elbow Cay

Getting underway early, as usual, we pulled out from the shelter of Cherokee Point around 7:15 am to be greeted by large swells driven by what was now a 25 knot northeast wind, i.e.: almost in our face for our first long tack out into the Atlantic to gain enough sea room to go around Ocean Point and to be able to approach Little Harbour safely, the entrance to the Sea of Abaco, about 15 miles south of Hope Town, and home.



Even motor sailing we could only make good a heading of 100 degrees at about 7 knots into the large swells, and as we left the shore behind they were definitely becoming even larger.

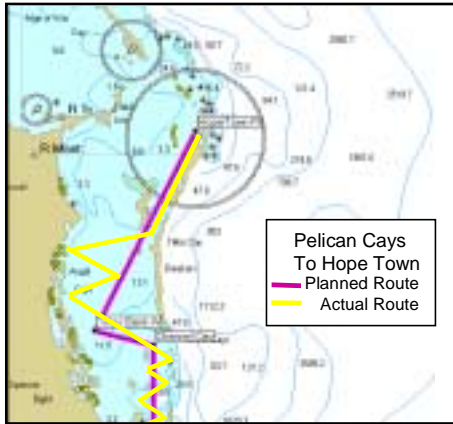
Having faced this short but tough passage around Ocean Point and into the Little Harbour Cut before in tough weather, we just resigned ourselves to an hour of uncomfortable sailing before we tacked, so that we knew we would be clear of Ocean Point, the dreaded "Boilers", and be able to enter Little Harbour Cut safely, and with some margin of error.

So when we tacked port onto about 020, I was delighted that we could clearly see the houses of Little Harbour in the sunshine and saw that we could make the Little Harbour Passage and go outside the "Boilers" without more tacks into the face of the wind.

Cross referring to the Yachtsman's Guide that recommends staying at least 1 mile offshore until you can approach a line between the Little Harbour Point and Tom Curry's Point, we came inshore on this heading, until we turned up into the passage when the white house on Bridges Cay bore 340 degrees. Sure enough, this house stood out clearly in the sun, and as it started to come onto the 330 - 340 bearing, the 150-yard

opening between the northeastern reef and that off the Little Harbour Point showed clear and open.

So, we turned up onto 340 and at about 9:30 am, we entered the Little Harbour Passage to exchange 25+ knot winds and 20' foot swells for the almost calm conditions of the Sea of Abaco, but still with strong winds and facing the prospect of multiple tacks to get back to Hope Town.



Tony took several photos as we came through the gap between the foaming reef and the north end of Little Harbour's point. The

contrast between the "rock and roll" of the 20 feet plus rollers to a 2 foot chop with the same wind was incredible. I called on the VHF and connected with ABC Yacht Charters in Hope Town to ask them to relay to Trish that we were safely inside the Sea of Abaco and should make it home within 3-4 hours.

However, we still had to face the reality of the wind direction which would cause us to make multiple tacks over the next 3 hours before getting home. With Tony at the wheel, we worked our way northwards between Lynyard Cay and Great Abaco. This took about 5 short tacks before we could make some slightly longer ones as the Sea of Abaco becomes wider around Sandy Cay.

North of Sandy Cay, we made it around Channel Cay where we went for a whole 5 miles on a single northwest tack before we ran into Great Abaco Island close to Snake Cay and tacked to the northeast heading for the gap between Lubbers Quarters and Elbow Cay.

By now it was late morning and the wind was over 25 knots, but with the strong sunshine, the Sea of Abaco showed some of its strongest turquoise and aquamarine colors, albeit interspersed with lots of white capped waves.

As we nosed through the narrow gap between Lubbers and the southern end of Elbow

Cay, we reeled in the Genoa and motor sailed for the last 2.5 miles, passing Tahiti Beach, White Sound, the Lighthouse, and the entrance to Hope Town Harbour, where we called Trish on the VHF to let her know we were turning in the final stretch to our home harbor.

Lining up with the narrow road that marks the harbor channel and which also lies besides one of our cottages, I could see Trish with our 2 dogs ready to take a photo of us as we approached the narrow harbor entrance. So Tony and I tooted horns and made silly gestures for her to capture on images, just as a final expression of happiness at making the journey successfully, and for being home in the wonderful settlement of Hope Town.

Peter Michie
NIÑA BONITA

Note: Peter is President of PERFORMAX, a sales and marketing effectiveness company, with offices in Jupiter, Florida and Toronto, Canada. He and his wife now live in Hope Town, Abaco, where they charter their PDQ 32 & PDQ 36, plus rent out 2 cottages ashore in the settlement. For more details visit www.come2hopetown.com.

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