



# Significant Deviation

The Journal of s/v *Alisios*' Seven Month  
Cruise from the Chesapeake Bay to the  
Southern Bahamas and Back

By Matthew B. Jenkins



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*“Trade winds: These steady winds which blow on either side of the equatorial doldrums were so called because of the assistance they gave to the trade of sailing ships. The early Spanish navigators gave them the more romantic sounding name of alisios.”*

*– World Cruising Routes, Fifth Edition by Jimmy Cornell*

# Preface

In late October 2007 my wife, Gail, and I pulled our 35' sloop *Alisios* away from her slip off the Chesapeake Bay in Deale, Maryland and embarked upon a seven month journey down the eastern coast of the United States, to the southern Bahamas and back. The dream which engendered this journey developed over ten years of local cruising. However, the hardest part was deciding the time had come and summoning the courage to go.

Before departing I decided to keep a journal of our trip on my laptop which would be posted incrementally to my website<sup>1</sup> whenever we could find a Wi-Fi hotspot. This task, which originated as a vehicle for sharing tales and photos of our journey with family and a few friends, grew into something much larger as I redirected some of the pent up energy that no longer had an outlet through my conventional job. As our trip progressed, it became clear that a number of people were with us vicariously, occasionally complaining when I was slow to post updates. The following pages reflect that journal, as posted, with only minor edits. If it's somewhat disjointed, I'll blame that on the serial nature of its development. If it's too verbose, I must acknowledge a sin of my nature and beg forgiveness.

A quick note on *Alisios* – She is a 35' convertible cutter-rigged sloop of conservative design that was built in Clearwater, Florida by a small family-owned builder named Caliber Yachts. The hull was designed by Michael McCreary and introduced in 1985 as a 33 footer of which 66 were produced. In 1991 a swim platform was added increasing the length to 35' and in 1994 the diesel and water carrying capacity were more than doubled, at which point Caliber added the moniker “LRC<sup>2</sup>” to the brand. In all, 33 Caliber 35s were built. *Alisios* was the last and is unique in having a completely re-designed electrical system in addition to numerous system, cabinetry and other upgrades not found on any of her sister vessels. We bought her new in the fall of 2004. For us, she was our “dream boat” – a combination of a sturdy, blue water capable, offshore cruiser and a shoal draft, Chesapeake Bay friendly, weekend sloop. Every boat is a compromise and *Alisios* is no exception. However, her key design features have largely lived up to what we were looking for. She served us well during our trip and continues to do so.

Regarding the title, *Significant Deviation* – Deviation is both a type of compass error and a departure from normal, expected behavior (such as two 42 year olds in the midst of their careers dropping out of mainstream society to move aboard a small boat and take off with only basic comforts). This pun has been used by others before me. But, I liked it and felt it aptly addressed our trip.

Finally, no journey like this is possible without support at home. For this, we greatly thank my parents, particularly my mother, for keeping track of our mail, our bills, and anything else requiring attention. We also owe our neighbors Steve and Barbara a debt of gratitude for watching over our house for so many months.

Matthew Jenkins

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<sup>1</sup> <http://cblights.com/>

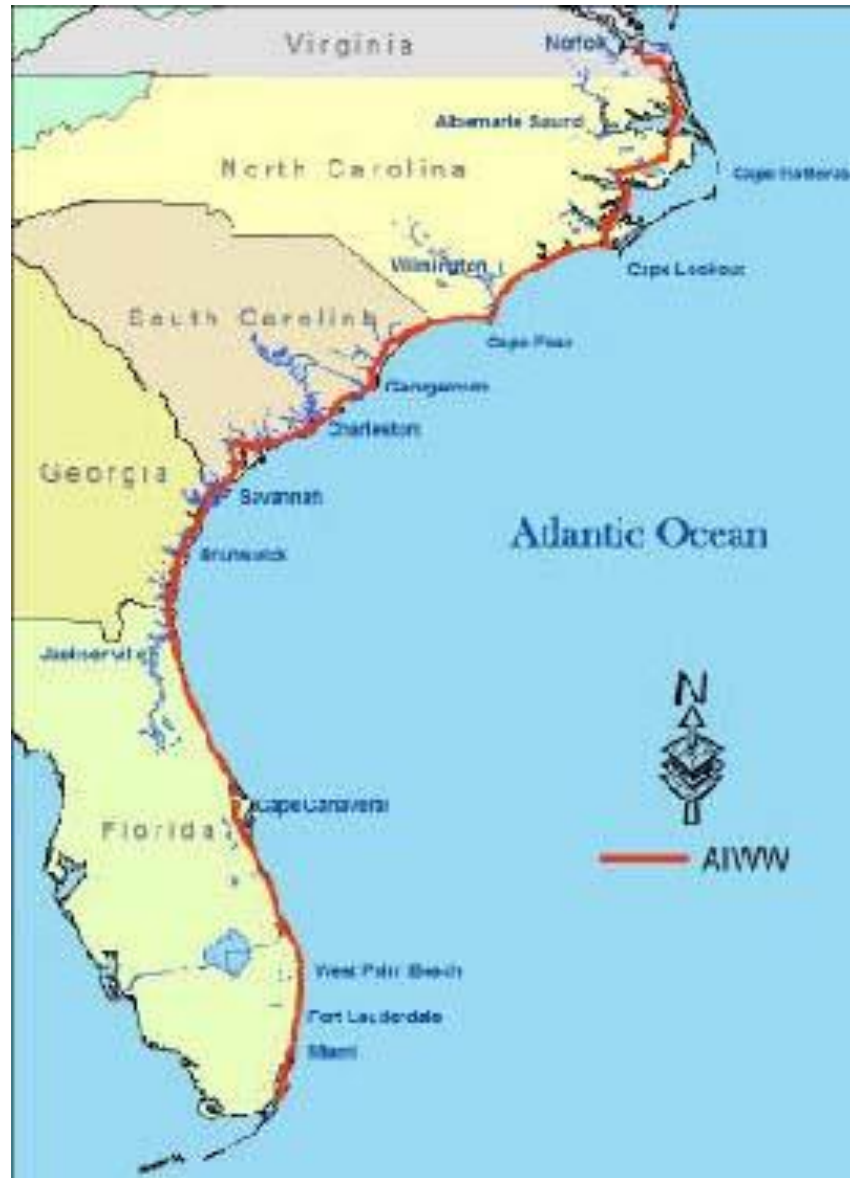
<sup>2</sup> Long Range Cruiser





# Section 1

## Casting Off and Cruising Down the ICW



The Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) from Norfolk, VA to the Florida Keys

### 1.1 KMAIBABIGOTS, 17 September 2007

"The best time to take action toward a dream is yesterday; the worst is tomorrow; the best compromise is today." – Alvah Simon, *North To The Night*

Less than 6 weeks to go and we've finally told all our coworkers. So, I guess it's OK to start the blog. . . For those friends who haven't heard yet, Gail and I have decided to go on "walk-about" again, though I guess that really should be "sail-about". We'll be taking a leave of absence from work from October 19, 2007 through about the first or second week of June 2008 and intend to take our sloop *Alisios* down the Intracoastal Waterway to about the Miami FL area, wait for a weather window, then cross the Gulf Stream to the Bahamas. The ICW portion will probably take us about a month, so we're aiming to reach the Bahamas mid-December. We'll probably clear customs in Bimini, then head for the Exumas (where it's warmer). After that I'd be kidding all of us if I tried to say exactly where we'd be apart from cruising around the hundreds of islands of the chain. We're both keeping our jobs. (Nice bosses – We did promise we'd come back.) We'll have our cell phone and laptop with us, but we don't expect the cell to work in the Bahamas. If it does, it will be at an outrageous cost per minute (so don't leave messages ;-). We'll keep an eye out for Wi-Fi hotspots and hope to maintain an ongoing web log of our travels on this page<sup>3</sup>. I guess this is the (il)logical conclusion of the path we've been on for the past 10 years since we bought our first boat, *Moondance*. A number of events recently fell into line to make this possible – The very sad one being the death of our 14-year old cat, Schwartz. We reached a point where we both needed a change and weighed a number of options. Gail has been pushing particularly hard for this one for the past 3 years. We finally figured "if not now, when? " and developed the guts to act. So, here we go.

A "cruiser" is someone who both travels and lives on a boat (at least for a while). For those who aren't associated with boats and cruisers, our trip seems like a pretty off-the-wall and extreme action. However, when one is in cruising circles, one meets many people doing this sort of thing. During our 10 years of boat ownership we've been extremely active in cruising the Chesapeake Bay, had circumnavigated the Delmarva Peninsula, and even made a trip up to New York, around Long Island, and back. We've been lucky to become friends with many people who live aboard their boats – some actively cruising, others re-building the "cruising kitty" so they can head out again. Over the past several decades a highly polished marketing machine has developed around this sort of dream complete with slick magazines and numerous "my life" stories from people who have seemingly just chucked everything to take off, how-to books on everything from diesel mechanics to provisioning, and cruising guides offering information on every nook and cranny in all but the most remote places. We've read more than our share of these, but are cognizant that there is a gap between dreams and reality and have the benefit of having done many couple-week cruises and of having done a significant walk-about 17 years ago. We realize that after a few weeks, vacation is no longer "vacation". One falls into new routines and work patterns and it's very likely that we will start yearning for something more purposeful to do towards the end of our trip (at least I will).

Our trip timing is determined by a combination of weather and insurance. 01 November marks the official end of hurricane season for the Eastern U.S. 01 June marks the official beginning. The insurance companies care about these dates (A LOT) and ours has said "thou shalt remain north of Hatteras [North Carolina] until after 01 November" and "thou shalt return to north of

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<sup>3</sup> This journal was originally posted on my website as a web log at <http://cblights.com/cruising/>

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Hatteras before 01 June". This is actually a good thing because it has provided us with boundaries.

The Intracoastal Waterway (a.k.a. ICW or simply "the ditch") is a semi-inland waterway running length of the Eastern and Gulf coasts of the U.S.A. It is made up of canals, rivers, and bays (some bounded by Atlantic barrier islands), is maintained by the Army Corps of Engineers, and was created to facilitate safe commerce. World War II and the German U-boat threat spurred its modern development. However, there's a reason they call the coast of North Carolina "the graveyard of the Atlantic" and the need for a safe sheltered passage here had long been desired. Though not built and maintained for recreational boaters, come late October and early November a great horde of cruisers descends down this otherwise quiet waterway clogging up the locks and forming lines behind numerous drawbridges in a great southward migration. We will join this migration. For us the ICW is about 1,200 miles long. Assuming we average 40 miles +/- on good days and leave aside some days for inclement weather and site-seeing, it should take us about 4 or 5 weeks to make it down to the Miami, Florida area. We expect the first half to be uncomfortably cold. Unlike a car, our boat has no heater at all and the cold is amplified by the over-the-water winds. The cockpit is mostly open and someone must be in it at all times when underway, steering and keeping watch. However, we're looking forward to the experience of traveling the ICW, much of which is supposed to be quite beautiful.

The Bahamas are about 50 miles off the coast of Florida at the closest point, with the Gulf Stream in-between. The Gulf Stream is a river of water flowing at about 3 – 3.5 knots in a northerly direction. One has to compensate for this northerly drift when crossing it and one also has to wait for a good weather window. Because the Stream is flowing with strength towards the north, any sort of northerly winds (winds from the north blowing southward) kick up large and dangerous seas. Once we have our weather window (calm seas and winds from the southeast to southwest), we'll leave late in the evening in order to arrive at the Bahama Bank in daylight. (Running up on a coral head in the dark will ruin your whole day). When we arrive we must raise the yellow "quarantine" flag. Only the captain is allowed to go ashore to clear customs. Even though both Gail and I hold 50-ton Masters licenses and are USCG recognized captains, as far as the Bahamian government is concerned, that will be me. After we clear customs we lower the quarantine flag and raise the Bahamas courtesy (merchant) flag which should be flown from our starboard spreader as a sign of respect throughout our stay.

But, the above is still a little ways off. In the meantime we've been frantically preparing. We made our decision to go in July and will use every bit of the time between. How does one provision to be aboard a 35' boat for 7 months? – We've spent 3 weeks aboard in the past, but seven months is a completely different picture. First you create a master inventory list of what you think you'll need with what you actually have X'ed off. This shows you the gap. But how do you determine what you'll really need? We'll be motoring a lot initially. How much spare oil, fuel filters, etc. do we bring? What do you put the old oil into when you change it? How do you dispose of it? What other spare parts do you carry? (Spare belts for the alternator, a raw-water impeller, and a re-build kit for the head (toilet) pump are a must. Also biocide for the fuel – Did you know that micro-organisms grew in diesel fuel in warm climates?) Our dink (inflatable dinghy with outboard) will be the family car for going to shore and site-seeing. Need a real anchor with a few feet of chain and 50' of line for it. (Does one of us still remember how to splice a thimble into 3-strand nylon line?) What spare parts do we need? Do I know how to fix the outboard if it breaks down? How do we secure it? How do we transport enough gasoline? (Vapors are heavier than air and explode with a spark – must vent overboard.) What is "enough"

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gasoline? We'll want to skin dive – better get full-foot fins and a light wetsuit, our big open-foot scuba fins and heavy wetsuits won't do. No spear guns allowed in the Bahamas – need to buy a Hawaiian sling or pole spear. How can a collapsible aluminum pole with a piece of surgical tubing and a screw-on barb cost almost \$100? What safety equipment do we need to add? We've put off rigging the horseshoe buoy and strobe – better do it (need bits of lines, a few clips – multiple trips to the hardware store). Check the flares – of course they expire in November. They still work, but we could get ticketed by the Coast Guard if boarded. Maybe this is the time to buy the "good stuff". Did you know SOLAS<sup>4</sup> parachute flares cost \$50 EACH? Do you spend hundreds of \$\$ on stuff you hope to never use or do you save money by buying the less effective, but equally "legal" USCG certified pyrotechnics? Maybe it's a good idea to buy and register a GPS-enabled EPIRB<sup>5</sup> (We did). What about shelves for the hanging locker and head cabinets – buy wood, measure, cut, measure some more, cut some more, measure and cut fiddle rail, router the edges, nail, glue, stain, varnish (1, 2, 3 coats), install (multiple trips to the hardware store). Maybe we should figure out a way to actually secure that extra propane tank we bought when we got the boat (another couple trips to the hardware store / chandlery). Oops – the radome has lost a couple bolts. Where does one buy 8M x 3.5cm metric stainless steel bolts? (Not at most Home Depots) – Find, buy (including spares), send Gail up the mast in the Boson's chair to fix. What other nuts and bolts do we need? (Undoubtedly ones we don't have.) We don't have refrigeration and don't have illusions of maintaining an ice box the whole time. Everything in the islands is supposedly really really expensive if you can find it. Imagine living food-wise on what you can buy from a mini-mart adding a 100 – 300% markup. Hit Cosco, monitor each week's sales at the supermarkets, stock up on canned and dried goods – cases of canned peas, mushrooms, chicken, tuna, ham, . . . Find, order and try canned butter, cheese, and powdered eggs. Oops – more reading tells us finding butter and cheese at reasonable prices isn't a problem. Re-look at provision list and go to Costco again. Did you know that 36 AA batteries at the Costco costs the same as about 8 at CVS or Home Depot? – But we don't need 36. We probably need about 18. However 36 is cheaper than 18. Yes, EVERYTHING uses a different battery type – 9-volt, AA, AAA, C, D – ahhhhh! Beer and Coke are very expensive (\$40 for a case of beer). Rum is cheap. Do we like rum and Tang? Need to renew my drivers license early, the boat documentation, the Boat U.S. tow insurance, get a rider for the regular boat insurance, get a Customs and Border Protection decal, find someone to watch the house, cut the lawn, re-route our mail, put my mom on the bank accounts, make out instructions, make lists – inventory everything, buy, buy, buy . . . Oh yeah – and in the midst of this, we're supposed to pretend at work that nothing is happening and that we still care about our jobs.

### 1.2 Upright Carpentry by John Updike (1932 – )

*We recently had a carpenter build a few things in our house in the country. It's an old house, leaning away from the wind a little; it's floors sag gently, like an old mattress. The carpenter turned his back on our tilting walls and took his vertical from a plumb line and his horizontal from a bubble level, and then went to work by the light of these absolutes. Fitting his planks into place took a lot of those long, irregular, oblique cuts with a rip saw that break an amateur's heart. The bookcase and kitchen counter and cabinet he left behind stand perfectly up-and-down in a cock-eyed house. Their rectitude is chastening. For minutes at a stretch, we study them*

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<sup>4</sup> The International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 – SOLAS requirements for pyrotechnics are more stringent than those of the U.S. Coast Guard. Consequently, SOLAS certified equipment is more expensive.

<sup>5</sup> Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon – When activated emits a distress signal that identifies the vessel and location using a frequency that is monitored by international search and rescue organizations through a network of satellites.

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wondering if perhaps it isn't, after all, the wall that is true and the bookcase that leans. Eventually, we suppose, everything will settle into the comfortably crooked, but it will take years, barring earthquakes, and in the meantime we are annoyed at being made to live with impossible standards.

### 1.3 Everything Falling Into Place, 14 October 2007

As we approach our last day at work this upcoming Friday, there's no escaping the reality of our trip. 2 1/2 months ago I downloaded a countdown clock from the web, configured it as the "KMAIBABIGOTS<sup>6</sup> Countdown Clock", and it's been running in the upper right-hand corner of my PC ever since. Everything was fine and we were pretty cool until the time to go dropped below the 3 week mark. There's something about glancing up and seeing "2 weeks, 4 days, 7 hours, 21 minutes, 24 seconds (yes – it does count to the seconds) that makes one go "Ahhhhhhh!!!!". 2 months out everything was quite abstract. However, there's nothing at all abstract when one looks up and sees "2 weeks" staring back at you. Less than 3 weeks is very real and any doubts settled down to a vague feeling of uneasiness. People kept on walking up to me saying things like "So, are you getting excited?". Well – the truth is that rather than being excited I had somewhat of the "deer in the headlights" feeling and part of me was thinking "Oh sh\_t! This is really happening and it's happening soon." That was just one phase and it's "mostly" over now. Reality is sinking in and we are getting excited. However, we're mainly taking each day as it comes.

So far we're doing great with the lists (the "To Do", "To Buy – General", and "To Buy – Provisions" lists). I've maintained these in Excel and they've all been expanding and contracting for the last couple months – the breathing manifestation of our cruise preparation. Some of the items come with a multi-week lead time. The trick has been to keep on top of these "critical path" items and knock them off as soon as possible so they can't cause delays. There's been lots of shopping – Costco, Giant, Target, and the Internet, lots of carpentry, electrical, and other handyman-type work, and lots of calling banks, insurance companies, utilities, etc. In addition to these check off lists, we have a separate "Provisions" list that contains every item of non-perishable food stowed on board and where it is. We don't have refrigeration and don't have illusions of maintaining a cold icebox the entire trip. At last count we had roughly 650 cans and bottles, plus an additional 230 individual packets of various foodstuff. We used our guest room as a staging area and by the end the floor and bed were almost completely covered. This had us truly worried – "How the heck were we going to fit all this stuff aboard a 35' boat?" The weekend of October 6 we loaded it all into the *Blue Beast*<sup>7</sup> and carted it down. To our relief it fit into the *Beast* (which meant it would fit aboard *Alisios*). It took us a couple days to get everything stowed – Gail shoe-horning the stuff into the settees and me recording the locations in the spreadsheet. (A key to where we put stuff is critical if we want to be able to find anything

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<sup>6</sup> About 7 years ago a friend gave us the Lyle Lovett album *Pontiac*. The first song on the album is *If I Had A Boat*. The lyrics aren't anything to particularly rave about. However, there is a line in the song that seemed to sum up our dream reaction to any bad day or on-the-job frustration. Gail and I latched onto this line and would sing it out to each other whenever we felt tied down or frustrated (or just felt like it). One day a few years ago, Gail wrote out the acronym for it, "KMAIBABIGOTS", and taped it to the top of her monitor at work. When ever someone asked what it meant, she'd only say "It's a state of mind." I thought this was great. So, I wrote out "KMAIBABIGOTS" prominently on the top of the whiteboard in my office and it's also been there for years. Whenever someone would ask what it meant, I'd only say "Can't tell you until I leave." Well, that time has come and this is definitely the "KMAIBABIGOTS" cruise. Although it sounds a bit harsh when taken out of context, KMAIBABIGOTS stands for "*Kiss my ass. I bought a boat. I'm going out to sea!*"

<sup>7</sup> We have nick-named our 1991 VW Vanagon Westfalia the *Blue Beast*.

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after a couple weeks / months.) Once this was done, it was as if a weight was lifted off our shoulders. In addition to the Provisions list, we also have the "Boat Inventory" – a list of every non-food item from charts and reference books to safety equipment and spare parts. This is both an inventory and a "make sure you don't forget something critical" list. I like to joke that we have every spare part except the one we'll need. Unfortunately, I'm sure that isn't a joke. Nevertheless, we've tried to cover the main contingencies. Most of this got loaded this past weekend and the boat is now sitting a couple inches lower in the water.

In addition to stowing the provisions, the latest true stress point was the fluxgate compass ("smart heading system"). This piece of equipment is integrated with our electronic chart plotter and radar and provides the vessel heading information so everything overlays properly (accurately). It turns out it wasn't installed correctly. "Deviation" is compass distortion caused by metal items on the boat and where they are in relationship to where the compass is mounted. All boat compasses have some deviation. However, our fluxgate compass had auto-calibrated after install with a deviation of 26 degrees which is well outside the acceptable range and unreliable (not good for the primary piece of navigation equipment). It had to be un-installed, moved, re-installed, and re-calibrated. We, of course, discovered this three weeks before departure and almost a year after the installation. After troubleshooting the problem, I realized "I can fix this if need be". This realization took most of the stress away. After some back and forth with the original installer, we set a time window for him to come back out. However, I had Columbus Day off, so decided to do it myself instead and get it out of the way (after first making sure he'd bail me out if I screwed up – ha ha). This worked well for both of us. He avoided half a day of warranty work he wouldn't get paid for and I gained the experience. Of course it was a 90+ degree, windless day. I spent a couple hours twisted half upside down under the settees, pulling cable and re-doing the wrap and ties in tight crevices (many one-handed), while sweating like a horse. Then I took her out single-handed and re-calibrated everything. I even anchored out and dove on the hull, freeing our knot meter pin-wheel<sup>8</sup> of the algae that was clogging it and scraped the prop while I was at it. All of this gained me major kudos with Gail, which, as the ads say, is "priceless".

We're now down to last-minute preparations, attending a few parties and bunches of lunches and dinners as everyone wishes us goodbye and vice versa. Only a week and a half to go (inshala).

### 1.4 *The Jumblies* by Edward Lear (1812 – 1888)

*They went to sea in a Sieve, they did,  
In a Sieve they went to sea:  
In spite of all their friends could say,  
On a winter's morn, on a stormy day,  
In a Sieve they went to sea!  
And when the Sieve turned round and round,  
And every one cried, "You'll all be drowned!"  
They called aloud, "Our Sieve ain't big,  
But we don't care a button! we don't care a fig!  
In a Sieve we'll go to sea!"*

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<sup>8</sup> The knot meter / speed log, has a transducer set into the hull that includes a mini paddle-wheel that spins as the boat moves through the water. This is used to generate a rough measurement of the boat's speed.

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*Far and few, far and few,  
Are the lands where the Jumblies live;  
Their heads are green, and their hands are blue,  
And they went to sea in a Sieve.*

*They sailed away in a Sieve, they did,  
In a Sieve they sailed so fast,  
With only a beautiful pea-green veil  
Tied with a riband by way of a sail,  
To a small tobacco-pipe mast;  
And every one said, who saw them go,  
"Oh won't they be soon upset, you know!  
For the sky is dark, and the voyage is long,  
And happen what may, it's extremely wrong  
In a Sieve to sail so fast!"  
Far and few, far and few,  
Are the lands where the Jumblies live;  
Their heads are green, and their hands are blue,  
And they went to sea in a Sieve.*

*The water it soon came in, it did,  
The water it soon came in;  
So to keep them dry, they wrapped their feet  
In a pinky paper all folded neat,  
And they fastened it down with a pin.  
And they passed the night in a crockery-jar,  
And each of them said, "How wise we are!  
Though the sky be dark, and the voyage be long,  
Yet we never can think we were rash or wrong,  
While round in our Sieve we spin!"  
Far and few, far and few,  
Are the lands where the Jumblies live;  
Their heads are green, and their hands are blue,  
And they went to sea in a Sieve.*

*And all night long they sailed away;  
And when the sun went down  
They whistled and warbled a moony song  
To the echoing sound of a coppery gong,  
In the shade of the mountains brown.  
"O Timballoo! How happy we are,  
When we live in a sieve and a crockery-jar,  
And all night long in the moonlight pale,  
We sail away with a pea-green sail,  
In the shade of the mountains brown!"  
Far and few, far and few,  
Are the lands where the Jumblies live;  
Their heads are green, and their hands are blue,  
And they went to sea in a Sieve.*

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*They sailed to the Western Sea, they did,  
To a land all covered with trees,  
And they bought an Owl, and a useful Cart,  
And a pound of Rice, and a Cranberry Tart,  
And a hive of silvery Bees.  
And they bought a Pig, and some green Jackdaws,  
And a lovely Monkey with lollipop paws,  
And forty bottles of Ring-Bo-Ree,  
And no end of Stilton Cheese.  
Far and few, far and few,  
Are the lands where the Jumblies live;  
Their heads are green, and their hands are blue,  
And they went to sea in a Sieve.*

*And in twenty years they all came back,  
In twenty years or more,  
And every one said, "How tall they've grown!  
For they've been to the Lakes, and the Terrible Zone,  
And the hills of the Chankly Bore;"  
And they drank their health, and gave them a feast  
Of dumplings made of beautiful yeast;  
And everyone said, "If we only live,  
We too will go to sea in a Sieve,—  
To the hills of the Chankly Bore!"  
Far and few, far and few,  
Are the lands where the Jumblies live;  
Their heads are green, and their hands are blue,  
And they went to sea in a Sieve<sup>9</sup>.*

### 1.5 Departure, 24 October 2007

Rock Hold Creek Marina, Deale, MD (38° 46.667' N, 76° 33.585' W)

*"It will be many a year yet before our people learn how to enjoy their leisure time. How easy it is in this new workshop of ours to make a few dollars, but how hard it seems for people to get any real pleasure in the spending of them when made." – Henry Plummer, The Boy, Me, and the Cat, Life Aboard a Small Boat, from Massachusetts to Florida and Back in 1912*

The last day of work (Friday 19 October) came and went. This was followed by a busy last few days – We took the last major load of stuff down, including the bulk of our clothes, on Saturday leaving the boat 98% ready to go. Sunday we drove up to Pennsylvania and back to say hello and goodbye to Gail's father and sister. Monday we did some banking, some last-minute yard work, visited my parents, wished them well and dropped off our checkbook, files and a few valuables. Identifying the latter involved walking around the house and asking "Is there anything

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<sup>9</sup> Edward Lear is most famous for his "Nonsense Poems", including the *Owl the Pussy Cat*. He later wrote a follow-up poem to this one called the *Dong With A Luminous Nose* which is terribly moving and sad. It didn't fit in with my journal. But, I couldn't bear to separate the two so have included it in the appendix.



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here we'd really be devastated to lose?" The answer, in the grand scheme of things, after living there 14 years, was "not much we couldn't replace or eventually get over". We grabbed the portrait of my great grandfather (the original Matthew Jenkins) and a few other items and vowed to clear out some of our crap when we return. Tuesday was filled by doing a final load of wash, going grocery shopping for perishables, and a last ride down to the marina to bring down block ice, setup the ice box and get the last bit of stuff stowed away. We swapped out our dock lines and brought the *Beast* back home. A friend picked us up and brought us back down. We had an enjoyable dinner with him and a few others, spent the night in the slip, and prepared to cast off Wednesday morning. After literally months of drought (no rain whatsoever), of course we woke to a steady downpour and a forecast for more all day. To add to our dilemma the wind was forecast for NW 15 to 20 knots which was perfect for our southerly voyage. Should we spend a quiet day in the slip and wait for the rain to subside, or have a damp sail south? After showers and coffee, we eventually decided to go and only incurred an hour and a half delay. We left dock at 9:25 am on 24 October 2008. Our destination was simply "south" with a probable first night stop in Solomons, MD.

### 1.6 Southward Down The Chesapeake Bay, 28 October 2007

The distance from our marina to mile zero of the ICW at Norfolk, VA is approximately 125 nautical miles. One nautical mile is approximately 1.15 statute miles. A small sailboat moves slowly. We're content when we do over 4 knots steadily under sail. We're ecstatic when we make over 6. The design of our hull doesn't permit us to make much over 7 without the help of a following current. Depending on the amount and direction of the wind, one often does less than 4. Whether or not one turns on the engine depends on where one has to be, when one has to be there, and one's tolerance for bobbing about. We don't like to use the engine when we don't have to and will generally hold off as long as we can. Once we enter the ICW, we'll be doing a lot of motoring. Under engine we make about 5.7 knots at 2,500 RPM in calm water (i.e. not plowing headlong into winds and waves, which can cut our speed back down to 4-something or worse). We, therefore, hoped to make between 30 and 40 nautical miles a day going down the Bay and, with luck, 40 – 45 down the ICW (given that the days were short). To put things into perspective for our non-sailor friends, imagine journeying to Florida by jogging there using available paths and roads (some of which may wind and back-track a bit) and taking appropriate rest stops. We anticipate about 5 weeks for this first "to Florida" leg, assuming we don't make too many stops. I'll try to include the latitude and longitude of our anchorages in case anyone feels the urge to use Google Earth or other mapping software to check out our location.

Anyway, back to our trip – We stayed just ahead of the storm cells for the first half of our sail to Solomons, MD (about 35 nm). However, at about 14:00 the rain caught up with us and it stayed stormy for the next few days. Our roller furler chose to jam this first day and we had to lower the Genoa<sup>10</sup> by hand. We anchored up Mill Creek (39° 10.791' N, 76° 27.047' W) and I hurriedly disassembled the furler drum, rebuilt and rewound everything as darkness fell and the heavier rains set in. We rode out Thursday at anchor since the forecast was for 20 – 25 kt winds, 4 foot seas, gray and damp, then left bright and early Friday morning with some urgency as a

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<sup>10</sup> A Genoa is a common type of large "jib" foresail. It is stowed by rolling / furling it around the forestay (the supporting wire that runs from the top of the bow of the boat to the top of the mast). The device that facilitates this is a roller furler. Before roller furlers were invented, foresails were stowed in bags and had to be pulled out, connected to the forestay, then "hanked" up each time they were needed. When one was done, it had to be lowered, folded, and re-stowed. Roller furlers are a great convenience and are found on almost all modern boats. However, they occasionally jam.

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telephone call to the Army Corps of Engineers indicated that they planned to close the Dismal Swamp Canal route of the ICW (the older, more scenic, and our preferred route) after October 30 due to lack of water – somewhat ironic given that the forecast was for 4 days of steady rain.

The weather hadn't changed and we had a reasonably unpleasant damp, quite windy, and extremely bumpy ride down to the Northern Neck of Virginia. However, we made over 50 nautical miles before pulling into Prentice Creek south of Reedville in a strong downpour (37° 43.689 N, 76° 19.694 W). The forecast for Saturday was more rain, waves of 3 – 4 ft. and strong south winds (on our nose) in the morning, shifting to the west in the afternoon. We, therefore, had a leisurely breakfast and left at 10:45, only intending to go as far as Deltaville (about 15 miles). The west winds came early, the rain cleared, and we were making great speed down the Bay, so Deltaville passed. We thought about overnighting in Mobjack Bay, then decided to hump it and go all the way to Norfolk. On our way we sighted a pod of about 10 dolphins off our starboard side, which we considered good luck. We saw the entrance to the Atlantic at dusk and pulled into a calm Willoughby Bay at Hampton Roads (36° 57.627 N, 76° 17.403 W) about an hour after nightfall and anchored. This bought us an entire day and we were now in good shape to make it to the Dismal Swamp Canal before they closed it in a couple days. We woke up the following morning to see that our harbor abutted a set of Navy docks. The wind had kicked up overnight and we left in over 20 knots with gusts of 30. Pulling anchor was a chore. However, it was neat passing numerous aircraft carriers and other Navy ships on our way down the Elizabeth River and the wind did abate back to the high teens as we motored down.

Hospital Point in Portsmouth, VA marked the end of the Chesapeake Bay portion of our journey and what we considered the beginning of the Intracoastal Waterway – ICW mile marker zero. Just before this mark, I was excited to note the small marina where I had met the father of my friend Geof at a few years ago when I had helped him bring his 45' trawler, *Scrimshaw*, up the Atlantic coast to Long Island, NY.

### 1.7 The ICW Dismal Swamp Canal to Elizabeth City, NC, 31 October 2007

Safe water passageways ("channels") are marked by red and green aids to navigation (ATONs). The green are odd-numbered and square in shape. The red are even-numbered and triangular in shape. When returning from the open water one keeps the greens to port (left) and the reds to starboard (right) – hence the saying "red right return". The first ATON leading into a given location is generally a green #1. The numbers increase as you proceed down a channel.

Once we entered the Elizabeth River at Norfolk, VA we switched from sailing to motoring down or alongside the channel. This is a very industrial area consisting of naval bases and commercial docks. Next to Norfolk is Portsmouth. (They really merge into one megalopolis). At Portsmouth the Naval / commercial landscape is broken by tall glass buildings – modern office and shopping areas. Across the river from this is the US Navy Hospital which sits on a point of land appropriately named "Hospital Point". The ATON here is red #36, which is "ICW mile marker zero". From this point onward, the ICW is marked by a series of miniature yellow squares and triangles superimposed on the regular green and red [square or triangle] channel markers. The ICW is measured in statute (not nautical) miles and Miami, Florida is 1,087 miles away. After this point one also starts hitting drawbridges. Consequently, many boats anchor just below Hospital Point in order to pull anchor at 0-dark-thirty to catch the bridges first thing in the morning, before they close for rush hour traffic M-F 6:30 – 8:30, and time arrival at the locks.

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This first part of the ICW is not a "gunk-holer's" paradise<sup>11</sup>. One times one's journey by drawbridges, locks, and the next available anchorage or marina (for us, anchorages). At mile marker 7.3 (after one ferry, 4 railroad lift bridges (usually open), two "on-request" drawbridges, and one high-span 65-foot drawbridge) the ICW splits. The Albermarle and Chesapeake (A&C) Canal (also known as the "Virginia Cut") is the main branch. The Great Dismal Swamp Canal (a.k.a. the Old Intracoastal Waterway) is a second option. Most powerboats and large sailboats choose the A&C Canal route. It is deeper, more open, has only one lock, and has no speed limit. The Great Dismal Swamp Canal on the other hand is older, narrower, and doesn't accommodate boats with over 6' draft. (*Alisios* draws a bit over 4 1/2'.) However, it is supposed to be the more beautiful of the two, has a low speed limit, and is, therefore, more appealing to those travelling on a slow small sailboat like ours who aren't in a hurry. It has two locks and these are filled by reservoirs (lakes). After two months of drought (near zero rainfall) these reservoirs were low. Accordingly the Army Corps of Engineers had placed the locks on a limited schedule (only two openings: 9:00 and 15:00) and had scheduled a complete closure of the Great Dismal Swamp Canal after October 30. One presumes if you're stuck between the two locks overnight that they'll actually let you out the other end the following day.

With the above background in mind, we motored down the Elizabeth River on Sunday. Our first drawbridge, the Jordan, was a "lift bridge". This type of bridge is often used by railroads and our first encounter with one was on the Chesapeake and Delaware (C&D) Canal when we first circumnavigated the Delmarva Peninsula. The center portion rises like an elevator between two towers. This was the first one we'd seen used for car traffic and the bridge-tender's house / office was actually on the rising span. Our next bridge was a double bascule – the type with two spans that break in the center and rise at angles to each other that everyone pictures when they think of a drawbridge. We're used to going through a single bascule and the double was much more comforting – much more obvious that your mast is actually free and clear. After going under the final bridge – a 65-footer, we hit the Great Dismal Swamp Canal turn-off. This is literally a sign in the water with an arrow saying Dismal Swamp Canal to the [HARD] right. We took it and anchored about a mile down in a beautiful little basin (Deep Creek Basin, 36° 45.333 N, 76° 18.450 W, ICW mile 8.5) because our first lock was only 2 miles away, we wanted to catch the 09:00 lock opening and traverse the main canal in daylight.

Traversing the lock was fun. The "Deep Creek Lock" was the first lock Gail had done and only the second I'd done (first aboard my own boat). We were one of four boats that entered it at low water (two trawlers (one quite friendly, the other not) and two sailboats). We each put out fenders<sup>12</sup> on our starboard side. I positioned myself at the bow and Gail at the stern. We each tossed up lines to the lock keeper who looped them around a bollard so we could shorten them as the water rose. The doors behind us were shut, checked, then the water allowed in. We rose eight feet. The doors in front opened, and we made an orderly exit while the lock keeper hopped into his truck and drove half a mile down the road to raise the single-span of the small bascule drawbridge for the local road and let us into the canal proper. This portion of the canal was laid out as if someone sat down with a map and a ruler and drew a straight line, which is obviously what had happened. Along that line a ditch was dug, some of it by slave labor before the Civil War. There is just enough room for two medium sized boats to pass uncomfortably. The shores are lined by trees the entire length and the water is VERY dark brown with tannin (more like coffee than tea). It was quite beautiful and we were glad we took this route. At 12:05 we crossed over from Virginia into North Carolina. We encountered a lot of duckweed at this point – bright

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<sup>11</sup> A term used for an area with lots of pretty anchorages.

<sup>12</sup> Inflatable rubber bumpers

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green plant matter that blankets the water. It looks slimy, but isn't. We were warned to check our engine's raw-water strainer as it can clog causing the engine to overheat<sup>13</sup>. Sure enough at the end of our motor, there was a good glob of the stuff in it, which we dumped. Soon after the border we tied up at the bulkhead of the North Carolina Visitors Center where we stepped ashore for the first time since our departure a little over 5 days ago. We topped up our water tanks – less than 20 gallons down. (We carry 110.) Unfortunately, they didn't sell ice. We pulled off again at 14:00 in order to reach the second ("South Mills") lock where we performed the steps outlined above in reverse, including passing through another little drawbridge that was also opened by the lock tender.

Soon after the second lock the canal began to wind quite a bit, then merged into the Pasquotank River where it broadened a bit more. Around mile 40 we hit normal aids to navigation again – only this time they had switched sides as we were now heading down the river back out towards the sea. We anchored behind Goat Island (36° 20.585' N, 76° 13.370' W, ICW mile 43). A few months ago our friends Paul and Joyce cruised this way aboard their Caliber 40, *Time*, and saw a house on the water that was for sale. On their way back they made an inquiry. Paul had just retired, they were both looking for a change, and as fate would have it, they settle on 30 October – tomorrow. After a volley of voice-mail tag, we finally reached each other and made plans to meet in Elizabeth City, 8 miles down river. We passed their house on the way and it is truly beautiful.

We pulled up to the city Town Docks Tuesday 30 October at 11:20 (36° 17.920' N, 76° 13.096' W, ICW mile 51). Elizabeth City is a classic old waterfront town with a "Water Street" that abuts into "Main Street". Like many such towns, the new development is all on the outskirts and the old downtown is struggling. There were a noticeable number of "For Sale" signs on the commercial buildings and the downtown hardware store was having a "Going Out of Business Sale". This sort of thing always makes us sad. However, it was far from depressed. There were a number of cafes with free Wi-Fi, a little museum, and the old movie theater had been converted to a cinema and draft house. The city actively courts the cruisers who pass by on their migration. There is a small free town dock next to the visitors center and the local supermarket will even pick you up then drive you back to your boat. Elizabeth City was also famous for the "rose buddies". This was group of three elderly gentlemen who since 1983 had met all of the newly arrived cruising boats, hosted them with wine and cheese, and presented each lady with a rose. The first two passed away a while ago, but remaining founder, Frank Fearing, had continued the tradition with gusto until a couple months ago. He was a local institution known internationally throughout the cruising community. Unfortunately, Frank joined his co-founders Friday a week before we arrived. The city wants to continue the tradition and despite Frank's demise we were treated to free wine and cheese and greeted by the Mayor Elect that afternoon. Soon afterwards the last batch of boats through the canal locks all rounded the bend and there was a bit of a chaotic rush as they jockeyed for the remaining free docks. It was interesting, because there was obviously a communication chain in use and the Mayor Elect knew exactly how many boats were arriving including what type so he could try to direct them (catamarans to the bulkheads, regular mono-hulls to slips according to width). This sort of thing is also interesting because one never knows who is the ICW rookie and who has done the trip half a dozen times or who is an experienced and sensible captain, or who bought a 40+ footer as their first boat the previous summer figuring they'd learn along the way. (The latter happens more often than you'd want to believe and some of them are better than the

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<sup>13</sup> Marine engines are cooled by pumping seawater past a heat exchanger. The raw-water strainer catches sea grass and the like so it isn't pumped through the engine where it could clog the cooling system.

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"experienced" ones.) Just after the last arrivals settled down, our friends Paul and Joyce picked us up and we all went to a nice restaurant, each excited about the other's new adventure. The following morning we pulled away from dock at 06:30 in order to comfortably transit Albermarle Sound and the Alligator River.

### 1.8 Re-joining the Main ICW, Riding Out a Gale at Anchor, 03 November 2007

When viewed through the lens of maritime development, North Carolina had a much rougher time than its neighbors to the north and south. Lacking good natural harbors and possessing a treacherous coast, it didn't develop economically the way Virginia and South Carolina did and the cities tend to be small and dispersed. The stretch of the ICW that we're on is relatively remote. Though tides aren't much of an issue here, there are a number of large shallow sounds that are open to strong sea winds. Waves are the result of energy transferred from the wind to the water. When a shallow bottom breaks the natural wave cycle, the seas pile up high and close resulting in extremely uncomfortable and sometimes hazardous conditions. The area also doesn't afford many nearby places to run for shelter. There are few deep creeks and the banks, more often than not, tend to be marsh grass, rather than wind-blocking trees. For these reasons the sounds are treated with a certain amount of foreboding by cruisers coming down the ICW. In practice, one just has to be prudent, keep an eye on the weather, and plan ones departure times appropriately with a buffer.

Our daily routine begins with NOAA weather radio. Each marine VHF radio is equipped with 10 weather channels / frequencies. One can usually receive 2-3 at any given location along the east coast (VHF is line-of-sight). On these channels computerized voices read the daily synopsis, buoy readings, and marine forecasts in an endless loop for the regions walking down the coast. This is a wonderful service. Usually, but not always, the one with the best reception includes your region. As we move southward, we have to constantly figure out which region we're actually in. County names don't have much meaning after you're more than a hundred miles from your own home and I'll confess that our geographical knowledge of points of land, rivers, etc. wasn't up to par at first either. The order of forecasts is generally given north-to-south: sounds, bays, and rivers, followed by a jog back up the coast and another set of north-to-south forecasts of the Atlantic shore. We write down the 5-day forecast each morning for our area, walk out our journey on the charts, and plan our days accordingly. Its not uncommon for the forecasted winds to change dramatically (e.g. increase, decrease, or shift 180 degrees) from day to day or morning to afternoon. The information is fluid. So, one has to take everything with a grain of salt. For the past several days Tropical Storm Noel has been hovering around the Bahamas and Cuba. It was forecast to head up the coast, turning out to sea, but bringing a day and a half of 35 – 40 knot northerly winds (with gusts past 50) and a possible couple-foot storm surge on Thursday night and all day Friday. 40+ knot winds are well into gale conditions and are not to be trifled with. So, our stops after Elizabeth City were planned around this weather system.

Upon exiting the Pasquotank River we crossed Albermarle Sound. The day was beautiful – wind light (7 knots) and the water relatively calm (seas 1 foot). We unfurled the Genoa and motor-sailed. The two branches of the ICW meet across the Sound at green "1 AR", just off the mouth of the Alligator River. There were only a handful of boats travelling our Dismal Swamp Canal track. However, for hours we were able to look to the east and see a chain of boats coming down the invisible line of the A&C route as we slowly converged. It was interesting to see these very obvious highways in the middle of a large open body of water. Just inside the Alligator

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River is a large swing bridge. With this type of bridge, the center span pivots on an axis creating two paths, one on either side of the now perpendicular road. Here, as in our Maryland home waters, one contacts the bridge tenders on VHF channel 13 to request an opening. (This changes to channel 9 in South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. 16 is the normal ship-to-ship hailing channel.) The Alligator is a fairly broad river and we travelled many more miles before it narrowed and took a sharp turn. Once it narrowed, we dropped anchor just outside the channel to spend the night (35° 40.630' N, 76° 04.541' W, ICW mile 103). This is an area where red wolves have been reintroduced and we could hear their howls at dusk. There are no city lights and the starscape was incredible. The Milky Way (or "star river" as the ancient Chinese poets called it) cuts a bold swath across the sky and old stand-by constellations like the big dipper (Ursa Major) and Cassiopeia were hard to spot because they were overlaid by so many additional stars we're not used to seeing. However, Cepheus and Cygnus, which I have difficulty spotting at home, jumped right out. I wonder how many people go their entire life without ever seeing the real night's sky?

The Alligator River is linked to the Pungo River by a 21 mile canal. This was a bit wider than the Dismal Swamp Canal and deeper since it hosts a fair amount of tugboat traffic. We needed an anchorage for the following night with good protection, particularly from the north. The obvious choice was Slade Creek off the Pungo River, a few miles south of Bellehaven, and we'd heard many different boats on the radio talking about heading there to ride out the impending blow. Looking at the chain of boats, we figured we should get there early in order to get a good spot because there would be quite a crowd. With this in mind, we hauled anchor with first daylight and took off down the Alligator and Pungo River Canal with a line of boats soon behind us. Ironically, the creek was fairly empty and we only ended up sharing it with 4 other boats. I guess most of the others got transient slips in the couple marinas up river or slogged it down to Oriental. We dropped anchor at 13:40 (35° 28.603' N, 76° 32.012' W, ICW mile 140) and set the boat in order. Properly securing the dingy on deck became a necessity – can't have it blowing off and cart-wheeling down the creek. I discovered that the painter splice of the dink clipped perfectly into the snap-shackle of the cutter sail chain plate<sup>14</sup> (mid-foredeck) with no slack. For the aft end, I took some line and small shackles and was able to strap the transom eye-bolts to the mast ring<sup>15</sup>, the result being that the dink is now shackled in place with a fit so perfect that it's as if the boat had been designed and built to accommodate it. These little things do give one satisfaction.

Not long after anchoring, we had a minor catastrophe – Gail dropped the percolator strainer overboard while dumping the grounds. This was the only percolator we had on board. So, I grabbed my mask and bathing suit and went into the cold water feeling around in the mud for it (visibility was zero). I came up empty handed and Gail thought I was nuts. But, if I had found it I would have been a hero. No such luck today and no more morning coffee until we can replace it – Guess we'll be content with tea and cocoa. At least I got a shower for my efforts. The day was sunny, beautiful, and windless. Here it was November and we were hanging out in shorts and t-shirts. The creek was absolutely beautiful and undeveloped. There was no visual indication of any sort of impending storm. Another beautiful starscape. Weather is strange.

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<sup>14</sup> A cutter sail is an inner foresail. *Alisios* is a convertible cutter rig in that the cutter forestay (cable from the top of the mast to the deck on which the cutter sail is raised) can be unclipped and pulled to the side. This frees up deck space and makes the boat easier to tack with only one foresail. The cutter sail chain plate is a stainless steel plate mid-foredeck to which the cutter stay is attached and the forward base (tack) of the cutter sail shackled.

<sup>15</sup> A stainless steel ring affixed to the deck at the base of the mast that designed to support blocks (pulleys) for much of the running rigging.

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The winds started picking up a bit after midnight and every hour or so one of us got up to look around and make sure we hadn't moved (dragged anchor). We were fine and though it howled through the rigging loudly, our anchorage was protected and we were only getting 15 knot gusts. One of the shackles on the deck over our berth was clinking in a most annoying way. At 06:00 I finally got annoyed enough to climb out of bed, pull on sweats, and go topside to track down the noise and wrap the offending shackle with some masking tape. Back into the warm, now quieter, v-berth.

Throughout the day, within our anchorage, the winds picked up, settling into a cycle of 15 knots increasing with great howling to 25, then easing off only to repeat. Very occasionally we'd get a gust of 30. With the stronger gusts the boat would heel over strain and swing hard on the anchor, furiously riding a crescent path until it stopped, righted, and swung back the other way. We continually checked our position against the shore and were holding well. I threw a line over the dink for good measure as it was straining to rise up with the wind – no need to let the bow handle take so much tension. There was no rain during the day, but it was quite chilly and we confined ourselves below. Our main cabin measures roughly 11' x 8'. There's also a v-berth about the size of a queen bed, that one can curl up in. The quarter berth is unusable by people because it's full of cockpit cushions, canvas, and the like. (We jokingly refer to it as our garage.) The cozy space isn't an issue, but hour after hour of rocking, and swinging back and forth while the wind howls loudly does get on ones nerves and made us a bit stir crazy. We read, napped, ate, and plotted out our trip. The winds died down a bit overnight. However, the forecast indicated that the prudent thing to do would be to spend another day here. So, we did.

### 1.9 *Night's Mardi Gras*, by Edward Jewitt Wheeler (1859 – 1922)

*Night is the true democracy. When day  
Like some great monarch with his train has passed,  
In regal romp and splendor to the last,  
The stars troop forth along the Milky Way,  
A jostling crowd, in radiant disarray,  
On heaven's broad boulevard in pagents vast.  
And things of earth, the hunted and outcast,  
Come from their haunts and hiding-places; yea,  
Even from the nooks and crannies of the mind  
Visions uncouth and vagrant fancies start,  
And specters of dead joy, that shun the light,  
And impotent regrets and terrors blind,  
Each one, in form grotesque, playing its part  
In the fantastic Mardi Gras of Night.*

### 1.10 The Anchoring Dance, 05 November 2007

An anchor is referred to as a "hook" in sailor slang. Spending the night at anchor is, therefore, a night spent "on the hook". This is a pretty accurate description because an anchor literally hooks a boat into the bay / river / creek bottom. An anchor's effectiveness is determined not by its weight, but by how well it hooks and holds once hooked. Of course the size of the anchor and how much chain is used in conjunction with it both help. There are half a dozen basic types of anchors with names like CQR, Danforth, Bruce, Spade, grapnel and fisherman's. One or more

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of the first 4 are found on every cruising boat. We actually have 3. Sailors will argue forever over the effectiveness of one type over the other. This is heavily influenced by the type of bottom, though most properly sized name-brand anchors do relatively well in both sand and mud. Not surprisingly the one you use tends to be "the best". We spend almost all nights "on the hook". There's a process to anchoring. This first involves finding an appropriate location (sheltered from the forecasted winds and waves). Then you find the "perfect spot in the water" and the anchorman (person) at the bow shouts directions back to the helmsman (who can't hear very well because of the distance, the wind, and the engine) like "more to port, no – to the starboard" as if those few feet in one direction make a real difference. This helps elevate stress (particularly if the helmsman disagrees with the instructions) which provides entertainment (at least for other boats in the anchorage). The helmsman heads the boat straight into the wind. The anchorman drops the anchor and feeds out a pre-determined amount of chain / rode (anchor line). We use a Bruce, claw-type, anchor with a chain rode and always set a scope of 5 – 1 or more. Our usual goal is about 7 – 1, though we go higher if a blow is forecast or if we have the chain and aren't near other boats. Once the anchor is dropped, the helmsman "sets" the anchor by applying a steady pull on it (reverse engine). Both people check the boat motion against a land reference. Hopefully there is none. Motion is bad because it means the anchor is dragging. Dragging is very bad. Having your boat play bumper-cars at 2:00 am in a crowded anchorage because your anchor dragged is the sort of vision nightmares are made of. Once the anchor is set, a 15 – 20 foot piece of line called a "snubber" is hooked into the chain and pulled back to a bow cleat. Chain doesn't stretch. Nylon line does to some degree. The snubber provides a small amount of shock absorbance and ensures the load is borne by the bow cleats and not by the anchor platform and windlass. Once you've done all this, you sit back with a rum and Coke and monitor some more.

Hauling the anchor is pretty straightforward in calm conditions. We have an electric windlass that does the hard work of pulling up the chain. In windy conditions you really have to fight to keep the bow aligned with the anchor rode and keep the chain on the bow roller. In most areas of the ICW north of Florida there is a serious "mud" factor. The bottom where we anchor in the Chesapeake and the upper portion of the ICW is like wet wet potter's clay and it coats the chain to the point where you often can't see the links. It often comes up as one dirty slimy mass and needs to be washed off before coming aboard. *Alisios* has a raw-water wash down pump run to a coiled hose in our anchor locker. This pump pulls ocean / bay / river water and pumps it at pressure through a spray nozzle of the same type you'd use at home to wash your cars. The person hoisting the anchor has to spray off the chain, foot by foot, as it is coming up. Sometimes this is quite time-consuming. Sometimes the mud reeks badly of sulfur and leaves a greasy feel and stench on your hands after you grab the chain to pull the anchor the last few inches over the roller into the chock. After sitting out the gale, our anchor had been set hard and the electric windlass wouldn't pull it out alone. In this situation one has to haul it in as tight as one can until the bow of the boat is held tight right over it and you can haul no more. Then you secure it and use the engine to drive it out, stopping as soon as it pulls free so you can finish hauling it up.

All of this is part of our daily routine.

### 1.11 Oriental, NC, Down Inside the Outer Banks, 08 November 2007

The nights are getting colder (40 degrees Fahrenheit / 4.4 degrees Celsius) and the sun is rising a bit later each day. It's amazing how quickly the dawn transitions from near darkness to light



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enough to see well (about 10 minutes). The v-berth is a cozy place to have to climb out of when everything is still cold and dark. (Full bladders provide motivation.) We actually remembered daylight savings time, set our clocks an hour back Saturday night, woke up at 05:15 Sunday and pulled anchor at 06:05 with first light. Upon re-entering the Pungo River we were soon joined by the southward horde of other boats and continued across the Pamlico River, down Goose Creek and into a canal that took us to the Bay River, briefly into Pamlico Sound, then up the Neuse River to Oriental, NC. This is an area of many shrimp boats and we've passed several with their arms spread trawling a net behind. In Oriental we pulled up to a marina fuel dock just long enough to top up our diesel (only 28 gallons used), water, and ice, and nab a poor connection to the marina's free Wi-Fi long enough to upload our web log and some photos, but not long enough to check email. We were then kicked off the dock to make room for the next boat in line. Oriental is known as a pretty little town and we would have loved to have spent a few hours checking it out, but I think every boat that had been holed up somewhere by the previous day's winds descended on it simultaneously. There was no room in the basin to anchor and no slips at any of the marinas to pull into temporarily or for the night. Pity. So, we crossed the river, anchored in Adams Creek (34° 56.977' N, 76° 39.863' W, ICW mile 187) and watched the shrimp boats motoring with their floodlights on their nets before turning in.

Monday – Up at 0-dark-thirty again and another 06:05 departure. The moon was beautiful in the pre-dawn glow – a perfect crescent with the planet Venus just off to the left side. Adams Creek ends in another wide canal that exits in the Newport River just before hitting Beaufort, NC. We passed a number of dredges here along with miles and miles of associated underwater pipes near shore, buoyed off, and rising periodically onto barges. Beaufort has one of the major inlets to the Atlantic. Here, the ICW turns starboard past Moorhead City and down the inside of Bogue Sound, behind the barrier islands. We're very much on a water highway, one of a long chain of boats heading south. Northbound vessels are odd enough that you raise your eyebrows when you see one. The analogy is more real than I wish. When you're in a line of boats (which is only some of the time), you have to pay attention to your speed in order not to rear-end the boat in front and keep in lane. Most drivers are courteous and there's give and take. But there are also a few jerks who have a need to go half a knot faster than everyone else, slowly moving half a mile ahead weaving past 1 boat at a time. There are those who cut to the front of the queues as you're waiting for drawbridges, and there are a few sport fishers who come by at full speed sending everyone rolling back and forth, spinning half sideways in their wake. The sailboats are mostly used to this. However, the trawlers and some of the small run-abouts get pissed and we get a smile listing to other power boats ream them out over the VHF. (It can be quite dangerous, not just uncomfortable, for the small run-abouts.) Some boats smile and wave as you or they pass. Others won't make eye contact or return a wave. Mostly everyone settles into a give and take.

VHF Channel 16 is the main hailing channel and everyone monitors it. Technically one is supposed to hail another vessel, switch to a recreational "working" channel (yes – an oxymoron), then talk. In practice people use 16 to announce they're passing on the starboard or port or give a quick warning about shoaling, a floating log, etc. and never make a switch. The commercial boats have their own channels to do this and it does make sense. The Coast Guard doesn't seem to mind most of the time as long as there is no chatter. If people try to carry on a conversation the Coast Guard will interrupt with "Channel 16 is for hailing and distress only. Please shift your conversation to a working channel. This is United States Coast Guard {insert location}, Out". The same script is used everywhere. Interestingly, when people do switch channels to talk, no one seems to use the legal recreational channels (68, 69, 71, 72, and 78).

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Most just say "up one" (to 17). We don't see this on the Chesapeake unless someone is just ignorant. On the ICW it's taken in stride as an expedient and does make sense since 17 is a low-power channel. Everyone is just careful to stay off the commercial shipping, bridge, and Coast Guard frequencies. Oh – and yes, it's expected that others will listen in on your conversations and you on their's. You get a lot of good information this way.

We passed the Marine Base at Camp LeJeune. They have a firing range that crosses a section of the ICW between miles 235 and 241. When in use, they may close the ICW for up to an hour. (We're not talking about just small arms fire.) Luckily we didn't get held up. However, it's a mildly interesting area to pass as the shores are littered with half a dozen wrecked and very shot up Bradley fighting vehicles. There are very few good anchorages in this stretch. One, Mile Hammock Bay, is a basin dredged by the Marines and occasionally used to launch amphibious craft. (The widest boat ramp you can imagine.) We anchored here (34° 33.065' N, 77° 19.410' W, ICW mile 244.5) with about 20 – 30 other boats and learned pretty soon why one doesn't anchor near a Marine base. We laughed at the occasional sound of shells at dusk. However, the helicopters that arrived after dark were nothing to laugh at. They flew in fast, low, and were incredibly LOUD!. The only thing missing was Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries* echoing in the background and the 50-caliber machine gun fire. Thankfully, they stopped by about 21:00. It was a windy night and at 05:00 the following morning the trawler next to us dragged anchor and bumped into the sailboat behind us. We awoke to the sound of an engine, hurried voices and chain being hauled. We quickly pulled on clothes and clambered topside to fend off if necessary. It wasn't.

Our awakening was only 15 minutes before the alarm had been set for. Soon afterwards we went through our morning routine – listen to NOAA weather radio, check fuel, water, and battery levels, make entries into the ship's log, boil water, towel the dew off the dodger<sup>16</sup> windows, start engine, turn on the electronics, wash-down pump, the nav lights and go forward to haul anchor. We left with the pre-dawn light at 06:05 and were one of several boats pulling out at this time.

Drawbridges are great equalizers. We went through three this day. All of the ones on the North Carolina coast open on either the hour or hour and half hour (no more "on request" bridges until half way through South Carolina). It stinks to arrive 5 minutes late for a bridge that opens on the hour. Sailboats with their long keels and single fixed propellers don't have very good steerage when not moving forward (with our skeg rudder we have almost none in reverse) and its hard to remain stationary for long periods of time, particularly with wind and current. One, therefore, tries to time ones arrival at the bridges. There's a table in one of our cruising guides that tells you how fast you have to go to cover X amount of distance in Y amount of time. However, modern electronics make even this aid unnecessary. Each afternoon after anchoring, Gail enters a "route" for the following day's journey into our GPS-enabled chart plotter<sup>17</sup>. When doing so, she creates "waypoints" for each bridge. The chart plotter knows where you are, and how fast you're going from the GPS and both calculates and displays an estimated time of arrival to the next waypoint. Consequently, most boats going down the ICW know exactly how fast they have to travel to get to the bridge on time. The result of the bridge schedules is that you may be in a group of boats for an hour + with their engines laid wide open trying to get to a bridge with

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<sup>16</sup> A dodger is a canvas and clear plastic windshield in front of the cockpit that blocks wind and sea spray.

<sup>17</sup> A chart plotter combines a LCD screen with global positioning system (GPS), and a set of electronic charts so that the boat's progress is shown real-time on the charts. Ours is located above the wheel and integrated with our radar, depth, and anemometer (wind meter). The charts are stored on memory chips similar to those used by digital cameras and can be swapped out when you change locations.

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only a 2 minute buffer. (Imagine a race of highly motivated turtles.) On the flip side, we had an hour and a half to cover only 5 miles to a bridge that opened on the hour. There was no way we could make it in half an hour. So the chain of us headed down at just above idle speed so as not to end up bunched at the bottom.

Along the way we passed Surf City and Wrightsville Beach and some pretty impressive houses including a number of true mansions. One had a life-sized fiberglass giraffe in the yard. Most were more normal houses, some on stilts, a number for sale. It was obvious that the storms play havoc on the waterfront houses here. Many are built on what were shifting sand banks. Now people expect the land to stay put. Throw in North Carolina's heavy dose of storms and hurricanes and you realize that it really is crazy to build some of these. 45 nautical miles after the day's start we anchored in the basin behind Carolina Beach (34° 02.905' N, 77° 53.361' W, ICW mile 295), a place we soon learned to dislike.

A cold spell was coming through and the temperatures dropped into the 30s at night. Gail baked bread and made New England clam chowder. The oven warmed up the cabin and the mixed aromas were heavenly. We sat down and drank a glass of red wine while the cold wind howled up top at between 15 and 20 knots (windy, but nothing extreme). Then came the dreaded sound of voices and chain. We rushed topside to see that a Hinkley<sup>18</sup> two boats over had dragged anchor and was re-setting near us. Then we saw someone else drag and reset. Then we dragged ourselves and had to reset. I laid out 95 feet of chain and decided to sit anchor watch in the cockpit to make sure everything was OK. Gail handed me up a mug of soup which I cradled in my gloved hands. While up there I watched a few more boats re-setting. After about an hour later we again found ourselves close to the bow of the boat behind us. So, we hauled and re-set again. This time we pulled more mid-channel where we stood a better chance of being clear of other boats if we dragged a third time. We didn't feel we could trust the bottom now. (The nautical term is "poor holding".) So, we decided to keep an anchor watch all night. When sailing overnight, Gail and I usually keep 3 hour watches (trading off every 3 hours). That's the most we can comfortably do because you have to constantly be on the lookout for other boats and shipping, monitor sails, depth, direction, position, etc. An anchor watch is much easier. I pulled on multiple layers of clothing and a stocking cap and spent the first couple hours in the cockpit tucked under the dodger, out of the wind – no requirement to constantly look forward, except to occasionally check that no boat was dragging down on us. As a matter of fact, it's what's behind you and your relationship to it that one is most concerned with. We seemed to be holding OK, so at about 23:00 I tucked down below and set our battery-operated kitchen timer for 15 minutes so it would wake me if I dozed off. I sat, paced, and poked my head up every few minutes to see that everything was OK. It's actually hard to tell what OK is because every boat clocks around a fair amount and your reference points are constantly changing. I was pretty wired and decided to let Gail sleep in the best she could – no use in us both being miserable. After 2:00 am the winds died down a bit and every thing still seemed in order. So, at 03:00 I lay down on the settee for cat naps, letting the alarm wake me for my checks. The rest of the evening was uneventful. Of the 14 boats we counted in the basin, we saw 5 drag, all early – a pretty bad percentage, but no one was hit and no damage was done. Needless to say, we hauled anchor with first light and left this unpleasant place as soon as we could vowing to avoid Carolina Beach on the way back.

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<sup>18</sup> A posh, expensive sailboat

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**Alisios' New England Clam Chowder** – 3 or 4 slices of bacon, 1 or 2 medium-sized potatoes, 1 medium-sized onion, 2 stalks of celery, 2 or 3 tins of clams (strain clams, keep juice), 4 to 6 cups of milk (Whole tastes best, 2% is OK, skim is not), flour to thicken (approximately 3 tbsp.): Fry the bacon until crisp. Pull out the bacon. Add chopped onion, celery, and potato to the bacon fat. Add liquid from the clams and simmer until the veggies are tender. Add all the ingredients together in a large pot and simmer over low heat for about an hour. Stir and check often. Milk burns easily.

**Alisios' Minimal Knead White Bread** – 1 3/4 cups warm water, 2 tsp. sugar, 1 packet (2 1/4 tsp) dry yeast, 1 1/2 tsp. salt, 1 – 2 Tbsp. vegetable or olive oil, 3 1/2 – 4 cups all-purpose flour; Mix sugar, yeast, and water in a bowl and let sit for 10 minutes. Add salt and oil. Stir until the salt is completely dissolved. Add flour slowly and mix well with a strong (e.g. wood) spoon, until you get a lump of firm, slightly sticky dough, then hand-fold / knead the dough in the bowl sprinkling in additional flour until the texture is consistent. Rinse the bowl clean, dry it, and spray the interior with a very light coating of Pam. Place the dough back in the bowl, cover with a towel and let rise in a warm, not hot, environment (75° – 85° F best) until the dough approximately doubles in size (about 1 1/4 – 1 1/2 hours, varies according to conditions). Oil (Pam) a bread pan. Fold the dough again in the bowl, shape it a bit and put it into the pan, shaping further until it fills the bottom relatively evenly. Let rise another 35 – 45 minutes until it's made a small dome above the rim of the pan. Bake at 350 degrees until golden brown (approximately 50 minutes). It will rise further in the oven. Remove from pan and let stand on rack at least 30 minutes before cutting. Don't bag any bread until it has cooled completely.

If you don't have an oven, bread can also be baked in a pressure cooker. In addition to a 4 or 6 quart pressure cooker, you will need both a heat diffuser (flame tamer) and a little corn meal – Follow any of the bread recipes above. But, instead of using a bread pan, grease (Pam) a 4 or 6 quart pressure cooker and coat the pot with a dusting of corn meal. Place the dough in the pressure cooker for the final rising (if applicable), then bake it over a low flame, with a heat diffuser between the pot and the flame and WITHOUT THE GASKET OR STEAM VALVE, until done (between 45 minutes and 1 hour). The pressure cooker is being used as a Dutch oven. The heat diffuser and corn meal insulate the bread from the direct heat of the flame, keeping it from burning on the bottom. The bread will not brown on the top but will cook through. You will have to play with timing as it will vary a bit depending on the stove and pressure-cooker used.

After leaving Carolina Beach Wednesday 07 November, we took Snow's cut behind Cape Fear and into the Cape Fear River. There was a large military base on one side and a wide deep channel down the river to the Atlantic, but very little shipping traffic. Before we could exit into the ocean, we turned into another canal that was lined on one shore with nice newly built waterfront homes, most with their own docks fronting onto the canal. The other side was all sea grass. We assume these were protected wetlands and were a "compromise" that was made when the building permits were issued for the opposite shore. We worked our way down the remaining bit of the North Carolina coast. The temperature had dropped to 10 – 15 degrees below the November norm and it's quite chilly. Only one bridge this day, but it is worth noting because it was an oddity – a "pontoon bridge". The center span is mounted on a barge that has a bridge keeper's hut in the center and a set of cranes on each side. It opens on the hour and when it does the cranes lift the road up and the barge is winched to the side via large cables. Once the bridge is open, the boat traffic has to wait for these cables to drop to the bottom (the bridge tender gives an all clear signal) before proceeding through. At exceptionally low tides it can't open because it's aground. I understand the bridge keeper is an old coot with character. He

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opens "his" bridge when he feels like it. We met a boat he made wait 20 minutes past the designated on-the-hour opening time because they were the only one in line. He didn't feel it was worthwhile opening for only one boat. (We kiss bridge tender's butts both on the VHF and when passing in sight. They hold all the power. Nothing can be gained from being snotty. The vast majority are decent. However, some are just weird.)

We passed the North Carolina / South Carolina border at 13:35. There was no welcome sign. Soon afterwards we pulled into the Calabash River a few miles north of Myrtle Beach and anchored at 14:00 (33° 52.400' N, 78° 34.204' W, ICW mile 342). This time we really felt the anchor hook. One more state checked off. 745 miles to go until our Miami, FL jump-off point.

### 1.12 Moana, 09 November 2007

Most boats used for cruising are equipped with an auto-pilot and ours is no exception. I was fortunate in that our first boat, *Moondance*, came with one installed by the previous owner – fortunate because it would have been a very hard sell to convince Gail that this was something worth spending money on. We laugh about it now – "You want to spend how much money because you're too lazy to steer your own boat?!?". When we bought *Alisios* whether or not to install an auto-pilot wasn't a question that came up. In practice, auto-pilots are wonderful. It's not uncommon for us to spend 10+ hours a day on the move. The auto-pilot is like cruise control on steroids. You give it a compass heading and it takes over. You still have to keep a lookout, be alert and near the wheel. But in most conditions it steers more accurately than you could. They're often referred to as the valued 3rd crew member – one who works long and hard without complaining and doesn't drink your beer.

Given the third crew member aspect, many sailors name their auto-pilot. This obviously isn't something to be taken lightly. Each crew member has their own personality and we didn't want to rashly assign a name to ours that didn't fit. For this reason, *Alisios*' auto-pilot went close to a year without a name. Then one evening it came to us with crystalline clarity: We had embarked on our first big trip with *Alisios* – up the Atlantic coast to New York and back. This involved a couple multi-day coastal ocean sails, with night watches. The auto-pilot is made up an electronic compass, processor, and a piston bolted to the rudder post underneath the cockpit. In the cockpit is a small control panel. When travelling overnight, the best "sea berth" on *Alisios* is the aft quarter-berth which is located just in front of the auto-pilot's piston which controls the rudder (separated by a thin bulkhead). We had a 20 knot following wind and 4-foot seas and the auto-pilot was working hard. Our auto-pilot is not the silent type. In fact she moaned loudly with each course correction, something particularly evident to someone trying to catch a few Z's in the quarter-berth as the boat rolled – imagine attempting to sleep in the middle of a pod of humpback whales and you get an idea of what it sounded like. Then it dawned on me and at about 02:00, I poked my head up the companionway and shouted to Gail – "I've found the name for our auto-pilot". She's been Moana ever since.

### 1.13 South Carolina, 12 November 2007

South Carolina is interesting. We passed a tremendous amount of development by Myrtle Beach. Golf courses and beautiful new homes lined the waterway and more are actively under construction. The demand for waterfront property is such that in some cases they dig a grid of canals into the mainland with a root exiting into the waterway like a multi-pronged trident (octants, dectents ?). Each branch is lined with beautiful new houses close together on their

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own little waterfront parcel. I believe this is a model imported from Florida. Even huge multi-million dollar houses are often stacked up on each other. We're talking palatial pillared mansions so close you could spit between them. The architecture is a cross between southern plantation and Spanish. Many have pillars, multiple balconies, and sweeping staircases. One golf course had high-wire gondolas traversing the waterway. Two cars converged going in opposite directions as we passed beneath, one with golf bags hung on the bow and stern. It's an interesting situation to be in – looking up hoping the mast clears and simultaneously imagining how one would explain the accident to an insurance adjuster if it didn't. (Everything new over the water is 65 feet or higher, so this problem is imaginary.)

We continued through a 4 mile stretch called "the rock pile". The banks are rock ledges that are invisible at high tide water, so you **MUST** stay in channel if you don't want to rip the side out of your boat! It's noted in the cruising guides and they advise you to call ahead on the VHF to check for any north-bound tugs and the like before starting through it. There was a danger sign as we entered it from the north, but we didn't see one on the southern end. Interestingly, for all the warnings in the guides, it's not marked in any way on the charts.

From here we entered the Waccamaw River and suddenly we were back in cypress swamps. This change really highlighted the varied scenery we've seen – the Chesapeake Bay, Dismal Swamp, narrow canals, wide rivers and sounds, cypress, loblolly pines, dunes, salt marshes, highly developed waterfront including beach resorts and expensive homes to scattered shacks. I'm sorry we don't have photos to adequately depict all of this. It's easy to take a shot of a sunset or a tug or bridge. However a single camera frame can't capture the panorama. The flavor of the landscape gets lost in a small rectangle if there is nothing to jump out in the rectangle. Anyway, the Waccamaw is very beautiful. It's cut by numerous creeks and little islands (really islets) and winds back and forth through banks of cypress roots that give way to other trees and grasses yet averages 20 or more foot of depth. The trees are covered in Spanish moss. Oh – and the other boats suddenly diminished. We followed one other sailboat boat down most of the day (a female solo – something rare. Gail chatted with her on the radio a bit). After another 55 [statute] mile day we pulled off into a winding narrow creek and anchored at 14:30 in 20 foot of water – all alone for once on a beautiful sunny afternoon (Jerico Creek 33° 26.993' N, 79° 11.032' W, ICW mile 395).

From mid-South Carolina through Georgia one experiences a fair amount of tidal change. The tides create strong currents which facilitate shoaling and also carve out deep creeks. At low tide, in particular, one has to be alert for shoals. We've seen a couple boats run aground this trip (nothing serious and no damage). There's a saying that "There are two types of sailors – those who have run aground and those who lie about it". We've had our own minor bottom encounters in the past and will cross our fingers. The currents can make it difficult to time your days. A following current can put you hours ahead and one on your nose can delay you badly. Finally, the currents can make anchoring and nights on the hook "interesting". Generally one points the nose of the boat into the wind while anchoring and the boat falls off the anchor accordingly. However, a strong current that is opposite to the wind may cause you to actually sit over your anchor while the bow is still facing into the wind. The current may push the boat sideways to the wind and waves resulting in a slapping against the hull and uncomfortable motion (not a joy to sleep to). Of course one also has to plan for the tides when anchoring to ensure you have enough scope out to accommodate the high tide. Having your boat raise itself off its anchor while you're asleep and drift off with the current would not be a good thing.

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We pulled anchor just before dawn as usual and headed out into a light fog that quickly burned off when the sun rose over the horizon. The Waccamaw River exits into Winyah Bay and from there we turned down a series of canals and rivers into a long stretch of salt marsh. The salt marsh is fascinating – There is very little relief to the land, mostly a sea of rushes with creeks and rivers winding through them everywhere. Some of these are quite deep, scoured by the current, others very shallow. The chart is a mass of squiggly lines with the ICW cutting through and interconnecting. There is no vertical relief. You can't see the creeks and rivers until you're upon them. When you look to the side it's like seeing a wheat field. True land is usually separated from true water by quite a distance of rushes. Many houses have long docks that span this distance. A few were as long as football fields. Much of it, however, it's undeveloped and undevelopable. We liked this area.

We're still in the midst of a passing cold spell and it didn't quite warm up today. Late afternoon one starts thinking – "What can I have for dinner that requires baking?". We have no heater and the oven does a nice job of taking any edge off cabin temperatures. For the evening we pulled into a branch of one of the larger marsh creeks. We could see other boats anchored around the bend. They appeared to be anchored in a farmers field. We dropped anchor about a half an hour before sunset, one of 4 sailboats. (Deweese Creek, 32° 50.570' N, 79° 45.338' W, ICW mile 455). More homemade bread and soup. (Who knew Gail had it in her?<sup>19</sup>)

Saturday morning began with a dolphin sighting just after pulling out of our creek – two dolphins "frolicking"<sup>20</sup> off our bow. From here we had another long day. We passed through the middle of Charleston Harbor with Fort Sumter on our port, through Elliot Cut and into the Stono River. This continued to Wadmalaw Sound, where we saw more dolphins, and into the Dawho River near low tide. The Dawho was shoaled badly enough across the mouth that we thought we might go aground. But we had been wished "fair winds, following seas, and six inches under our keel" when we left. Though at times we literally only had six inches under our keel, it never dropped below that. The tide here is 7 feet, so a grounding would only have necessitated a couple hour wait. From the Dawho we took the North Creek Cut into the South Edisto River and anchored for the night in a wide bend – somewhat open, but the options aren't many around here (32° 33.550' N, 80° 24.815' W, ICW mile). The marsh grasses near by and trees in the background were beautiful. Nice sunset.

Sunday was a short day on the water. We had another dolphin encounter just after pulling anchor and another later in the day. (We consider these good luck.) However, the really interesting animal encounter came at 07:00 when we had to down-throttle to avoid running over a deer. That's right – a good sized buck with quite a rack was swimming right across our path and at quite a clip too. We dropped to neutral and watched him make the other shore where he waded up through the reeds onto land, and stood there in all of his white-tailed glory. He didn't seem too concerned about us. People don't appear to hunt deer from sailboats in these parts – ha ha.

This is an area of zigzags through rivers and creeks with interesting names – We left the South Edisto River to cut into the Ashepoo River, then over to Rock Creek, to the Coosaw River, to the Beaufort River. After all these days on the hook (Its been a week since we set foot on shore, and that was just for a few minutes to top up fuel, water, and ice), we decided to get a transient slip in Beaufort, SC (not to be confused with Beaufort, NC – same spelling, different

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<sup>19</sup> It turns out she didn't. Not long afterwards I took over all bread baking duties (I have more patience ☺).

<sup>20</sup> screwing

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pronunciation), which was rumored to be a lovely little town. There is one downtown marina (32° 25.781' N, 80° 40.460' W, ICW mile 536), so given the season, we called ahead and made reservations. As noted, the tides here are real (8 1/2 feet. The marina has floating docks and the current at the docks gets up to 3 knots. We pulled in fine, filled up with diesel, took showers with no worry about how much water we were using and met an old family friend of Gail's for lunch. The afternoon was spent grocery shopping for some fresh stuff – walked to the Piggly Wiggly<sup>21</sup> a mile away, but caught a cab back because of our bags. They sell interesting canned meats in the south – Much to my chagrin, Gail wouldn't let me buy the pigs brains in milk. (One fries it for breakfast.) Afterwards we did laundry at the marina laundromat then went out for a mussels appetizer and brick oven fru-fru pizza for dinner.

Monday was Veterans Day. It would have been nice if the marina had told us there was going to be a big parade in the morning. I was just finishing changing the oil when we heard the marching bands. I saw some of it when I carried the used oil up, but I had a real need to wash my hands. After doing so, I picked up Gail and we caught the tail end. We found a temporary replacement percolator at K-Mart. The quality was everything that has given K-Mart a bad name – beyond cheap and nasty. However, we had a new basket for our real one on order to be shipped to the Smithsonian Marine Station in Ft. Pierce, FL where we would pick it up on the way down. I've worked for the Smithsonian for 15 years and pride myself in having visited almost all of the SI facilities. Fort Pierce is one of only a handful I haven't seen. We're looking forward to it. With errands completed, we saw more of Beaufort. It really is a beautiful little town and they've done a great job of revitalizing the town center – lots of restaurants and shops along a waterfront park – nice brick walkways, swings overlooking the water. Go back a couple blocks and you're into the old southern homes, most in very good shape. We were very happy we visited.

### **1.14 Georgia – Land of Tides, No-see-ums, and Great Beauty, 17 November 2007**

"Caution – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers does not have the funds to maintain the ICW in the lower South Carolina / Georgia area." This is how Skipper Bob's introduces mile 552 and below. Though South Carolina is mentioned, it's mostly Georgia they're talking about. When we were preparing for this trip we were warned about Georgia's 9-foot tides, strong currents, and endless marshes where the channels weave back and forth on each other. Though Georgia only has a 100 mile coastline, the length of the ICW here is 138 miles. We were told that it was "interesting" to watch masts over the grasses doing zigzags in front of you like ducks in a carnival arcade game. We were told about clouds of no-see-ums, bugs so small you can't see them until you feel their significant bite. Even then, you usually look down and there's nothing there. Sometimes you wipe the portion of the arm or leg where the pain is and see a tiny black smear. Other times you wonder whether you're just imagining it. Bug screens are ineffective. They just climb right through the holes in the mesh. "Yeah, we have them in Maryland too – but not like Georgia!" We were told the Georgia stretch was something worth "experiencing". However, we noted that at about mid-South Carolina a lot of seasoned ICW veterans started actively looking for opportunities to jump offshore and shoot straight down to Fernandina Beach, Florida, leaving Georgia in their wake. It's supposed to be very pretty – the majority of the islands that create their coastline are wildlife refuges, but it's also supposed to be the "hairy" part of the ICW.

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<sup>21</sup> A large chain of supermarkets in the southern U.S. famous for its name



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We often found ourselves sleeping in a bowl of Rice Krispies – This is a big shrimp fishing area and I've mentioned the shrimp trawlers. However, I should bring up another aspect of anchoring in water where shrimp live – the sound. You can't see them, but at night, boy can you hear them! The shrimp make a loud snapping sound with their claws and there are thousands of shrimp. I don't know whether this is for mating, defense or other purposes. The bulk of our cabin lies below the waterline. The v-berth, where we sleep, is right at water level. There comes a time after dark where all of a sudden you notice that the water is crackling around you. This is particularly evident when you go to bed, since there are no other sounds in the cabin. It's literally like sleeping with your ear over a bowl of Rice Krispies.

Our departure from Beaufort, South Carolina was uneventful (the way we like it). We declined to take the advice of the marina hands that "you'll be OK backing out with the current" and turned the boat around on Monday so we'd have our bow facing out with the tide when we left Tuesday morning. When it came time to leave it was a simple matter of removing all but the stern line, pushing the bow out from the dock and jumping on as Gail steered us forward under light throttle.

Docking is one of the most dangerous things you can do with a boat because its one of the few times where there is a strong chance of hitting things. Docking a boat isn't like parking a car. Sailboats like ours have a long keel designed to keep you going straight and a small fixed propeller with a small rudder behind it. We depend on forward motion to be able to steer. The slower you go the less responsive the helm is. When you've slowed to a crawl, there is no such thing as a quick turn. You have little maneuverability. Moving in reverse is worse. We have what's known as a "skeg" rudder, which means the forward part of it is fixed and only the aft part turns to direct the thrust created by the propeller. The rudder sits behind the propeller to direct this thrust when the boat is going forward. So, when in reverse, the rudder is basically on the wrong side of the propeller. To compound matters, the propeller functions like a screw turning into the water. The direction of the twist creates what's known as "prop walk" – the turn of the propeller actually pulls the stern of your boat to one side. This is true in both forward and reverse, but isn't as noticeable in forward. In reverse, our prop pulls our stern to the port. In calm open water, you can actually turn a circle in reverse just using prop walk. When you combine limited steerage with tight spaces, obstacles (i.e. pilings and other boats), tides, current, and wind (which can come in gusts that hit your hull like a sail, suddenly pushing your bow around contrary to the direction you're steering) you begin to see why docking involves a high degree of comfort with how your boat acts in different conditions, common sense, and preferably a high degree of knowledge of the "normal" conditions for your slip at different tides and currents. One always lacks the last part when pulling into strange docks. The dockhands don't always volunteer information (if they have it). Furthermore, many dockhands, by definition, spend their time on the dock, and the young ones, in particular, may not really understand the limitations of the different boats coming in. (Some power boats maneuver easily.) They like to brush off the reality outlined above with comments like "a captain should be able to control his vessel". What the captain needs to do is question situations when warranted, seek information, think before acting, and use common sense. Experience can be an expensive teacher. We've had some close calls (our friend Bob probably still has heart palpitations from New York), but luckily no damage so far (knock on wood). We've learned to question the marina and to always think twice and three times about tides, currents, and wind – both present and forecasted.

We went down the Beaufort River through Port Royal Sound and Skull Creek, passing Hilton Head Island. (Surprisingly little development visible from the water, apart from some nice

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homes.) From here we headed down Calibogue Sound through the Cooper River, New River through a couple cuts and over to the Savannah River. Just before this point, somewhere around ICW mile 575, we passed from South Carolina into Georgia. It wasn't signed and the demarcation line is unclear on the chart. The Savannah River is a major commercial artery. It had been fogged in all morning so the commercial shipping had shut down and they were backed up when the fog finally lifted. As one exits the cut, one has to cross the main shipping channel of the river in order to pick up the ICW on the other side. VHF channel 13 is the frequency used by commercial shipping. We monitored both 16 and 13 as we approached the river from our cut and we heard the container ship *Portland* hailing the powerboats around the bend in front of us asking them to keep out of his way. We were only about half a mile back, so I hailed him, told him our position and asked if he'd be turning up Fields Cut. Just after these words came out of my mouth, we rounded the bend and saw what looked like a high-rise building afloat – she was HUGE! As I saw her, it immediately became clear that there was no way she was turning down or could turn down our little cut. He responded that he was "X" hundred thousand tons, "Y" draft, and "Z" width and laughed saying that "maybe he could fit the nose in". I replied that I now saw him and "boy did I feel foolish". He responded that "everyone needs a smile at least once a day". I love the South for this sort of thing. People are just friendlier. There is no way a Delaware River pilot would have treated a dumb pleasure-boater this cordially (if they responded at all).

Many more dolphin encounters. Actually, they're common enough now that I'll stop mentioning them for a while, except to note that we saw one playing with a fish. (At least for the dolphin it was play). He had caught what looked like some sort of flat fish about a foot and a half long. He was flipping it into the air and as far ahead as he could throw it, just as if it were a beach ball. Then he'd swim rapidly to catch it, so he could flip it forward and race after it again. This was really really neat to see in the wild!

We timed Tuesday's journey with a cut called "Hell Gate" in mind. This seems to be a popular name for scary cuts with strong tidal currents. The most well known Hell Gate in U.S. waters is on the East River which connects the Hudson River by New York City with Long Island Sound. We had taken *Alisios* through that Hell Gate (at slack tide) in 2005. Georgia's Hell Gate connects the Vernon River with the Ogeechee and is known for shoaling and currents. We were warned to traverse it at high tide. We were projected to hit Hell Gate the following day so the tide tables were consulted. (Most of the time spent consulting tide tables in areas you're not familiar with is figuring out where the heck the various reporting points are – "Are we closer to Thunderbolt, Coffee Bluff, or the Egg Islands?") It turned out that high tide for the Egg Islands (near Hell Gate) was at 10:28 the following morning and there was one drawbridge before we hit it which is on a restricted schedule during rush hour – only opens on the hour. So, we chose our night's anchorage first based on distance to Hell Gate, then our ability to make the bridge on the appropriate hour (08:00), then based on depth, holding, current, and wind. We ended up anchoring in Herb River (more like Herb Creek) in 20 foot of water in front of some very expensive houses (32° 00.863' N, 81° 01.997' W, ICW mile 584.5). It was reasonably pretty, and there was a small barge and crane doing some interesting piling work on the dock off one of the expensive looking homes. However, the no-see-ums drove us down below pretty quickly.

(Gail wants my mom (who's following this blog) to know that she cooked a full course meal of fresh chicken, broccoli, and mashed potatoes and that we're not living off canned corned beef (which we, BTW, call Alpo ;-)).

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One nice thing to note – Its warm now. Most of the first half of our trip down was done during a bit of a cold spell (10 – 15 degrees cooler than normal). A few nights were in the 30s and one morning we had ice crystals on the dink. On these mornings you climb out of bed and immediately start layering. As sun rises and the day warms up we'd peel down layer by layer. Then in the afternoon, we'd have to start adding again. It felt a bit odd continually donning, shedding, and re-donning clothing. The last couple days we've been able to start out with shorts and a sweatshirt, then shed the sweatshirt.

Wednesday we had a good haul. We traversed the Skidaway River, Vernon River, and passed through Hell Gate at high tide. Hell Gate wasn't much to look at. It's a very short cut that is extremely well marked and with the marshes it hardly looks like you're changing rivers. However, we had only 10 1/2 feet under our keel on an 8 foot tide, so one definitely needs to take this one at high tide. From here we traversed the Ogeechee River, Bear River, St. Catherine's Sound, Johnson Creek, South Newport River, Sapelo Sound, the Front River, and finally anchored just before sunset in New Teakettle Creek (31° 27.518' N, 81° 18.261' W, ICW Mile 646). When crossing Sapelo Sound a neat thing happened – we were hailed by s/v *Moonstuck*, a Saga 43 we had anchored with for a couple days in Coecles Harbor at the northern end of Long Island back in 2005. Back then, we had had a good time with them over drinks. They had also made some really innovative modifications to their boat. We hadn't seen each other since. However, they heard us on the radio and hailed us out of the blue. It turns out they were also working their way south and heading to Florida and the Bahamas, mostly via off-shore jumps as they're deep draft. Hopefully, we'll be able to hook up. It is a small world.

Without planning it, we've spent the last couple days travelling with another boat – s/v *Agape* (pronounced "a-gah-pay") from Oriental, NC. We met Don and Wilma briefly on the docks at Beaufort, SC. Tuesday she ended up on our stern (Don said he was using us to test the depth). Today we were on theirs'. They have a house in Florida and have done the ICW several times. Don provided some useful hints without overtly suggesting we do anything. It pays to listen to sage advice when it's offered. A small gale was forecast for Thursday night. The anchorages in GA have little protection from the wind, so we decided to follow their lead and reserve a transient slip at Jekyll Island for that night (31° 02.715' N, 81° 25.362' W, ICW mile 684.5). Gail has more family friends down here. So, we called her dad, got their phone number and made arrangements to meet for dinner. One of the neat things about having been together since we were 18 is that I know these people pretty well too, even though they moved back down to Georgia 15 years ago.

Jekyll Island is an interesting place. In the late 1800s / early 1900s a group of the ultra-rich, including the Goulds, Astors, Goodyears, Morgans, Pulitzers, and Vanderbuilts built small (by their standards) homes here with a common hotel / clubhouse where they shared meals and where guests could stay. Here they whiled away the winter months with their social and economic peers in a warmer climate than New York afforded. During World War II a German U-Boat torpedoed a tanker not far from the island and the government had it evacuated. The subsequent family generations were less interested in the place than their parents and grandparents. After the war it was purchased by the state of Georgia. The houses initially decayed and were vandalized. However, those that remained were subsequently restored and the clubhouse is now a hotel (which my parents say is charming). The "old historic district" as its called is a delightful place to walk or ride a bike around. During the 1960s, a limited number of modest ranch style houses were built. Then, all future home building was discontinued. Our friends live in one of these homes.

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We had a delightful dinner Thursday evening. Friday morning they picked us up again and we drove over the bridge to the city of Brunswick. A fundamentalist Christian group called the Twelve Tribes has purchased a partially completed barkentine rigged tall ship which they are outfitting with the idea of using it for outreach. We went down to look at the ship. She was started in Brazil in 1989 by a man who had made his money in the oil business and is somewhat of an odd vessel. Her hull is Brazilian ironwood and the interior all mahogany (beautiful). She sits quite high on the water with a large center pilot house (something you don't usually see on tall ships). The builder had envisioned mechanized sails and the like. The transom (stern) folds down with an extending platform that was designed with the idea that a small helicopter could be deployed and pulled back on board into an aft, below decks, holding area. The idea was never tested. The original project lost steam. The religious group purchased her at bargain prices and brought in a tall ship expert who rigged her conventionally to be manually sailed by a crew of about 15. She's still a work in progress. Our hosts couldn't have been more gracious. They have a wild dream that's pretty crazy on the surface given their complete lack of experience with tall ships. But, it is quite a magical dream. They're slowly making progress and we wish them well. After leaving the ship we had lunch at a local institution – Willie's Weiner House where we all had "Willie Burgers". These were true heart attack specials that were absolutely delicious. They came with sweet tea (a super-saturated sucrose solution that would grow crystals on the bottom of the glass overnight if you gave it the time), a true southern tradition that even my significantly developed sweet tooth has a hard time dealing with. After showing our friends *Alisios* we parted. Gail and I borrowed bikes from the marina and rode around the historic district and over to the ocean.

The cold front that brought the small gale dropped the temperatures back down 15 degrees below normal for a couple days. So, we were back to layers of clothing. However, when we pulled away from dock Saturday morning the sun was out again and it was on its way to becoming a beautiful day. We passed through St. Andrew's Sound and down the Cumberland River. Cumberland Island is a wildlife refuge that is supposed to have wild horses on it. However, we didn't see any. We made it to Cumberland Sound before noon and were suddenly in Florida. It felt like quite a milestone, though Fernandina Beach was not what we imagined.

Throughout the Georgia portion of the ICW we'd seen little development and often few signs of humanity. The ICW here may wind back and forth, but it does so through fairly virgin land and it is very beautiful. All in all we loved Georgia and it was our favorite part of the ICW.

### 1.15 Florida to Daytona Beach, 20 November 2007

We were warned that after days working through the pastoral marshlands of Georgia, Florida's development would be a bit of a shock. Our first sight of Florida was of factory smoke stacks as we approached, and a small commercial port of the type that loads sand and gravel into bulk carriers. A little ways down was a small container ship and more industry. The river entrance going into Fernandina Beach was full of moored barges and a large dredge, not in operation. It was quite ugly. This was the destination we heard so many people talking about hopping off shore to go to. Nestled in the middle was a medium size anchorage and mooring field with a number of pleasure boats and what looked like a nice little marina on shore. (With good access to the ocean and safe close facilities, this actually is a pretty good jumping in point.) As you continue down the Amelia River a nuclear power plant stands out on the horizon. Once one passes the small industrial zone and approaches the Jacksonville area one passes by beach

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communities with houses on the water. The development isn't any where near as hard core as say Ocean City, Maryland and the change was reasonably gradual.

We've been in touch with the first two sets of people we plan to visit in Florida. The timing is a bit awkward with Thanksgiving coming up as we don't want to arrive (and impose ourselves) either on the holiday itself or the subsequent weekend. With this in mind, we planned a stop in Daytona / Port Orange before the holiday to visit an old co-worker of mine and Fort Pierce on the Monday after.

My are the drawbridges here friendly and incredibly responsive. Good thing since Florida has 2/3 of all the drawbridges on the ICW between Norfolk and Miami – 81 total. I envision some offshore hops in our near future to avoid some of these.

We ended up dropping anchor for the night outside Old Fort Matanza (29°, 43'.038 N, 81°, 14.500 W, ICW mile 792.5) which was named after an event that took place 200 years before its founding. In the 16th century the Spanish had laid claim to Florida, and the French to the areas just north. In 1565 a group of 300 French Huguenots (Protestants) from a settlement near Jacksonville had planned an attack on the Spanish at St. Augustine but were blown off course and shipwrecked. In due time they were discovered by the Spanish and forced to surrender, after which the governor of St. Augustine demanded that they convert to Catholicism. When they refused the Spaniards tied their hands, led them behind the dunes, and stabbed all 300 of them to death. Matanza is the Spanish word for massacre. It's hard to imagine how the cold-blooded murder of 300 people can be seen as doing the will of God. It's frightening what man is capable and willing to do to his fellow man if they don't think the way he does and sad to think we have not improved significantly in this aspect after almost 500 years.

The early evening was spent transferring fuel – Alisios is built by a small company called Caliber Yachts that produces about 20 boats a year. She's fairly conservative in design, but has some very nice, non-sexy, features. One is the fuel system. Anyone who comes down the ICW does a lot of motoring. The 30 horsepower diesel auxiliary engines that are standard in boats of our size burn about 2/3 of a gallon of fuel per hour. Many of the mass-produced boats seem to come with very small fuel tanks (e.g. 25 gallons). You see many of them with yellow diesel jerry cans strapped to their rails and they're forced to pull into marinas to re-fuel every 3 days or so. Our primary tank holds a more reasonable 45 gallons. However, we also have a secondary tank. Caliber took the unused area under the cabin sole and built a shallow tank that holds an additional 70 gallons giving us an impressive 115 gallon fuel capacity (One of the reasons our boat is called a LRC / Long Range Cruiser). This second fuel tank is not a feature that we've used before as it's unnecessary when cruising locally. However, when one travels abroad, fuel may be expensive, difficult to locate, and of questionable quality. This latter aspect is of particular concern. Water, crud, and micro-organisms can do bad things to a diesel engine. (Algae-like micro-organisms can grow and blossom in diesel fuel? One buys biocides to add to the fuel to prevent this). For this reason, all boats are equipped with a primary fuel filter / water separator between the tank and the engine in addition to the smaller one that comes built onto the engine. Caliber has a particularly nice setup that I haven't seen on other boats - redundant systems (double primary filters) and a fuel control panel. The panel, which is inside our cockpit locker, has a set of valves that allow you to easily switch from one tank or filter to the other. Newer boats like ours also have a separate fuel pump that when set in "auto" mode will continually cycle the fuel from the active tank through the filter when the engine is running. This is called "polishing" the fuel. This same pump can also be used to transfer diesel from our

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secondary, under the cabin sole, tank into to our primary tank. We had tested this briefly before we left, but had never performed an actual fuel transfer. It seemed a good thing to do before we left the U.S. To effect the transfer one opens the valves to the various tanks, sets the source to tank #1, the return to tank #2, and switches on the pump. It's a small pump and the hoses are also small, so the transfer rate was only about 13 gallons per hour - definitely not like filling up at the pump. However, it did work and we transferred about 25 gallons before calling it a night.

At about ICW mile 800 the landscape suddenly changed. The salt grasses gave way to real trees interlaced with palms. This gives the land a much more substantial feel even though it's still flat and low. Not long afterward, while I was down below writing, the boat made a sudden lurch and went from 5 1/2 knots to a complete halt – Gail had wandered slightly out of channel while taking a turn and had "found the bottom". This is always one of those slow motion occurrences. The channel depth was about 12 – 14 feet. She looked down at the depth gauge and saw 7, said "uh-oh", looked around quickly to try to figure where we should be, then bam! We, of course, had some on-lookers sitting on a bench on shore in the perfect spot to watch the whole thing. One of the nice things about *Alisios'* fin keel is that we were able to back right off (while laughing with the people on shore). Our earlier boat, *Moondance*, had what's called a wing keel. The fin came down to a bulb that had small wings on each side. This allows the boat to perform well with a shallower keel, which is a nice feature when anchoring in the creeks of the Chesapeake Bay. *Moondance* only drew 3' 9" and we got her into some places no other sailboat went. However, when you run aground with this type of keel, the wings dig into the mud just like a plow anchor. *Moondance* was hell to get off a shoal and I swam the anchor out on top of a fender more than once so we could set it and use a winch to kedge ourselves off. So far, we've never had to do this with *Alisios*. The few times we've "touched bottom", she's backed right off.

An interesting thing happened as we were entering Daytona - We had been followed by a catamaran since the first drawbridge of the morning. I noticed that they were flying the British red duster (British maritime flag) off their stern where one flies national flag of the boat. Later on in the day, I decided we should hoist our own flags. We have pennants (small triangular flags) for the Seven Seas Cruising Association and Caliber Cruising Club which we fly below our port spreader<sup>22</sup>. On our boat, there is one spreader on each side of the mast<sup>23</sup>. We fly a U.S. flag (the stars and bars), a Welsh Flag, and a Maryland flag, in that order, below our starboard spreader. Well, the boat behind us must have seen our little Welsh flag because in a few minutes I looked behind and saw a large Welsh flag flying behind his boat. Well, I figured, I could match that. So, I went below and pulled out my big Welsh flag and hoisted it up the main halyard. Here we were, two sailboats, under sail, heading down the ICW with big red Welsh dragons flying proudly. It wasn't long before I received a call from an American voice on the boat behind – After switching channels I got a "Where in Wales do you hail from?". I responded that my father was from a small sea-side town near Swansea called The Mumbles. She said - "Oh my God!. You need to speak to my husband". He was Welsh and had lived in The Mumbles. They had built their boat, *Peace IV*, in the U.K. and sailed her across the Atlantic. Her hailing port was Swansea. They were heading to the Bahamas, so I'm sure we will see them again. I told them that before today I had been sure we were the only south-bound sailboat on

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<sup>22</sup> A spreader is a horizontal bar 2/3 of the way up the mast that holds the shrouds (side cables that steady the mast) out at the proper angle.

<sup>23</sup> Ours is a "single-spreader" rig. Some boats are rigged with two or more sets of spreaders.

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the ICW with cockles and laverbread<sup>24</sup> in our provisions – now I wasn't so sure. We chatted about buying fresh cockles at the Swansea market (which I had done with my dad as a boy several times). It certainly is a small world. We're looking forward to bumping into them for real sometime in the future<sup>25</sup>.

We tied up to a pier at a small marina in on the Port Orange side of Daytona Beach (29°, 09'.271 N, 80° 58'.536 W, ICW mile 835) that is known for being one of the cheapest marinas on the east coast (80 cents a foot). There were some wakes at the dock, and the manager was a bit of a Richard Cranium, but everyone else was nice and it sufficed. We grabbed showers and my friend (now our friend) Joe picked us up at about 15:00. It's a bit strange calling up people who you haven't seen in years out of the blue and saying "Hi – entertain me". We seem to be doing this a lot. But old friends are just that and our four visits to date have been wonderful. Joe couldn't have been more hospitable – He gave us a driving tour of the area. Daytona is famous for the race tracks and the beach. (In our college days it was a massive Spring break party town.) It's somewhat unique in that you can drive on the beach. Unfortunately, the last several hurricanes have caused some serious erosion. It was high tide and Joe didn't feel like sacrificing his convertible to Neptune. So, we had a look and turned around. On the way to his house we swung by the grocery store, where Gail and I quickly provisioned up for Thanksgiving, then we settled down for beer, wine, and a great barbecue dinner. We ended up spending the night – our first night away from the boat since leaving. The next morning we treated him to late breakfast at a waterside greasy spoon and we hung out watching the boats go by until we all had to say our goodbyes.

We filled the diesel and water (didn't need much, but one should never pass by an opportunity to top off the tanks) then we turned the boat around for an easy bow first exit in the morning. Gail and I spent the afternoon walking the beach. Oddly, the smell was overwhelming. We were told that it was red tide and it burned our lungs badly. Everyone walking the beach was coughing. Towards the end of the beach portion of our walk we came across a Russian man and his family who spoke no English and had gotten their mini-van stuck in the sand trying to cut a corner to the little ramp off the beach. We did the good Samaritan thing and tried to help. We dug around the front tires, but they just spun deeper. I even found an old piece of plywood to shove under them, but it was no use. Luckily for him a Jeep came down the beach. I waved him over, he had a tow chain and yanked the guy back to cement in no time. One of the Russians kept repeating "thank you" over and over. The other was able to say "I have Russian whiskey at apartment. I give to you". We smiled and waved goodbye as we walked away. We weren't the ones with the Jeep and anyone who won't stop to help someone in need without thought of reward isn't worth much in my eyes. At that point we cut back to the main street where we could breathe and took the land route home past all the hotels with universal beach hotel names like "Pirates Cove", "Fantasy Island", and "Sand Dollar" then settled back on board for a quiet night at dock.

### 1.16 Daytona Beach to Vero Beach, FL, 26 November 2007

From Daytona Beach we continued down the Halifax River and crossed through Mosquito Lagoon. Despite the ominous name, the mossies weren't too bad. Actually, the mossies haven't

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<sup>24</sup> Cockles are a type of small clam (baby clam). Laverbread is a cooked, minced seaweed which is served with cockles. The two combined are a classic Welsh breakfast.

<sup>25</sup> We never saw them again and I regret not having gotten their contact information.

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been too bad throughout our trip to date – I think this is partly because it was colder than normal and this kept them at bay. However, I also think it's because they have been normal American mosquitoes. Now, I realize that there are thousands of types of mosquitoes and there is no such thing as a "normal American mosquito". However, I wanted to differentiate them from the Asian tiger mosquitoes, a transplanted that thrives around our home in Maryland, that are VERY aggressive. The mosquitoes we've seen going south down the ICW have been smaller and pure black. They're still blood-thirsty evil little she-devils. (Only the females bite.) But, they've been much less persistent than the ones at home and we haven't spent any nights waking to high-pitched buzzing around our ears from invisible attackers. I suppose we have many more months in which to experience that.

Anyway, the ICW moves from Mosquito Lagoon to the North River to the Indian River. This is prime manatee territory and there are many speed limit signs with the words "Manatee Protection Zone". We were both very eager to see manatees. However, up until now, the manatees hadn't been cooperating. There is a small cut called Haulover Canal that connects the North River to the Indian River with a small drawbridge in the middle. We had been told that they liked to hang out in the canal and, sure enough, we had our first sighting here. We saw a couple people looking down at the water from a scenic overlook on shore and caught the brief site of a fluke breaking the water. It was definitely a manatee tail and not a dolphin. A little later a small nondescript lump broke the surface for a couple seconds. That was it. A little further on we saw a floating lump in one of the side pools. None of these sightings were particularly enriching or satisfying. However, they were typical.

We anchored Wednesday and Thursday off the town of Titusville (28° 37.625' N, 80° 48.387' W, ICW mile 878) within sight of the main shuttle hanger at Cape Canaveral. There was a shuttle on the pad, but it wasn't scheduled to launch for a week or so. Pity – apparently this anchorage is a prime site for watching shuttle launches. Titusville has a municipal marina that sits inside a nice, protected, man-made basin. We took the dink in to explore the town. There isn't much to see – some condos and block stores along a sandy highway. I gather the town has suffered a bit as NASA's budget was cut. However, there is a grocery store, CVS, and a West Marine Express within walking distance. We picked up an additional fender and some spare cabin light bulbs from West Marine for more than they should have cost. (For our non-boating friends – West Marine is a large nationwide chain of marine chandleries. They started out as a discount store that aggressively expanded, systematically putting their competitors out of business, much like Home Depot and Sports Authority have done. Once the competition was nearly gone, they quietly raised their prices. When outfitting for this trip, we figured out that they actually charge about a 20% premium over what you'd pay elsewhere. However, elsewhere isn't easy to find any more. The staff are usually very nice and will generally match prices but this is a hassle as you have to provide proof of the lower price. As they got larger, they also started branding everything they possibly could. We've found ourselves struggling not to have our boat covered with the West Marine logo. I guess this is OK with jackets, lines, and the like. However, now they're doing it with hardware too. This is a problem because boat builders use name-brand hardware. If a latch or something similar breaks, we need the real ABI or Perko name-brand item – not a slightly different West Marine knock-off that usually has a different screw pattern and is made of inferior Chinese stainless steel. This means that most little hardware purchases are special orders requiring some lead time, a luxury we no longer have. We both love and hate West Marine.)



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We had a leisurely Thanksgiving day. While at anchor we were circled by a para-plane that was pretty neat to look at. After a real cheese omelet, sausage, and toast breakfast we called various family and dinked into town again. We had been told that manatees liked to hang out in the municipal marina basin so we brought the camera and walked the docks looking for them. We weren't disappointed. Apparently about 15 of them live there. The water is a murky green and it was hard to tell whether the first one we saw 25 meters away was a mammal or a half-submerged piece of garbage. They like to rest with the hump of their backs just breaking the surface and in this situation don't move much. However, not long afterwards we were rewarded by another, much more photogenic, sighting. This second one was swimming in the shallows near the bulkhead occasionally lifting its snout out for a breath of air. We walked along side for about five minutes with a clear view of its entire body as it glided by. This made our day. (The locals are much less enamored by them – Imagine sharing your small marina with 15 lumbering endangered species water cows that cause their share of problems, including copious emissions of methane, and can't be touched. It doesn't approach the sea lion problem in California, but I can empathize a bit. Nevertheless, they're very cool animals and I've always loved them.)

Thanksgiving turned out to be a day of several interesting animal sightings. As we walked the shoreline of a small park, we saw a small pod of dolphins, working as a pack herding a school of mullet into the shallows so they could break off one by one and easily snatch up the fish. In the afternoon we moved *Alisios* to the south side of the drawbridge and re-anchored. Here we saw Pelicans fishing within a few tens of meters of our stern. They fly slowly about 5 meters off the water then suddenly stop and plummet down. This isn't a graceful dive – It's more like a belly flop / crash landing where beak and body hit simultaneously. It looks painful and we read that they all eventually go blind then die because of the damage it does to their unprotected eyes over time. A small seagull was covering them closely, so if a pelican caught a fish it had to float with its bill half in the river as it drained the excess water. The gull was literally in (or on) its face hoping to get any escapees or even snatch the meal out of the larger bird's mouth. There wasn't much the pelican could do about this in its compromised position except shield its meal as best it could. Once the excess water drained, the bill came up and the fish went down the hatch.

We settled in for a Thanksgiving dinner that couldn't be beat, listening to Arlo Guthrie's *Alice's Restaurant* then sitting down in the cockpit to a small baked ham with green beans, sausage stuffing, and cranberry sauce while the little waves lapped at our hull.

From Titusville we headed to Vero Beach with a non-noteworthy anchorage in-between. During this timeframe, I officially became "head mechanic". A marine toilet is called a head. They look pretty much like you'd expect, a bit smaller than the home version. Ours is a manual model. It has a pump assembly on one side. There is a valve one turns to enable or disable the water flow and a handle you crank up and down to flush. The waste goes into a holding tank for later pump-out at a marina pump-out station unless you're off-shore, in which case there is a Y-valve that allows you to pump directly overboard. The water valve on ours had become very hard to turn and made a loud squeaking noise when used. We lived with this for a long time. But, it was apparent that we really needed to service it before it broke. The problem was that I didn't know how the valve assembly worked and how to dismantle it wasn't intuitive. With critical items like this, it's best to have some clue what you're doing before you start taking things apart. I realize that goes against one of the most basic rules of "guyness" and apologize for not being more manly. But, falling back to a bucket wasn't going to cut it with Gail. Many cruisers carry hard copy owner's manuals for every piece of equipment they have on board. This gets pretty bulky.

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With *Moondance* I kept a simple running document in which I entered the names of every part I had to work on and where one could find them. This was pretty useful. When we got *Alisios* I decided to notch this concept up several levels. So, I took one of the consulting templates I use at work (I am an IT system architect / engineer by trade) and over the past three years have created the most obsessive-compulsive boat manual anyone has ever laid eyes on. It attempts to document every component on board, including the manufacturer, model, serial number, basic use, and general maintenance instructions. In a number of cases, I've copied the maintenance pages and diagrams for various components (e.g. winches, the roller furler, and windlass) directly from the manufacturer's owners manuals – Why carry the bulky manual when all you care about are the two pages that tell you the maintenance intervals and how to service it. My manual also has an address list at the back that includes every part manufacturer and useful marine company I've come across. I didn't write this all at once. It's a living document that has grown over several years and I update it continuously as I encounter and conquer new challenges. It has proved invaluable. Where possible, I also keep electronic copies of the various real owners manuals which I've downloaded from the web to my laptop. However, Murphy is alive and well and, despite my preparation, of course I had no information on the head apart from the make and model. Therefore, while in Daytona, I contacted Raritan, downloaded the manual, and prepared for battle. I tried to convince Gail that she should take on this task. It was obviously a "pink job". She countered "No noooo. Taking apart the head is soooo obviously a blue job<sup>26</sup>", following up by noting firmly that: "Everything mechanical on board is your responsibility!". There was obviously no reasoning with the woman. So, I became head mechanic. The way to dismantle the valve was non-intuitive, but simple and I even remembered to close the seacock before taking it apart so I didn't create an on-board mini geyser. All it needed was a little silicone grease around some O-rings. The whole repair took me about 5 minutes and only required one paper towel. Of course, when Gail asked me how tough it was, I just shuddered and muttered "taking apart heads – you really don't want to know." (We later made friends with another couple who had the same head and same problem. It was a pleasure to pass on detailed instructions and loan them a dab of silicone.)

Vero Beach is a popular cruising destination and known by cruisers as a place people get "stuck". For this reason, it's been nick-named "Velcro Beach". There is a decent size municipal marina that has a good number of mooring balls that boats can tie up to for \$12 a day. There's a free bus service that takes you into town (which includes a Walmart and Costco) and many people re-provision here before hopping off to the islands. The demand for space is such that they put multiple boats on each mooring ball. We tied up to a boat from Rhode Island named *Pearl* (27° 39.270' N, 80° 22.265' W, ICW mile 951.7). It's somewhat odd tying up to someone else's boat when they're not there. We hung fenders over the gunnels and pulled up to their leeward side. I had two 35-foot lines secured to *Alisios* – one at the bow, the other at the stern and stood center-ship holding both lines as Gail approached slowly. When we were about a foot away, I jumped over and Gail throttled back to a complete stop. Our prop-walk brought the stern slightly over so Gail was able to grab their stern rail. I, therefore, dropped the stern line and secured the bow. Then we set about securing four lines – the bow and stern lines + two "spring" lines that keep us from moving forward and backwards. When two sailboats "raft up", it's important that the masts be staggered so they don't entangle if the boats are rocked back and forth by someone's wake. They returned via their dingy not long after we tied up. He inspected our handiwork and didn't have any complaints. So, here we were. We took our dink into shore, paid for two nights and picked up ice and showers before returning to the boat. On our way

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<sup>26</sup> Pink jobs are "girl" jobs. Blue jobs are "boy" jobs. We often joke about blue vs. pink jobs, particularly when it's something neither of us feels like doing.

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over, we spotted a Hunter 28 of the same vintage as our old boat *Moondance* and chatted with them a bit.

We had planned to go ashore again and walk to the beach / restaurant area. However, just after pulling away from *Alisios* our dink engine cut out. We rowed back to the boat and after tinkering a bit, I discovered the carburetor was leaking copious quantities of gasoline which was pooling inside the engine housing. I was happy it only stalled. We had just had it serviced before leaving, including having the carburetor cleaned. We only started using it a few days ago after hitting Florida. Ugggg! – I hate working on outboards. I understand enough about how they work to usually figure out the problem, but not enough to comfortably fix it. Pretty much anything past a lower unit oil change and basic winterizing is outside my comfort level. (Diesels are simple and non-intimidating. I love our little diesel.) I mopped up the gas pools with a couple paper towels. Since darkness was imminent, and the carburetor would need to dry out, We decided to retire back to *Alisios*. I washed my hands about four times ignoring water restrictions in an attempt to eliminate the gas smell, then poured myself a rum and Coke and decided to deal with it in the morning. Sometimes this is the best thing one can do. I woke up at about 01:00, itching from no-see-ums, and fixed it in my head when I should have been sleeping. There was nothing wrong with the engine itself. We have a very neat 3-gallon external gas tank, which mounts on the transom of the dink, taking up very little room. Unfortunately, it's an early model and the cap does not vent properly. I ended up throwing away the original rubber gasket and it worked fine on the Bay. Before leaving, I had to replace this gasket so we had a fuel-tight seal when storing the tank (didn't want an anchor locker full of gasoline). I had not removed this gasket and in the warm air, the contents of the tank had expanded to generate a lot of pressure. This pressure was literally squirting gas into the carburetor whenever I turned the throttle. That morning, I pulled out the gasket, and the engine worked fine. Quite a relief. The dink is indispensable this trip and the outboard will get a lot of use.

Our timing for Vero wasn't perfect as the shuttle bus didn't run on Sunday. However, we walked to the Beach, timing it perfectly so that we got drenched by a passing rain shower on the way. It's quite an upscale beach and we passed through a real banking / investment sector of town as we approached it. After walking the strip a bit, we found a grill overlooking the water where we sat down for a hamburger and a beer. The ocean was clean and beautiful. Our only complaint about Vero, and it's a big one, is the no-see-ums. They proliferate here like nowhere we'd been before or after. My comments above about the lack of mosquitoes may have hexed us because Saturday night the no-see-ums ate me alive. It was the most miserable night I've spent on board. Oddly, they mostly left Gail alone. Unlike mosquitoes, they come out in the morning too. Its weird feeling a painful itching bite, looking down, and seeing nothing. Maybe 1/4 of the time, if you look very hard, you can spot a little gray speck which smears a tiny bit if you rub it. This is the only way you can tell it was an insect. Sunday they started getting Gail too. We closed up every porthole, since they just climb through the screens, and covered ourselves with Deep Woods Off. But, the damage was already done. We were already itching, my legs were covered with welts, and they were already in the cabin. In spite of this, we probably would have spent an extra day there. We bumped into a number of other cruisers we'd met along the way, including Mark on s/v *Angel* who had given the couple-hour "Doing the ICW" seminar we'd attended before leaving. The showers were clean and strong. They had a big laundry room and it was very sheltered and easy. However, I had told the Smithsonian Marine Station in Fort Pierce that we'd arrive on Monday. So, after dinking in at 06:30 for showers, we cast off of *Pearl* at 07:30.

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### 1.17 Fort Pierce to Miami, 11 December 2007

As we got closer to the Fort Pierce Inlet the water changed color from the dark tannin tinted brownish green of the middle ICW to a much lighter, more pleasant pastel green that one associates with the ocean down here. From Fort Pierce south this cycle repeated itself each time we crossed a major inlet. The Smithsonian Marine Station at Fort Pierce is located on Causeway Island near Fort Pierce Inlet (27° 27.356' N, 80° 18.568' W, ICW mile 965). As a lover of the water, I've been curious about this and the other SI marine research facilities since joining the Institution 15 years ago. I'd never been there, so made arrangements before we left to visit as we passed. Its quite a modest facility that hosts a laboratory building with about 20 staff and researchers, a separate wet lab, storage building, and a 2-bedroom house that a couple donated for use by visiting scientists. They are not on the water, but are across the road from it and have a dock and an easement for access to it. The station has one 32' diesel research vessel (a Florida lobster boat that had originally been outfitted for drug running before being caught and confiscated by the Coast Guard) plus a much smaller trailerable center-console outboard and a couple skiffs. The station is low key – chemistry labs, equipment, and a handful of scientists performing their studies. Much of their research is estuary-related. I gather they are well situated, well respected, and well published. They couldn't have been more gracious and helpful to Gail and me. We were given a tour, met the various researchers, picked up the few items we had mailed there (books, bolts, and a replacement basket for the percolator – quality of coffee aboard *Alisios* much improved), and ran most of the last minute errands we needed to do before our jump off to the Bahamas.

While the Marine Station itself is not open to the public (There isn't much for the public to see.), SI has partnered with the local county government and maintains a small aquarium and estuary exhibit across the street. It includes a coral reef and multiple tanks showing the development of locally captured fish and invertebrates from fry to young adult. When they grow too large, they are released back to the Inlet. Since the exhibit portrays the local ecosystem using locally caught specimens, it is constantly changing, depending on what specimens they are able to gather at any given time. It was extremely well done and quite a tribute to the few passionate staff and handful of volunteers who build and maintain it on a shoe-string budget.

After a day and a half in Fort Pierce, we left Wednesday morning in the rain, something we haven't seen much of since our first few days out, and continued down Indian River. As if to help offset the weather, we had a dolphin playing off our stern side almost close enough to touch. We passed ICW mile 1,000 (which I suppose is a sort of milestone, even if it's an arbitrary one). We were less than a week from Miami where we will leave the U.S. and make our Gulf Stream crossing. The Bahamas was suddenly feeling quite imminent. At the end of the day we anchored in the northeast end of Lake Worth (26° 50.213' N, 80° 03.204' W, ICW mile 1,014). After setting the hook we looked off our port side and noticed our friends on *Moonstruck* anchored 100 meters away. So, after half an hour to make sure the boat was secure, we dinked over and said hi.

Before reaching Miami, we had hoped to stop at Boynton Beach (just south of Palm Beach) to visit Gail's aunt. We had made arrangements ahead of time and had found a city marina / fuel dock we could tie up to during our visit. Unfortunately Gail's aunt has chronic health problems and was having a very bad day. We know she was really looking forward to seeing us. As best laid plans often do, these fell through. We topped off our fuel, water, and ice since we were there ("never miss a chance"), then pulled off and continued down to Boca Raton. Before we

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pulled away from the dock, a pretty turbo-prop sea plane circled, landed in the water near us then took off again about 10 minutes later. We heard some boater tentatively ask the question over the VHF – "What is the right of way regarding sea planes?" This gave us a laugh. (Sea planes are actually at the bottom of the totem pole. Almost everyone has the right of way over them. This said, the few times we've seen them, we give them lots of clearance. Everyone does. They're not something the normal recreational boater encounters often). Anyway, it was something to see. The dockmaster said it belonged to the owner of the Miami Dolphins football team and we could see the helmet logo on its fuselage as it took off.

"Boca Raton" is Spanish for "Rat's Mouth", apparently named for rocks off the coast that the Spaniards felt were like teeth for the ships. I thought this was an interesting bit of trivia as Gail read it to me from the cruising guide. We anchored in Lake Boca Raton – quite a grand name for a basin off the side of the ICW surrounded by condo buildings (26° 20.762' N, 80° 04.404' W, ICW mile 1047.8). Next to us was one of the more curious boat hulls we've ever seen. m/v *Freddy Freddy* had what looked like a small lobster hull with a graceful curved skiff half-hull glassed onto each side just above the waterline. This gave her considerably more breadth at the deck level. She was built up with a conventional fore-cabin followed by a very block-like structure in the center with big square windows, and a small bridge tower in the stern like one sees on small working tugs. We missed the opportunity to speak with them as they retired quite early. However, I hope we bump into them again because I'd gladly trade a couple beers to hear the story of their boat<sup>27</sup>. I called my brother that evening and when I told him where we were, he responded: "So – you're in Rat's Mouth". I responded: "Yes – How do you know this?". (And to think I had thought that Pennsylvania had all of the interesting town names.)

The southern end of the Florida coast is much more built up than the northern end. The portion of the ICW we travelled through from Boca to Fort Lauderdale is known as "The Canyon" because it is lined on both sides by concrete bulkheads and impressive homes squeezed in cheek-to-jowl. Some are magnificent. There are also many many mega-yachts, some almost as large as the homes they are tied up to. This is an area to be avoided on the weekends when the powerboats come out in droves. As they roar on plane back and forth up the waterway, the wakes they send off ricochet back and forth off the concrete bulkheads of the canyon causing any slow, full-displacement hulled<sup>28</sup> boat like ours to rock back and forth and yaw constantly – a very unpleasant ride. We timed our trip to be past it Friday afternoon.

This is also the land of lots of draw-bridges, some less than a mile apart. Thursday we went through 12. Friday we did 14. We were pretty much locked into doing these because of our attempt to meet Gail's aunt in Boynton Beach, though we could have cut out from Fort Lauderdale and gone down the coast to Miami from there. But, now that we were only a day and a half from the end, we decided we wanted to be able to say that we've travelled the entire ICW from Norfolk to Miami. It seemed silly to jump off it for just one day's savings. Having said that, I don't think we'll return this way. A few of the bridges open on request. However, most are on the half hour. Not all are timed well for a boat going 6 knots and we've missed a couple by only 5

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<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, we never did.

<sup>28</sup> A full-displacement hull sits completely in the water and is limited in speed by its length and the weight of the water it is pushing in front of it (an over-simplification). Most sailboats and large ships have full-displacement hulls. This is in contrast to a planning hull which rises out of the water and skims on top of it. Many small power boats have planning hulls. It takes a lot of power to lift a boat out of the water and keep it skimming across the surface, which is one of the reasons these boats burn a lot of fuel and we don't. When they come out of the water or when the hull is still partially submerged they throw off large wakes.

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minutes. According to the owner's manual, our engine can be run at a cruising speed of 3,400 RPM or lower. This is an upper limit and we generally run her at 2,500 or 2,600 RPM. However, when racing for bridges, we've sometimes gone as high as 3,200. Our engine is water-cooled – outside water is pulled through a "thru-hull", past a heat exchanger on the engine, and out the exhaust. The water in this portion of the Florida ICW is 84 – 88 degrees Fahrenheit (28.8 – 31.1 degrees Celsius), which is pretty warm. We ended up setting off the engine heat alarm on two separate occasions on different days rushing for bridges. Immediately down-throttling allowed the heat exchanger to catch up and we were fine. However, we've had to recognize that in these warm waters, we can't push the engine too hard.

At this point, we got to verify the height of our mast – something, I suppose we had to do sometime. When we got the boat, I had asked the builder how high the mast stood over the water. They said they couldn't tell me, that every boat was slightly different, and advised me to measure it. They gave us the length of the extrusion which goes through the deck to keel, part of which is under water. We estimated the height of antennas, etc. on top of it and Gail went to the top and we dropped a tape measure down. But that just gave us the length to the cabin roof. Where exactly the water line is inside the cabin isn't obvious. We measured the distance from the cabin roof to the waterline as best as we could, but this is difficult to do with accuracy since one first steps down to the deck then to the water. After selecting our "best" figures and doing the math, our conservative estimate was that the top of *Alisios* stood 52 1/2 feet (16 meters) above the water (probably a bit less). This is a critical feature to know when travelling under bridges, but had never been tested. In a bad case one has misjudged by a foot and strips a thousand dollars of anemometer transducers, lights, and antennas off the top. In a catastrophic case, one has misjudged by a couple feet and rams the top of the mast against a bridge. It acts as a lever with the other end rooted in the hull and the cabin roof acting as a fulcrum (which it is not structurally able to do). The impact causes the mast to either break (sending hundreds of pounds and thousands of dollars of rigging raining down on the deck and people below) or rip the boat apart. We had two 56 foot bridges on this trip and went under the first Friday. It was somewhat nerve-racking. All of the above went through our minds. However, we had to trust our earlier work. We took it slow and sure enough, she cleared with a couple feet to spare, though from deck-level it looked like inches. We now knew that *Alisios* was truly capable of travelling under 55 foot bridges.

We also encountered one drawbridge that had broken down and got to turn circles for an hour in front of it while the engineers worked to repair it<sup>29</sup>. Even then, we went through on a one span lift on their second attempt to raise it. (They had radioed us to tell us they'd attempt to lift only one side and asked whether we could get through that way. We responded "yes". When they tried, the span went up about 1 meter and stopped dead. I was tempted to call back and say "I'm not sure we'll fit", but thought better of it. Humor isn't always well received in times of stress. They lowered it, let the traffic through, and tried again 15 minutes later with the other side with greater success.)

At 14:20 we pulled into a pretty basin between Florida International University and Oleta River State Recreation Area / Park near Baker's Haulover Inlet, about 10 miles north of Miami (25° 54.527' N, 80° 08.153' W, ICW mile 1079.7). The water was pastel green and warm so we went swimming. Gail and I both donned masks and checked the prop, zinc, keel, and transducers. Everything was in order except for three and a half barnacles on the prop. (one was very small),

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<sup>29</sup> This is not as infrequent an occurrence as one would expect.

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which I knocked off with a scraper. Our original intent had been to continue on to Miami Saturday. However, this seemed silly as the weather reports showed northerly winds through at least Thursday and we were unlikely to find as nice a place as where we were. So, we stayed in the basin, dug out our fins and snorkels, and spent the weekend playing in the water with the local weekend boaters and park visitors. In times like this, one picks one task a day then relaxes.

As noted, we carry an inflatable zodiac-type dingy ("dink") which is used to explore shallow creeks, and get us back and forth to shore. A dinghy is a cruiser's family car and an indispensable companion. Ours is named *Moondink* as she was originally *Moondance's* tender. (It's unlucky to change a boat's name, and why would we anyway?). *Moondink* is an Avon Rover 2.8 [meter] (9.2 foot) soft-bottom inflatable made in Llanelli, Wales. The Welsh connection makes me happy and she's a quality little craft. The advantages of this type of dink are that it is light (about 65 pounds), can be rolled up and easily transported, and is very buoyant. The downside is that with no real keel she rows poorly and has a lot of side-slip through the water. Sand and gravel beaches can also be rough on the fabric bottom, though it's made of pretty strong stuff. Dink's of this type are made to be powered by an outboard. We have a 5-hp Yamaha 2-stroke which has both a small internal gasoline tank and a port to plug in an external tank. The external tank gives it a range of many hours and miles if conditions are reasonable. With that intro – Saturday I finally got around to splicing a clew onto to our new dink anchor rode. *Moondink's* anchor has heretofore been a 2 pound collapsible grapnel that we clipped to the 10 foot painter<sup>30</sup> when needed. While this has been effective in the shallow, sheltered waters we've travelled to-date, it wasn't going to cut it in the Bahamas where depths of 10 – 15 feet are not uncommon and there is a couple knot tidal flow that one can not row against. We needed a "real" anchor in case the engine failed. (Getting swept out to sea in a 9 foot inflatable with no food, water, or method of communication is another one of those sailor nightmares.) So, we bought 50 feet of 3/8" 3-strand nylon line and 3 feet of chain from the hardware store and a stainless steel thimble<sup>31</sup> and a small Danforth anchor from West Marine. For the past 2 months the line and the thimble have been waiting to greet each other. Work with line (never call it "rope" on board a boat) is called "marlinspike". We're both quite handy with our knots. Splicing 3-strand line is fairly straightforward. However, it's not something one does very often. Actually we've only had to splice line twice – once in 1997 when we took the 2-month USCG Auxiliary boating course and again a year ago for our captain's licenses. Splicing is something we have to re-learn when we do it. We're proud when we produce something relatively decent and know to stop when we're ahead. So, I pulled out my knot book, whipping twine, and tape, and carefully walked through the directions. The third strand always gets you as it starts differently and how it follows the others isn't initially clear (at least until you've done it a few times). The line I had was also very slippery and had some spurs on the burnt ends of the three strands. These kept snagging the fibers as I pulled them through and on my first attempt I ended up with a bit of a frayed mess. So, I cut it off, re-grouped, covered the ends with a bit of electric tape, and tried again. I got a snug grip on the thimble and the splice came out looking reasonably clean, though not perfect. Stop while you're ahead – I finished everything off with some whipping twine closing it up as neatly as I could.

More dink work the following day. Boats that remain in the water develop growth on their hulls. This includes "hard growth" such as barnacles and "soft growth" such as algae and seaweed.

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<sup>30</sup> A painter is a 10 – 15 foot light line connected to the bow of a small boat (think canoes) that is used to secure the boat temporarily to a docks, etc. so it doesn't float off.

<sup>31</sup> A metal half-sided loop that is spliced into the end of the line to protect it from chafe when shackled.

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To prevent this, we have painted the underwater portion of *Alisios*' hull with anti-fouling paint. Cupric oxide (copper) dissolved in the paint prevents any organisms from attaching to the hull. It's not practical to do this with an inflatable dink. So, one discourages growth by pulling it out of the water whenever possible and washing it when you can. *Alisios* is not a big boat. She doesn't have dinghy davits off the stern, and hauling a 9 foot dink onto the bow every day isn't a workable solution. So, we rigged a lifting harness and used one of the spare halyards to pull *Moondink* out of the water, engine and all. Once out of the water, she remains suspended at the side of *Alisios*, easy to deploy. Before leaving I had added a couple stainless steel eye bolts to her transom and purchased some line and shackles in preparation for rigging the lift. After a couple tries we got what we considered an acceptable balance, though I wished I had added a chafe guard to the bow when we had done so for the towing harness.

Tuesday morning we pulled anchor at 07:00 and finished our journey to Miami. We passed into Biscayne Bay and travelled as far south as the Venetian Causeway bridge before turning east, then up the west side of Miami Beach where we anchored in a protected basin between Mount Sinai Medical Center and Sunset Lake at 09:25 (25° 48.481' N, 80° 08.492' W, ICW mile 1,088)<sup>32</sup>. It was a non-monumentous close to our trip down the ICW which has taken us 1 day short of 6 weeks. Development along Biscayne Bay is older and the homes lining the water aren't as impressive as those in Fort Lauderdale. Having said that, we did manage to anchor in front of a good sized walled compound with a mega-yacht named *Utopia III* tied to the bulkhead. This was the spot where a few good friends had spent much of the winter a few years before. The next day we pulled into the even more protected Sunset Lake basin about half a mile away (25° 47.962' N, 80° 08.439' W).

Miami Beach is on a barrier island. There are a couple canals that lace through the island and close to the beach. We initially explored these at great length by dink, however, soon realized that one saw more and covered much more area on foot. The trick is finding a place to tie up. There aren't any nice cruiser-friendly dingy docks. One basically has to find a bulkhead that (1) isn't private property and (2) has something you can both tie off and padlock to. (It was strongly recommended that we padlock our dink in Lake Worth, Miami, and Nassau – any big city.) On our first go we found one under some trees abutting a parking lot. The next day and thereafter we tied up behind a dry cleaners our friends had told us about and asked permission from one of the employees. They had a water tap in the back and every couple days we'd fill a 5-gallon jerry can and bring it back to the boat to top off our tanks. This location was convenient in that we were within walking distance from both Miami Beach and South Beach and close to two supermarkets. Over the next several days we walked the Lincoln Road Pedestrian Mall, along the ocean walk of both beaches, the Art Deco district, and some of the more mundane areas as well. Miami is an interesting clash of cultures – very heavily Latin (English is the second language, if it is spoken) with a notable concentration of orthodox Jews. There are lots of cafes, restaurants, and shops and great people watching. California may have Silicon Valley, but Miami is Silicon Beach. Almost everyone on South Beach is young and beautiful. We walked the length of it one day and Gail counted only 5 women in one-piece bathing suits (though occasionally some skip the top portion of their two-piece suits). The water was warm and shallow and the life guards over-zealous. I guess there can be a serious under-tow. Anyway, they whistled frantically anytime someone got in past their belly button. While playing in the waves, I was able to be a hero to Gail. A good pair of sunglasses are necessary down here and are worn constantly. We often hang out in the water with our sunglasses on. Gail decided to dip

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<sup>32</sup> Friends of ours had spent the winter anchored here several years ago.



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her head and dived through the waves, holding her glasses. Still, they came off and were lost in the turbid surf. I watched this happen, immediately noted her position, and we both started an urgent, but doubtful search. After about 5 minutes, just as she had given up, I found them.

We had a couple chores left to accomplish, most notably changing oil, fuel filters, getting a haircut, doing laundry and finding block ice. The latter proved very difficult. *Alisios* does not have refrigeration and at this point, we'd successfully maintained our ice box for six weeks. There's a trick to this – one needs to establish a core of block ice. Around this one packs meats and other things that must be on the ice and not just cool. Then one adds cube ice to fill the voids. As long as it is topped up with cube ice and there isn't a lot of air circulation, the core will last for weeks as ours had. However, the core does slowly melt and there comes a point where you must add more block ice to maintain everything. We were at that point. But, the days of iceboxes are long over, block ice isn't easy to find nowadays, and cube ice doesn't last, even if it's kept in the bags. We took a two mile dink ride to a marina we were told would have some and inquired at every store and gas station that looked remotely promising – no luck. We threw in a few bags to cover us until we eventually found blocks at a distant marina a few days later. Sometime in the Bahamas, we'll let the ice box die and learn to like warm drinks.

Miami and its environs is not a particularly cruiser-friendly area and we now understand why so many people rush to get their tasks done at Vero Beach. Almost every inch of waterfront is covered with private housing and the homeowners would like to make the water their own private reserve. Some really don't like boats anchoring in their back yard, even though they chose to buy houses on public waterways. South Florida is many people's destination. However, the anchorages are fewer and, for the most part, are not as good quality as those further north. Transient slips are much more expensive and also fewer. In order to discourage squatters, particularly encampments of derelict boats, Miami and some of the Keys have enacted sweeping local restrictions on both the number of days you can anchor and where you can anchor. These local laws are generally drafted by non-boaters with skewed information at their disposal. They affect everyone and some are quite draconian. Sometimes they conflict with time-honored rights of mariners and don't have a legal basis. But, how many cruisers have the time and/or resources to launch a court challenge? We'd heard rumors of some harassment, but had no personal problems. On Wednesday, the day after our arrival, while on our 2-mile fruitless ice run in the dink, we spotted a police boat and asked about ice, laundry, etc. They were very friendly and helpful, but also gave us an official "Police Notice" (triplicate form with case # and everything) that we were only allowed to anchor in Miami waters for 7 days and after that point they could give us official notice to vacate within 48 hours. I was asked to countersign this. In retrospect, I shouldn't have because it affirmed that we were a "live-aboard vessel or vessel not engaged in navigation". That wasn't true on either count<sup>33</sup>. But, they pressed the form on as if it were nothing but a formality. I gather people sometimes freak out when they receive this notice because there is no guarantee that a suitable weather window will open within 7 days and there is an implication that you can be forced into a situation where there is true risk to life and property. The police went to great lengths to explain that they had no intentions of forcing us to move on day 8 – that the law was meant to stop the development of long-term encampments and waiting for a weather window was a legitimate reason for staying longer (as were health problems, family emergencies, and the like). If we were there two weeks or even three weeks it would be fine. However, if several sets of boats cycled through and we remained

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<sup>33</sup> From our standpoint, we were not a live-aboard vessel because we own a house and were on a cruise vacation with a planned start and finish. We were in transit and certainly were a vessel involved navigation – a U.S. documented vessel on route from Deale, Maryland to the Bahamas, passing through Miami en route.

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## Significant Deviation

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week in, week out, we could be asked to move on. We try to go into these situations, non-confrontationally, assuming that both parties will act reasonably. We did end up having to stay past our allotted time and both times we encountered the police boat they were as friendly and helpful as possible. Our take on the situation is that the law was designed to clear out a number of derelict boats and was successful, but it's a double-edged sword for the police. The idea of forcing boaters from a sheltered harbor conflicts with established maritime law (and reason). The police don't want to harass transient cruisers quietly minding their own business. But, at the same time, they have to put up with repeated nuisance complaints from a handful of rich, sometimes influential, waterfront residents with overly developed feelings of entitlement. The notice they hand out is a "CYA" document that gives them something to show that they've spoken to the boaters, most of whom have plans to move on in a reasonable time frame. Finally, we had heard third-hand both that the ordinance had been declared unlawful by the courts and that it was under appeal. This seems likely, though we don't know which exactly is the case. We gathered that the police would only try to enforce it in extreme situations.

We're neither big city nor public beach people and after about 4 days we were ready to continue on to the Bahamas. But, we needed a weather window. The prevailing winds at this time were from the north (which we can't cross the Gulf Stream in) occasionally shifting to the east (which would be on our nose for the crossing – doable if light, but not optimal). A weather system settled in with East / North-East winds of 15 – 20 knots and waves of 6 – 7 feet offshore and it just stayed that way for a week, driven in part by Tropical Depression Olga. Sunday we rented a car for the day and visited Gail's aunt whom we had been unable to see earlier, finding block ice on the way back. After that we basically waited – monitored the weather daily, tried to do a task a day, read, and went into town or to the beach. We made sure our water tanks were kept topped off so we could leave with quick notice and waited for a wind shift to the south or west. This was the end of the U.S. leg of our trip, the end of cell phone access, and the end of regular, relatively easy Internet connectivity. With luck, we figured, our next posting would be from the Bahamas. It turns out we were wrong.

### 1.18 First Attempt at Crossing the Gulf Stream, 15 December 2007

The weather situation wasn't wonderful. In one of those ironic twists that are all too common in retrospect, the winds were perfect for a Gulf Stream transit for much of the two weeks prior to our arrival in Miami – big, long, perfect windows of light winds from the SW and small waves. However, once we got to Miami, the winds picked up and pinned us there. On the bright side, the temperature was close to 10 degrees warmer than seasonal – mid 80s and good for the beach. One of the houses by our anchorage had an unsecured, surprisingly powerful Wi-Fi AP that illuminated the south end of the Sunset Lake basin where we were anchored. As the week progressed, we spent a good deal of time checking NOAA weather, Acuweather.com, Weather.com, MyForecast.com, and about anywhere else we could think of to get information. The NOAA site echoes what they report on the VHF (maybe it's vice versa), though there are more details if one digs around. For the most part the others agreed with NOAA, but some gave tantalizing hints of changes ahead. A system of moderate to strong (15 – 20 knot) easterly winds was stuck over us for a week. These kicked up some uncomfortable, though not terrifying, seas offshore that weren't what we wanted to make our first Gulf Stream crossing in. Eventually this was driven out from the NW by a system that had brought huge ice storms to the Western U.S. and from the SE by the remnants of Tropical Depression Olga, but the winds never really subsided and NOAA consistently under-reported them. Friday morning we had the following forecast. It included a short shift in direction and 5 knot slackening in speed. We had been

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tracking this change for the better part of a week. We were getting somewhat stir-crazy and made the decision to move *Alisios* closer to Government Cut and prepare for a Friday night / Saturday 2:30 am departure. This is what a NOAA forecast (our NOAA forecast) looks and sounds like:

### SYNOPSIS

A TROUGH WILL MOVE SLOWLY WEST ACROSS THE AREA TODAY AND TONIGHT WITH WEAK HIGH PRESSURE OVER THE AREA SATURDAY AND SATURDAY NIGHT. A COLD FRONT WILL MOVE INTO SOUTH FLORIDA AND THE ADJACENT WATERS EARLY SUNDAY AND WILL MOVE SOUTHEAST OF AREA WATERS EARLY SUNDAY NIGHT. HIGH PRESSURE WILL BUILD IN FROM THE NORTHWEST BEHIND THE FRONT ON MONDAY.

### GULF STREAM HAZARDS

SEAS TO 6 FEET SATURDAY NIGHT.

THE APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF THE WEST WALL OF THE GULF STREAM AS OF DEC 14, 2007 AT 1200 UTC...

4 NAUTICAL MILES SOUTH SOUTHEAST OF FOWEY ROCKS.  
12 NAUTICAL MILES EAST NORTHEAST OF PORT EVERGLADES.  
9 NAUTICAL MILES EAST OF LAKE WORTH.

THIS DATA COURTESY OF THE NAVAL OCEANOGRAPHIC OFFICE.

AMZ651-671-141530-/O.ROU.KMFL.MA.F.0000.000000T0000Z-000000T0000Z/ COASTAL WATERS FROM DEERFIELD BEACH TO OCEAN REEF, FL OUT 20 NM- WATERS FROM DEERFIELD BEACH TO OCEAN REEF, FL EXTENDING FROM 20 NM TO THE TERRITORIAL WATERS OF THE BAHAMAS- 413 AM EST FRI DEC 14 2007

### TODAY

SOUTHEAST WINDS 10 TO 15 KNOTS. NEAR SHORE...SEAS 2 TO 4 FEET.  
INTRACOASTAL WATERS A MODERATE CHOP. SHOWERS LIKELY.

### TONIGHT

**SOUTHEAST WINDS 10 TO 15 KNOTS. SEAS 2 TO 4 FEET. INTRACOASTAL WATERS A MODERATE CHOP. SCATTERED SHOWERS.**

### SATURDAY

**SOUTHEAST WINDS 15 TO 20 KNOTS. SEAS 2 TO 4 FEET NEAR SHORE AND UP TO 5 FEET IN THE GULF STREAM. INTRACOASTAL WATERS CHOPPY IN EXPOSED AREAS. SCATTERED SHOWERS.**

### SATURDAY NIGHT

SOUTH WINDS 15 TO 20 KNOTS. SEAS 2 TO 4 FEET NEAR SHORE AND UP TO 4 TO 6 FEET WELL OFFSHORE. INTRACOASTAL WATERS A MODERATE CHOP. SCATTERED SHOWERS AND ISOLATED THUNDERSTORMS.

### SUNDAY

## Significant Deviation

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SOUTHWEST WINDS 15 TO 20 KNOTS. SEAS 2 TO 3 FEET NEAR SHORE AND UP TO 4 TO 6 FEET WELL OFFSHORE. INTRACOASTAL WATERS A MODERATE CHOP. ISOLATED THUNDERSTORMS IN THE MORNING. SHOWERS LIKELY THROUGH THE DAY.

### SUNDAY NIGHT

NORTH WINDS 15 TO 20 KNOTS. SEAS 2 TO 4 FEET NEAR SHORE AND UP TO 5 TO 7 FEET IN THE GULF STREAM. INTRACOASTAL WATERS A MODERATE CHOP. SLIGHT CHANCE OF SHOWERS IN THE EVENING.

### MONDAY

NORTH WINDS AROUND 20 KNOTS. SEAS 3 TO 5 FEET NEAR SHORE AND UP TO 6 TO 8 FEET IN THE GULF STREAM. NORTH SWELL 2 FEET. INTRACOASTAL WATERS A MODERATE CHOP.

### MONDAY NIGHT

NORTHEAST WINDS 15 TO 20 KNOTS. SEAS 3 TO 5 FEET NEAR SHORE AND UP TO 6 TO 8 FEET IN THE GULF STREAM. INTRACOASTAL WATERS CHOPPY IN EXPOSED AREAS.

### TUESDAY

NORTHEAST WINDS 15 TO 20 KNOTS. SEAS 2 TO 4 FEET NEAR SHORE AND UP TO 5 TO 7 FEET IN THE GULF STREAM. INTRACOASTAL WATERS CHOPPY IN EXPOSED AREAS.

The O-dark-thirty timing of our departure was designed to have us arriving in Bimini on Saturday somewhere around 13:00. This is somewhat of a guessing game, since you don't know what speed you'll end up making. We assumed 50 miles at 5 knots + time to get to and out the Cut. We dinked to shore a final time to drop off our trash, pick up a couple more bags of ice, and fill a 5-gallon jerry can with water then pulled anchor at 10:40. As we motored around to the other side of the Venetian Causeway (our final ICW drawbridge), we decided to check out Government Cut (the channel from Biscayne Bay into the Atlantic Ocean) in order to get a feel for it in daylight. This turned out to be a good thing. All of the big cruise boats that leave from Miami (Norwegian, Royal Caribbean, Carnival, etc.) dock along the main channel and it had been designated a "security zone" – recreational boat traffic was banned when any cruise ships were at dock. We were met by what we thought was a Coast Guard run-about (bright orange, center console, rigid inflatable boat with flashing lights), but which turned out to be owned by Royal Caribbean. The result was the same – we were warned off. It seemed odd that the main Miami channel would be closed, so we contacted the Coast Guard on VHF. It truly was and we were told that we would have to use the channel south of Dodge Island. This wasn't a major problem, but it would have been stressful to discover at 3:00 am. We were glad to get it sorted out in daylight. We motored part way up this second channel to become a little familiar with it, then turned back and found an anchorage on the south side of the causeway in which to wait.

When going off-shore at night one takes extra precautions since falling overboard often means death. We are both strong swimmers, our cockpit is quite enclosed, and we normally do not wear life vests. However, off-shore we don inflatable vests with a built in harness and 2 big stainless steel D-rings in front. The vest is activated by a CO2 cartridge. However, the harness is the key component. It is clipped by a tether to straps of nylon webbing<sup>34</sup> that we rig across the deck and cockpit. These are called "jacklines". We have two sets – the primary jacklines run in a

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<sup>34</sup> Nylon webbing is preferable to a line or cable because it lies flat and doesn't roll under foot when it is stepped on.

## Significant Deviation

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"V" from the bow down each side of the boat to cleats just outside the cockpit. Inside the cockpit we run a second jackline in the shape of another V across the floor. *Alisios'* cockpit is configured with built-in eyes for this purpose. Our individual tethers have two lines (also nylon webbing) with shackles at the ends – one is 6 feet long and is the one we use when in the cockpit. The second is 3 feet long, which is useful (and much more comforting) when going forward on a rolling deck. We carry personal strobes and there is a horseshoe buoy with a big strobe by the cockpit for man overboard emergencies. However, it's extremely difficult to see anything floating in the water amongst 4 – 5 foot waves unless you're right next to it. The rule to follow, particularly at night, is: "Stay on board!".

We pulled anchor at 02:40 and motored to the cut. The forecasted 10 – 15 knot winds were steady 20 – 25 and we fought ourselves past the jetty through 5 foot seas, dead on our nose. Every 7th or so wave was an 8+ footer. It's a strange feeling encountering these big waves head on at night because you can't see them coming. You just look forward and suddenly see this wall of water towering over the dingy on the bow and far up the forestay. One's gut reaction the first few times is "Holly sh\_t!". Then the boat rises up it and goes crash, sliding askew down the other side. Sometimes the bow cuts through them and rivulets of salt water flow back along the gunnels and spray shoots past either side of the dodger. It isn't particularly frightening. *Alisios* is quite capable of handling these and worse. It's just a feeling of surprise and awe and very much a roller coaster ride, only unlike a roller coaster, the boat also swings like a pendulum. (Luckily, neither of us is prone to seasickness.) It took us an hour and a half to get past the channel markers and into the open ocean. Here we dodged a couple cruise ships as we attempted to take a heading towards Bimini with some southerly compensation for the Gulf Stream. The 8-footers mostly died away once we got a mile or so out, but 5-footers, the wind, and the current remained. We were only making 1 – 1.5 knots forward progress, though both we and the boat were taking it well. At 05:15 we were still only 3 miles off the coast and Miami's condos still loomed clearly behind us. We realized that even if we picked up speed dramatically, we couldn't make Bimini before Saturday night. We had to arrive in daylight in order to see the coral heads and the channel to Alice Town and the winds and seas were to worsen over the next couple days. With that realization, we decided to call our attempt a "learning experience" and turned around. With our back to the wind and current, our speed jumped from 1.5 to almost 8 knots and we were able to keep up a steady 4.5 – 5 knots on our reverse track. With the waves behind us, *Alisios* lifted up and surfed down the slopes, her stern yawing widely as Gail gripped the wheel, steering us in. I started humming the Beach Boy's *Surfing U.S.A.*, which made me smile at first, but then I couldn't get the song out of my head. (I was kind and didn't pass it along to Gail ;-). Our return was much faster than our exit, though we had to time a couple arriving cruise ships and keep out of their way in the channel. (If you're going to meet big ships at sea, cruise ships are the best – They're lit up like Christmas trees. You can't miss em.) With the rest of the week's forecast shrouded in rain showers and high winds, we decided to continue north past Miami Beach and return to the tranquil anchorage we had stayed at earlier between FIU and Oleta River State Park. We dropped our anchor at 08:25 in 20 knots of E / SE wind, both a bit bummed because it will be a good week before we can try again. We also "found the bottom" on our way into the basin which put us in a foul state of mind. It wasn't soft mud or sand. Instead, it was corals scrub that made a sickening grinding sound against the bottom of the keel as we ran aground and halted. After finding the deeper water and anchoring, I dove the keel and found that a chunk of fiberglass the size of a couple quarters had been ground off the bottom front of the keel. As damage goes, this was extremely minor and easily repairable. But it still hurt us a bit.

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In retrospect, our experience wasn't surprising. We were feeling a bit trapped in Miami and hadn't waited for a proper weather window. The forecast really only showed a short shift in wind direction as the front clocked around to be replaced by another. We took a small forecasted easing off of wind speed and read into it what we wanted to see. The winds themselves never died down and observation showed that they were actually increasing as our day approached, with the forecast (sometimes) catching up with reality when it was updated and re-posted. We also unrealistically assumed we'd be able to make 5 knots speed even though we knew about the seas ahead of time and have never made that type of speed going headlong into seas of this type. We had underestimated the current through the cut and near shore and should have researched it better. We were right to call it. By Sunday night / a day and a half later, the seas in the Gulf Stream had increased to 13 feet as the front worked its way through.

### 1.19 Hurry Up And Wait, 19 December 2007

Time has changed for us. We've seen no newspapers or television since departing seven and a half weeks ago. Every now and then we'll ask friends and relatives what was happening in the world or skim through Google news when we have internet connectivity. In almost two months, we haven't missed much. If it weren't for the daily logging, we'd lose track of the day of the week. We're just a week away from Christmas, but this too has little impact or meaning to us and we mostly forget about it. We worried about getting some presents mailed to our little nephews and nieces, but accomplished that a couple weeks ago. We have nothing for each other, apart from this trip. Trivial things that concerned and stressed us in the past don't. While some new ones creep in and try to take their place, we're much more relaxed. I recently read a book by a man who took a small power boat across America, coast to coast, via rivers (porting it when necessary)<sup>35</sup>. He had a sign in the back of his cabin that said "Avoid Irritation". If I had read the book before we left, I'd have made up a similar sign for *Alisios*. It seems a good mantra.

Having real time with each other during the day is wonderful. Americans supposedly enjoy the highest standard of living in the world. However, we give up a lot in terms of basic pleasures, including time with our loved ones, in order to consume at the level we do. We rush off to work at 6 or 7 am returning at 6 pm and try to squeeze a personal life in the few remaining hours and the weekend during which time we must also attend to life's daily chores. We are driven to accumulate so we can discard. Living on a boat one is extremely conscious about both clutter and trash. The amount of packaging we are forced to go through both amazes and sickens Gail and me. Everything we buy is encased in cardboard and plastic packaging, sometimes multiple layers, then sold to us in another plastic bag. A captain I met a few years ago referred to this as "America's love affair with plastic".

Litter is everywhere along the beaches and walkways here. People seem to have become desensitized to it. Each day I try to walk the little beach by our anchorage and pick up any trash. I had found myself initially walking by the plastic wrappers and bottle caps saying to myself "how horrible", but not doing anything about it (after all, the trashcan was 100 feet away). It occurred to me how typical this is. But, one doesn't want ones quiet walks on the beach to turn into trash runs. So, I try to compromise and do one good back and forth pass a day. After that my time is my own. The little beach is pretty clean overall. My actions have only a tiny immediate impact. A clean beach (or woods, or wherever) seems to encourage people to keep it that way. The

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<sup>35</sup> *River Horse* by William Least Heat-Moon

## Significant Deviation

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park also owns a little island off the entrance to the basin. We took the dinghy over to it. It was covered in garbage and I do mean COVERED! In my opinion, part of this was the park's doing. They have signs saying take your trash out. But, have placed dozens of light plastic garbage cans around of the type you'd have at home. These don't seem to get emptied daily. They get over-filled and blow over because they're not fixed to the ground. The trash scatters. With the little island covered in trash, what incentive do people have not to take the easy route and add a little more. When I was a boy there was a wonderful anti-litter advertizing campaign in which an American Indian in full dress and on horseback surveyed a landscape filled with trash. It ended with a close-up of the Indian's face showing a tear trailing from his eye. It was a very powerful image and helped change a generation's attitude towards littering. However, that was 30 years ago and the message seems to have faded. I wish they'd replay that ad.

We had some excitement on Monday. Gail removed some dishes from below the galley sink to discover large puddles of fresh water covering the cabinet sole. Water inside a boat is bad. Salt water means there is a leak at a thru-hull (or, in extreme cases, a rupture in the hull). Fresh water means there is a leak in the fresh water system. Potable water is a commodity one does not take for granted when living at anchor on a small boat. *Alisios* has two water tanks that hold a total of 100 gallons. She has a 12 volt electric fresh water pump that provides pressurized water on demand, just as one has in a house (except we only have hot water if the engine has been run or we're plugged into shore power). In case this fails, there is a small foot pump at the base of the galley sink. These two water tanks have to cover all of our drinking, cooking, showering, and cleaning needs while we are out. The length of time we can leave civilization is determined by our water consumption. When you're not tied up to a marina dock, water must be ported to the boat. For this purpose we carry two heavy duty plastic 5 gallon (20 liter) blue<sup>36</sup> jerry cans. Finding easily accessible potable water isn't always simple. A full 5 gallon jerry can weighs over 40 pounds and they aren't a joy to lug long distances. So, we always try to keep the tanks topped off. Our understanding is that most of the water in the Bahamas is either rainwater gathered in cisterns or reverse-osmosis (R/O) and that it may cost up to 50 cents a gallon<sup>37</sup>. With both the present and future in mind, we naturally ration water and have found it easy to live within about 2 gallons per person per day. Anyway, unexplained puddles of fresh water are very bad because they indicate a leak in the boat's fresh water system. A leak can potentially drain one of the tanks and depending on where you are when this happens, and whether you've already used the other tank, this can be really bad. We sponged up the pools and felt around with dry paper towels for the leak, but to no avail. Finally, we turned off the pressure and went to shore. When we returned the puddles had returned, driven by latent pressure in the system. We turned the pump back on and this time were able to see the source clearly – the compression fitting by the manual foot pump had gotten wacked by the heavy Pyrex baking dishes we store down there during our roller-coaster trip out to sea and back. The leak was small at first, but in the process of mopping around it with the sponge, we had worked it some, and at the second inspection there was a noticeable stream gurgling from the fitting when the pressure was turned on. Luckily there were no split hoses. I dismantled the fitting, re-aligned everything, and put it back together. We mopped everything up, left the door open so it could dry completely, then checked it periodically with a square of toilet paper that would show even a small drop of new water. Everything seemed to be back to normal – or so we thought at the time.

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<sup>36</sup> Jerry cans are color coded – Gasoline cans are red, diesel yellow, water light blue, kerosene dark blue.

<sup>37</sup> The water we found for sale in the Exumas was mostly R/O, presumably since they get little rain. We found both R/O and cistern water in the Abacos. The cost figure is accurate. Most of the time the cost was 30 cents a gallon.

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## Significant Deviation

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The next day we noticed that the pump still cycled for a second or so periodically. This indicates a drip somewhere, usually at a hose connection. We have a somewhat complex water system so there are many individual pieces of hosing, each snugged over a male fitting of a valve, strainer, or piece of equipment and secured with a hose clamp. The sum of all of these connections must be completely air / water-tight and remain that way under pressure and movement. After a little tracing we finally found a drip at the end of a 4 inch hose that connects the pump to an accumulator tank (behind the engine, under the cockpit). This spot has leaked before. A crank on the hose clamp with a screwdriver eliminated the drip. Our friend Wayne, who has a sister boat to *Alisios* is firm in only pressurizing his water system when he needs to use it. While I thought this was probably a good idea, we were never devout in our practice of it. Now we've "found religion".

Another bit of excitement for the day was an un-attended power cruiser that dragged its anchor. A number of people have left their boats in this anchorage while off doing other things – Why pay for a slip or a mooring when you can just leave your boat in a safe anchorage? We noticed several of these when we were here a couple weeks ago. They have not moved, though someone did come to visit one of them. A large amount of growth on the anchor line is another, more obvious, sign that a boat has been in place for a long time. Generally these boats are a bit run down. The canvas may be torn and they may not have sails or other normal on-deck equipment you'd see on a boat that's used. One of these was a somewhat beat up cabin cruiser (powerboat), about 34 feet long, named *The Boy's Toy* from New Bern, North Carolina. It stayed put for the couple weeks between our prior and current visit here. However, it dragged anchor in Sunday night's and Monday morning's winds and wound up resting against the rip-rap<sup>38</sup> of the peninsula of the park. If left there, she would slowly beat against the rocks until she was damaged and maybe sunk. We saw her there from shore and soon afterwards some good Samaritans from three French Canadian boats came out in their dinks and decided to rescue her. They were able to move her off the rocks with their dinghies, and one got aboard. The pilot house doors were open, and they even found the keys, but neither engine would start. They eventually towed her off the point and reset the same anchors in the middle of the basin (in front of us!). This is an awkward situation. The park isn't responsible for these boats and would probably prefer they weren't there. Does one call the Coast Guard, the local police or DNR? I don't know whether any of them have a role or responsibility here. As it was, the 3 sailors saved the guys boat. However, it was also left so that if it dragged again in the evening's north winds, we would be in its path. Would they be responsible if this happened because they did a good deed? (I felt guilty even thinking this. I hate what the lawyers have done to the U.S.) – An interesting dilemma. We spoke to the Canadians. They felt she got a good set and had they had let out about 40 feet line (scope) for his anchor. We ended up just keeping a nervous eye on her to the extent we could.

The final bit of excitement was going on at the same time the boat was dragging and continued through the following day. There was a large camera crew on the beach shooting a Palmolive commercial. They had a young woman in a white bikini wading in and out of the water repeatedly as they took different shots. One of the crew said they were going to edit the results, replacing the water with Palmolive detergent and turning the beach into desert – something about Palmolive being so moisturizing it could aquafy the desert. They thought it would show in South America and Europe. We felt a bit sorry for the woman. It had been sunny and in the 80s for the past couple weeks. But, they chose an overcast day with a high in the 60s to start their

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<sup>38</sup> large rocks placed along the water's edge to prevent shore erosion



## Significant Deviation

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shoot. I'm sure it had been arranged weeks ahead of time and that was just the luck of the draw. If they don't actually edit out the water, there may be a Palmolive commercial with *Alisios* sitting serenely in the background. (*Moondance* made the Cable Shopping Network once several years ago while on a mooring ball off downtown Annapolis. So, I guess this achieves some sort of balance.)

It's looking like our next attempt at crossing the Gulf Stream to Bimini will be Thursday evening / Friday morning. Our plan is to pull anchor Thursday morning, top off the fuel tank and head back down to Miami where we'll wait out the afternoon and early evening. We'll depart again through Government Cut somewhere around midnight – 1:00 am. We're keeping our fingers crossed . . .

### 1.20 Second Attempt at Crossing the Gulf Stream, 22 December 2007

Thursday morning we pulled anchor at 07:45, pulled out of our little basin by Oleta River State Recreation Area, crossed Biscayne Bay (which is more like Biscayne River in this portion) and topped up our fuel and water at the little marina there. We then continued on to Miami Beach. Although the trip is only about 10 miles, there are 3 drawbridges (which we're getting to know pretty well ;-), so we didn't drop anchor south of Venetian Causeway until 11:00. The causeway is really a series of bridges (two of which are drawbridges – one "East", one "West") that jump from small island to small island until it reaches Miami Beach. One can tuck in between the islands, or just anchor in the lee of them. Because this anchorage is south of the Causeway and offers unimpeded access to the ocean through Government Cut, most cruising boats at Miami Beach choose to anchor here. We pulled in deep near the eastern shore (25° 47.265' N, 80° 08.831' W) since this time around we had some errands to run. We took *Moondink* down Collins Canal and tied her off across from the smaller, older Publix supermarket. A heavy cable is strung between two trees, and the seawall is low, so many dinks pull up here and tie off / padlock to the cable. (There aren't a lot of other good options.) Once ashore we walked 5 blocks to the laundromat and did our wash. On our return, we dropped the laundry off in the dink (protected from salt spray by a big lawn and leaf bag) and chatted with a couple other cruisers who had just pulled up. They were new to Miami, so we told them where to get water, where the supermarkets and the laundromat were, about the loop bus, etc., then walked across the street and picked up some last minute groceries. Upon returning to the boat, we setup the jacklines, moved the dinghy motor up to its mount on the transom rail, hauled up the dink and secured it to the top of the bow. (Gail hates having it there because it covers the V-berth hatch meaning no ventilation when we sleep.) We neaten up and stowed everything below and after a fine dinner of roast beef sandwiches and potato salad, tried to get some sleep at 19:00 with limited success.

For us, Miami has become like the Hotel California – "You can check out any time you want. But, you can never leave". One shouldn't cross the Gulf Stream in a small boat in northerly winds as they generate big seas. Once the winds shift, one also needs about a day of light winds before one starts for the seas to subside. The Wednesday weather forecast for Thursday Night was SE winds 5 – 10 knots, waves 2 feet. Friday S winds 5 knots, waves 2 feet. This seemed as close to perfect to us as we were likely to get any time soon. However, Thursday morning they upgraded the evening forecast to winds SE 10 – 15 knots, waves 2 – 4 feet. By the evening it had been updated again to SE 15 shifting to the SW at 15 – 20 with waves of 4 – 6 feet. We noted that the forecast during our prior attempt was also SE 15 and that there had been no period of light winds. We should have called it then, but we didn't because the weather

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was significantly calmer than during our prior week's attempt. We decided to poke our nose out and "see what it was like" (a guaranteed 4 hour or more endeavor). We timed our departure for the slack tide, pulling anchor at midnight. The channel was, indeed, much calmer than the last time and once out in the ocean there was less violence to the waves. Nevertheless, the wind was still SE 17 – 22 knots and the waves 4 – 6 feet (mostly 4, with a few 6s thrown in to stop you in your tracks whenever you started picking up speed). This time we were able to make 2.5 knots speed over ground heading out and even topped 3 a few times. However, the waves would increase as we hit the Gulf Stream and we didn't have a good angle into them – Still no good. So, we decided to bail at 02:45. When we turned around the wind and waves were behind us and not so bad and we immediately picked up speed. I hummed the Beach Boy's *Surfing U.S.A.* again, but it didn't get stuck in my head like the last time. The inside of the cut was comparatively calm. As we were returning through it, we listened in to several boats pulling anchor and eagerly chatting on the VHF about their departure from Key Biscayne just to the south. This caused us to second guess quite a bit. However, an hour later, all of them were turning back. We dropped anchor in a drizzle and as soon as we were set, the sky opened up washing the evening's salt off *Alisios*. (The showers here tend to be short and passing, rather than the all day affairs like we have at home.) After a half hour spent verifying that we were well set, hanging up our life vests and tethers to dry, and listening in on the other boats as they called it, we turned in for a couple hours of "out cold" sleep feeling quite dejected.

Friday morning we woke at 09:00, discussed our options and decided to head back to our northern anchorage by Oleta River State Park yet again (25° 54.473' N, 80° 08.156' W). I called a good friend of mine from work, Francisco, who had told me he and his family would be in Miami for the Christmas week. (I, of course, had responded to each of his several earlier inquiries that there was "no way we would possibly still be in the U.S. that late" – ha ha). We looked forward to the possibility of hooking up with him and his family sometime over the next few days. But, unfortunately, it didn't work out. Meanwhile, we had the makings for a nice Christmas dinner aboard. Could have been a lot worse.

### 1.21 The Mundane, 27 December 2007

We bought a faux (I'll have to remember to ask Philippe how you say that in French) Nerf football from the mini-mart across the Bay and play catch on the beach. At first we were a bit rusty. But, after a couple days the spirals, the accuracy of the throws, and the percentage of caught balls improved greatly. Because the ball is half yellow and half green, a bad vs. good spiral throw is very visible. I'm lucky I married a tomboy (though I suppose I sub-consciously sought one out) – Gail can throw a football pretty well. After catch, we go for a swim and walk the little beach.

Oleta River State Park is 1,043 acres and laced with several long, narrow, winding canals lined on both sides by mangroves with their spidery roots woven into the soil and water along both banks. We presume these were originally dug for drainage purposes as they are not wide or deep enough for any boat much larger than a canoe, kayak, or small dink. The mangrove roots give a tannin color to the water which is dark brown within the canals and diffuses into the pastel green of the ocean as one moves into the basins, Biscayne Bay, and nears the ocean channel. Evergreens take root just behind the mangroves and their branches intermingle in the canopy that completely covers the canals. These canals are magical to traverse in the dinghy. It's like disappearing into a land before time. Long legged fishing birds of many varieties perch hunch-backed in the tree branches. Multi-colored iguanas, 3 feet long, sleep on some of the horizontal

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limbs and look positively prehistoric. Because of the overhanging branches, the canals are not readily visible from the basin. You just drive straight into a corner and disappear into them.

For bathing we have a 2 1/2 gallon "Sun Shower" that we keep in the cockpit by the stern or hang from the boom. This is a sturdy plastic bag with a black backing and a shower nozzle that is filled with water and left in the sun to heat. We try to keep about two gallons of water in it. On a sunny day, it works pretty well and produces nice warm, sometimes quite hot, water. On a cloudy day, you get what you get. To bathe one douses oneself in fresh water and lathers up with shampoo and soap. Soap, unless it's Joy detergent<sup>39</sup>, doesn't lather in salt water. After completely lathering up, one rinses once with fresh water. Because of her long hair, Gail usually performs a preliminary salt-water rinse by taking a dip off the stern. After a little practice, it's possible to bathe quite well using about a gallon of fresh water (really). I'm sure there are friends who just won't get this. However, it is what it is. We also have pressurized showers both off the transom and inside the head for when water is plentiful or privacy is limited. In addition to the Sun Shower, we keep a two gallon garden sprayer by the stern to wash the salt off our feet so we don't track it into the cabin. We have to make a lot of effort to keep salt out of the cabin. Salt retains water and once it gets in the upholstery and sheets they never completely dry. One uses cheap, thin towels aboard a boat. The nice fluffy ones you use at home literally never dry in the humid salt air and after a couple days they start to smell of mildew. Our friend Win recommended that we go to REI and buy some backpacking towels. These are the size of a big bath towel, but made of a thin, synthetic, chamois like material. They take a bit of getting used to, but they're compact, work well, and dry much faster than a regular towel.

All of our cooking is done with a propane stovetop & oven. Although more compact, this is effectively like a gas stovetop / oven in a house only it runs off a 10 pound propane tank stored in a vented locker in our stern. This tank is smaller than a normal barbeque tank and made of aluminum so it doesn't corrode in the salt air. As with anything that has the word "marine" associated with it, the tanks are much more expensive than one would think they should be and have to be filled, not exchanged. 40+ foot boats tend to have provision for two, sometimes larger, tanks. At 35 feet, *Alisios* can only fit one tank in its propane locker. This is OK when weekend sailing close to home, but not when cruising long term. So, we carry a spare tank tied down in the anchor locker at the bow (which also vents overboard). Propane is heavier than air so you have to be careful with it in enclosed spaces. The propane systems on modern boats sold in the U.S. must adhere to strong safety codes that include the provision for overboard ventilation and electronic solenoid gas cut-off switches that must be activated in order to use the systems.

Cooking on a boat with no AC current is similar to living 50 years ago before the proliferation of appliances. We make our coffee with a stovetop percolator. This is a "plan ahead" activity. It takes quite a while for the water to boil, then the coffee must percolate 15 minutes, then it must cool a bit before you can drink it – It takes half an hour to make a cup of coffee. The coffee itself tastes quite good, but is a little different from the drip coffee everyone is used to now-a-days. Some percolators make better coffee than others. The good ones are the run-of-the-mill bell-bottom aluminum ones from the 1950s. However, they aren't sold any more. You have to get hand-me-downs from relatives or friends or find them in junk ("antique") shops. There are some good and bad new ones sold. However, they all seem to be straight cylinders and lack the bell bottom. This means it takes longer to heat the water which is unfortunate when you're relying on

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<sup>39</sup> The fact that Lemon Fresh Joy lathers in salt water has made it somewhat of a cult product amongst cruisers.

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a small propane tank for all your cooking needs. We found a 10 pound tank of propane lasted us about 5 weeks with live-aboard, daily use.

We also use a pressure cooker when possible. A pressure cooker allows you to prepare many foods in a fraction of the cooking time that normal pots require. It also allows you to prepare dried beans without soaking them overnight. (A bag of dried beans is much more compact than the multi-can equivalent and you don't end up with empty cans that need to be disposed of properly.) The pressure cooker can even be used like a Dutch oven to prepare bread and cakes on the stove if one doesn't have an oven. A couple years ago we baked a few loaves in ours for grins, but we use the oven in actual practice. Pressure cookers are billed as great time savers. In some ways they're over-billed because there is added time to reach pressure, then further cool off / depressurization time. Even so, they're still generally faster and they certainly require less time on an open flame. Before this trip we played with ours a bit. During this trip, we really learned how to use it. At first the sound of the steam venting under pressure and the little jiggling cap was somewhat nerve-racking (as in "she's going to blow any minute now" nerve-racking). However, the modern ones have multiple safety features and after regular use, the sound of venting gas became background noise.

Our electrical needs (lights, pumps, depth, speed, wind meters, navigational equipment, stereo, laptop, cell phone, and even electric toothbrush) are either fed directly by or charged from a 12-volt DC system backed by a pair of large deep cycle AGM "house" batteries (400 AH total). *Alisios* also has a dedicated "starting" battery for the engine. When not at dock and connected to shore power, these batteries are re-charged by a high-output alternator mounted on the engine. While longer term cruisers usually have some sort of additional passive charging system such as solar panels or wind generators, we do not, so must run our engine periodically to maintain the batteries. One becomes very conscious of battery consumption on a boat. A battery should never be discharged below 50% and we monitor amp hour consumption just as we monitor water and fuel usage. To facilitate this we have a digital battery monitor. This is a micro-processor enabled gauge connected directly into the main distribution bus of the electrical system. When initially configured, the size and type of the battery bank was entered. From that point onwards, it continually monitors amperage going into and out of the system, maintaining a running tally. Without a gauge such as this, we would just be guessing about the battery state. One can not judge the charge state of a battery with only a multi-meter. The batteries are charged in stages – The alternator is connected to a voltage regulator that steps the amperage going into the batteries down so as not to damage them. Bringing the battery bank back up to an 80 – 85% charge can be done relatively quickly (generally an hour, two or three, assuming only a moderate discharge). However, reaching a 100% charge takes much much longer. We never achieve a 100% charge while at anchor. Without an alternate, continuous charging method such as solar panels or a wind generator, it's almost impossible to maintain a battery charge state above 90%<sup>40</sup>.

The largest common battery drain on a boat at anchor (by far) is refrigeration. Because we don't have it, we can comfortably go several days without charging our batteries. To further extend their range, we've substituted a number of our incandescent light bulbs with LED replacements. Our original incandescent anchor light bulb drew 1.3 amps per hour. The LED replacement bulb (Dr. LED Polar Star 40) draws 0.15. A 15 watt incandescent cabin light bulb draws 1.1 ah. The LED (SensiBulb) replacement draws 0.25. The Xenon reading lights drew 1.7 ah. The LED

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<sup>40</sup> If we had this trip to do over again, we would have brought some solar panels.

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replacement draws 0.15. We are relatively free and easy with the LED lights at night, but are conscious to turn off the incandescent ones when not using them. We have 3 cigarette lighter type DC outlets on board – two by the nav station and one in the cockpit. The cell phones, laptop<sup>41</sup>, spotlight, and handheld VHF radio all have DC adaptor chargers that fit these outlets. For the couple of items on board that don't (camera battery and electric toothbrush chargers), we use a pocket inverter that plugs into a DC outlet and provides up to 175 watts of AC current.

In the meantime, the unattended motor vessel *The Boy's Toy* continued to add excitement to the anchorage. Every three days or so there'd be wind shift accompanied by burst of strong winds. She'd drag anchor yet again and careen across the basin until the anchor reset. A towboat<sup>42</sup> also came in a couple times and reset her, but her ground tackle (anchoring system) obviously isn't up to snuff, to put it politely. We don't know whether someone called the towboat on the owner's behalf or whether someone complained to the Coast Guard or police and they called it. Keeping an eye on her location and trying to anticipate the path she would take the next time she pulled became a daily routine. There's a certain Russian Roulette aspect to being anchored in the same basin with her. She's a true menace. I hope the owners are being charged out the wazoo by the towing company. It is completely negligent and irresponsible to leave this multi-ton hazard unattended for this long.

Christmas Eve we went exploring in *Moondink* and found the main strip-mall section of Route 1 for this area – restaurants, another grocery store, Home Depot, West Marine, the works. There's even a good tie-off for the dink just next to the bridge with a path and everything. This beat the heck out of clambering over rip rap then climbing up a highway embankment as we did a couple days before.

We discovered more leaking from the water line under the galley sink – same joint as before. Although the leak was only a small drip this time around, the design of the floor is not good. Rather than draining to the bilge, the water seems to be pooling around the floorboards and has produced some temporary stains where the cabinetry meets the floor. I disassembled the valve again, think I found the problem, and re-assembled everything properly. We continue to monitor. I'm pretty unhappy about this – both about the stains, and that we currently lack any way to isolate / bypass sections of the water system. This latter issue, I solved by purchasing a threaded cap for the valve fitting from Home Depot. Having it ensured that we never needed it.

That same evening we decided to invite the people on the boat next to us over for a drink. I took *Moondink* over and chatted with them. They had other plans. However, just after I restarted the dink engine to return it suddenly died. We've been using it a lot lately, including a multi-mile trip that afternoon, with no recent troubles, so this came as a surprise. Luckily it happened just a hundred yards from *Alisios*. After failing to get her to restart, I rowed back and, as before, decided to deal with it in the morning. If the carburetor was flooded with fuel it would evaporate overnight and maybe everything would be OK. Christmas morning I tried to start it – no such luck. I took the cover off the carburetor and it looked pretty dry. The little in-line fuel filter bubbled a bit when I squeezed the fuel bulb, so it looked like the fuel line was probably OK. Still,

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<sup>41</sup> Getting a true DC power supply for the laptop was a good move. Laptops draw a fair amount of current and I gather the draw is larger when they run off an inverter.

<sup>42</sup> Tow Boat U.S. and Sea Tow offer subscription towing services for recreational boaters much like the American Automobile Association (AAA) does for cars. These are relatively small boats with powerful engines and towing arches, winches, and oversized cleats and shouldn't be confused with tugboats. If one hasn't subscribed to their insurance, a tow can be very expensive – ten dollars per foot for your vessel + their time to and from dock.

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I switched it over to the internal tank but had no luck. Since it was a calm morning, I rowed to shore to drop off our trash and pick up 10 gallons of water and ponder the situation. After returning to *Alisios* and handing up the water, I asked Gail for my socket wrench set. She responded: "before you start taking things apart, do you know what you are doing?" This seemed an innocent comment to her. However, any guy reading this will instantly recognize that it was a Catch 22 – I found it offensive. If I ignored the comment / question, I'd get in trouble. If I responded with my actual thoughts of the moment, I'd get in trouble. The unimpassioned answer was "Of course I didn't exactly know what I was doing. However, I had both a theory and a plan of action. If I didn't, I wouldn't have asked for the socket set." For a guy, having a theory and a plan is the next best thing to actually knowing what you are doing. How else does one learn? As I had already checked the fuel line and carburetor, I thought the sparkplug might be fouled, something our friend Mike, anchored next to us, had noted happens not infrequently. Upon securing the wrenches, I pulled the plug and, as I had guessed, it was pretty gunked up. So, I asked for some paper towels, a wire brush, and some carb cleaner (which, in addition to its advertised purpose, is a good clean, fast-drying solvent). Ten minutes later with the plug cleaned and re-seated, the engine started. I sprayed some cleaner into the carburetor for good measure, put its cover back on, then finally, the engine housing. I took her for a test run. Upon returning, I looked up at Gail, smiled, and stuck my tongue out at her. Later that day I pulled out both the owner's manual for the outboard and my generic outboard repair book and read up on inspecting spark plugs and adjusting the fuel mixture. (One of the causes of a gunked up sparkplug is a fuel mixture that is too rich. Another is running the engine for long periods at low speeds, which we've done.) The next day, with my homework complete, I pulled the sparkplug again, re-cleaned it, adjusted the gap, then tightened the fuel mixture screw a half turn and tweaked the idle speed. As noted earlier, I'm not overly comfortable with the outboard and at home, I might have just taken it to a shop. Here that sort of response is very difficult logistically to execute and one is pretty much forced to RTFM<sup>43</sup>, pick the brains of nearby cruisers (if there are any), then deal with the problem oneself. It's actually a good thing to be pushed this way (assuming one doesn't make the problem worse;-).

*Moondink* has a hypolon fabric floor on which an inflatable keel (a long, thin bladder) is tied. Over this sits a high-pressure inflatable floor. This is in contrast to a hard bottom or a roll-up floor consisting of slats and webbing. The floor is screwed at the back to the transom and held in place on the sides by the inflated tubes of the dink itself. At the same time we were having problems with the engine we noticed that the air floor of *Moondink* was gradually losing pressure. The last couple mornings we'd found it mostly deflated. We'd pump it up and it would stay firm for a few hours, then get a bit soft. By the evening and/or next morning it needed to be pumped up again. There was obviously a pin-hole leak somewhere. The leak was just an annoyance and the dink was still usable, but it too needed to be dealt with. So, the day after Christmas we took her into a little lagoon hidden from the main public area and pulled her up to shore. We pulled everything out, including the gas tank and seat, and placed them on shore, then deflated the floor, unscrewed it from the transom, pulled it out too, and blew it up again. I carried it into the water and scrubbed it down with a car sponge then systematically looked for leaks by submerging parts of it in the water. Luck was with me and I found it pretty quickly. There was a clear trickle of air at the outside seam of the fabric flange that surrounds the fill valve where the valve is glued into the floor (not a spot that can be easily or effectively to patched). I then pulled it out of the water, rinsed the area of the leak with fresh water I had brought in a bottle, dried it with piece of a paper towel, and marked it with a black Sharpie

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<sup>43</sup> "Read The Manual"

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marker. Gail sponged down the fabric sub-floor of the dink while I performed the same leak test with the inflatable keel – another small leak, also on a seam, again rinsed and marked. With everything marked, we put the dink back together without screwing the floor in, and headed back to *Alisios*. Later in the afternoon, after we felt we our transportation needs for the day were through, we deflated both the floor and keel, pulled them aboard, washed the leak areas with fresh water, then rubbing alcohol (we didn't have any acetone at the time), roughed them up with a bit of emery cloth, and patched them using the emergency patch kit that came with the dink. In spite of all our lists, it took us close to an hour to track down the patch kit and new tube of inflatable repair [contact] cement, which for some reason weren't together. (After tearing every locker they could possibly be, we finally found the new cement stored with the spare outboard propeller under the v-berth – I suppose it made sense to me at the time). The next day we reassembled everything. However, it later became apparent that the patch wasn't working. (Not a surprise.) So, were back to square one. The valve really needs to be heat-gunned off and properly repaired by an inflatable shop using good two-part glue. But, I'll try a second field patch with an extra glob of glue to try and compensate for the ridge.

One definition of cruising is "repairing your boat in exotic places". There is quite a bit of truth to this.

Apart from the repairs, we had a nice and reasonably conventional Christmas. Though we didn't exchange gifts, Gail baked a traditional dinner of turkey breast, sausage stuffing, carrots, cranberry sauce, and pearl onions in cheese sauce. We invited Mike, a single-hander cruiser we'd become friendly with over at 17:00 and the three of us had drinks and dinner and hung out late into the evening. Everything was topped off with strawberry-rhubarb pie.

### 1.22 Key Biscayne, 30 December 2007

There is a singer, song-writer, ex-cruiser named Eileen Quinn<sup>44</sup> who has several albums of mostly funny songs about the "cruising experience". The music is so-so (an over-reliance on a "Kits organ" -like electronic synthesizer / keyboard and its cheesy electric background rhythm, rather than just playing straight acoustic guitar), but her voice is OK and her lyrics very good – often dead on. She's become a bit of a cult icon within the cruising community and we have all of her albums. One of her songs, called *Tarpit Harbor* is about getting "stuck" in a pretty or convenient anchorage (one we would later visit). For us, the basin by Oleta State Park was starting to become a bit like Tarpit Harbor and we openly joked about it. Finally, on Saturday December 29, we pulled up our anchor and headed down to Key Biscayne, south of Miami, leaving the basin by Oleta River State Park for good.

There are two good anchoring basins in Key Biscayne – one is called "Hurricane Hole". The second, more scenic one, is "No Name Harbor". This is another jump-off point for the Bahamas. We had wanted very much to see No Name. However, for peace and beauty, the Saturday before New Years was not the best day to do so. The man-made basin is relatively small with a consistent depth of 10 feet (good for anchoring) and extremely well protected. It too, is in the middle of a state park. As noted, scenic protected anchorages aren't in great abundance down here and everyone who owned a boat in Miami seemed to have come to No Name Harbor for the day. Weekend warriors aren't usually noted for their seamanship. Immediately as we entered, we were faced with two small powerboats rafted up with about two dozen 20 year olds

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<sup>44</sup> <http://www.eileenquinn.com/>

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partying up a storm. I mean full blown frat party style partying – everyone dancing on the deck with alcohol flowing like water. More small powerboats lined the sea walls. The half a dozen cruising sailboats seemed a bit out of place. There were mid-sized motor cruisers everywhere and lots of smaller boats between. We've never anchored in such a crowded basin. It made Solomons, Maryland in season look positively roomy. Nevertheless we found a spot in front of the 20 year olds, set our anchor, and settled down to watch the "human zoo" (25° 40.614' N, 80° 09.800' W). Not long afterwards a 40-some foot Hatteras anchored tightly next to us. At least we thought it was tight at the time – They ended up forming a raft-up of FOUR boats of similar size and beam in the same space. Boats at anchor swing with shifts in wind and any boat that is close enough to for you to throw a peanut onto its deck is too close. We ended up with another powerboat similarly close off our bow that was soon joined by another, oblivious to the fact that he was motoring directly over the large bright orange float and trip line of the anchor of the 4-boat raft-up. (Getting the trip line wound around his prop would have been a bad thing as it would have both pulled the primary anchor of the raft-up and prevented it from being reset.) Meanwhile, the 20 year olds continued partying up a storm. I must admit that the spectacle of a dozen young, bikini-clad women dancing on a very small deck did compensate for the noise. Mostly it was just interesting. At 14:00 (2:00 pm) we heard a guy amongst them shouting "SHOTS!" and tried to image ourselves in our college days with a smile. Not surprisingly, they weren't able to keep up the pace and their party ebbed and flowed (with a couple of the girls "chumming" over the side). Mid-afternoon, a 65 or more foot yacht named *Camelot* motored between us and the boat on our port. We looked over and thought "You are NOT going to try to plant that thing in that small slot". He ended up backing out and anchoring in the corner with WAY too little scope. We literally couldn't decide where to sit on deck and watch as the craziness was on all sides. A big, modern sport cruiser painted metallic grey (kind of a "Hummer of the water") pulled in and couldn't make up its mind whether it wanted to anchor or raft up with a friend. After about 4 different attempts, she (All boats are "she", but this was definitely a masculine "she") finally anchored. Then the stern opened up revealing a compartment that held a small rigid bottom inflatable jet-boat and the appropriate bikini-clad blonde climbed in it with the owner. A small SeaRay-type sport cruiser with about 10 young men on board, flying the rainbow flag, anchored off our bow. Eventually the 20 year olds went away and the 4-boat raft-up moved down to their spot (without breaking up the raft to move), then *Camelot* joined them. ("Better behind us than in front of us" we thought, even though they were well set and seemed like competent boaters overall.) As night fell most of the small boats left and the anchorage quieted down, though it remained quite packed and the drone of diesel generators filled the night. The young men aboard the rainbow flagged boat all sang along to show tunes, which was so self-consciously stereotypical that all the boats around laughed and everyone was in a good mood overall. We wouldn't want to embed ourselves in this type of environment very often, but it was certainly an interesting experience and I wouldn't have traded it.

The next day was quieter, but equally exciting. The little park is aware that this is a popular jumping off point for cruisers leaving to the Bahamas (when it's not overrun with weekend partiers) and at the west end is a pavilion with a washer, dryer, and an outdoor cold water shower. Sunday morning, we dinked over, did all our wash, and showered in our bathing suits with no water restrictions. On the other side is a quite nice, though somewhat pricy, Cuban restaurant with a big second-story deck overlooking the basin. After returning our clean laundry to the boat, we decided to have some lunch at the restaurant. It was at this point that the excitement started. We had just ordered when a 45 foot Morgan sloop came in with its Genoa<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Large jib foresail



## Significant Deviation

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flying. Occasionally, people do this sort of thing to show off. But, it's not safe in a crowded anchorage. They pulled past the stern of *Alisios* (with our full attention) and anchored in the corner of the basin only 60 feet away from our boat, sail still up. Soon thereafter, we noticed a big tear in it and the fact that they were trying unsuccessfully to get it down. A 45 foot sailboat has a mast 60 or more feet above the water and a Genoa this large produces A LOT of power. They were sailing hard, back and forth, on their anchor struggling with the sail as it tore itself apart – again, just 60 feet off *Alisios*' stern. Amazingly, a little 19' bow-rider powerboat with 4 people on board was anchored in between *Alisios* and them, right off their bow, and DIDN'T MOVE! (I suppose they figured they were there first – What morons!) We sat on the deck of this restaurant watching all of this unfold for half an hour. It was the most angst filled lunch I've ever had and my stomach was in knots by the time we paid the bill. We practically ran to *Moondink* to get back to the boat. Then we found ourselves in one of those strange "What is acceptable etiquette?" situations – We had had time to appraise the situation and knew what to do to solve their problem. However, does one interject oneself into someone else's crisis? Would they want help if offered? As we got to *Alisios*, Gail ended the argument with the sentence "We've got to help them". So, we motored over, and grabbed the side of their boat. The only people onboard were the owner and his college-age daughter. They were out for a couple days, overnighting in the Keys and apparently, the sail had jammed and blown out the afternoon before. It had been flailing all the previous night and half the current day. After failing to get it down in the open bay Sunday morning, he had thought that maybe pulling into a sheltered anchorage might help (not anticipating the quantity of other boats that would be at No Name Harbor). The sail would come down a bit, but not more than 10%. I told them the halyard (line that hoists the sail up) was probably wrapped around the forestay and jammed at the top. I asked if they had a boson's chair<sup>46</sup>. They didn't and had never used one. So, we grabbed ours from *Alisios*, returned, and climbed aboard. His daughter was a tom-boy type and eager to go up the mast (which saved Gail the trip). So, I explained to her what she'd see up there, helped strap her into the seat, verified she had the tools she'd need, and winched her up while Gail tailed the line and her father worked a safety line. Once up, she was able to release the shackle and I pulled the sail down, ending the fury. Once the sail was down you could see the weight lifted from her dad's shoulders. I reminded her "not to forget to bring the halyard down", which led to one of those funny "Oh – good point!" moments. She un-jammed the halyard and brought it down with her to a grand applause from many of the other boats. I'm sure most of the power-boaters had never seen someone go up a mast before, much less in this type of emergency situation. She did great and was obviously pleased and her dad was steady the whole time. We can only imagine the stress he was under. I would have been a basket case if we had a sail thrashing itself to shreds all through the night and half the next day. (The sail will probably cost him \$2,000 – \$3,000 and could have caused serious damage to the rest of his boat.) He thanked us profusely and wanted to offer us something. I told him we really didn't need anything and just asked that the next time he saw someone in need that he help them out. We took a glass of ice water, then gathered our stuff and left. In retrospect, I wish we had been a bit more chatty and openly empathetic (less business-like). At the time, we didn't want to hover or intrude more than necessary and I get very focused when dealing with a problem. However, we were happy with ourselves for (1) dealing quickly and efficiently with a crisis situation and (2) doing the right thing. Everyone has times in their past when they wished they had stepped in to help someone, but hadn't for some reason or another. This could have been one of those, but wasn't.

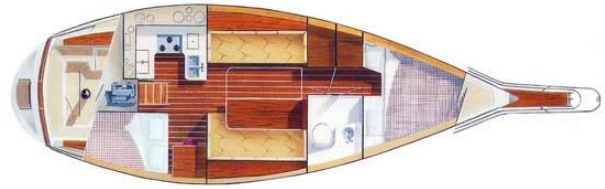
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<sup>46</sup> A harnessed seat used for hauling someone up the mast

## Significant Deviation



Caliber 35 LRC – artist's profile



Caliber 35 LRC – interior layout



*s/v Alisios*



*s/v Alisios*



*Alisios' Main cabin*



*Alisios' Galley*

## Significant Deviation



Our v-berth bedroom and library



Staging provisions in our spare bedroom  
(How will all of this fit on board?)



Somehow we shoe-horned everything in



A storm cell over the Chesapeake Bay



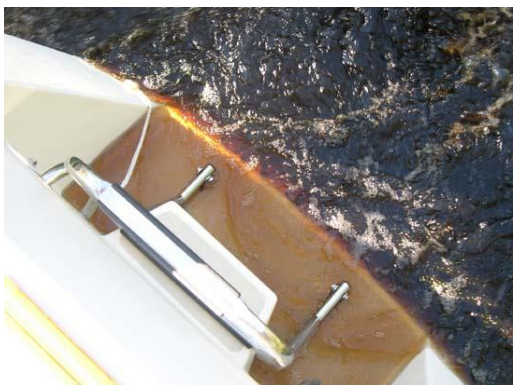
ICW mile marker 1 off  
Hospital Point, Norfolk, Virginia



Deep Creek Lock, Great Dismal Swamp Canal



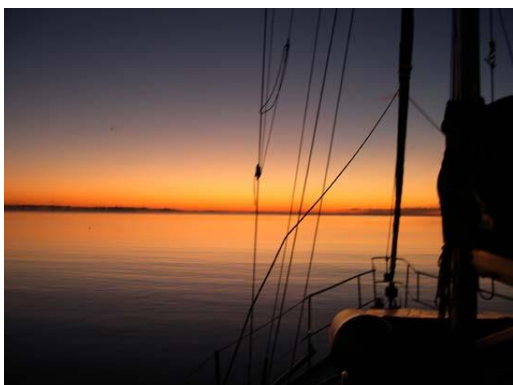
## Significant Deviation



Tannin water over the swim platform,  
Great Dismal Swamp Canal



Looking over our stern at the path we'd cut through  
the duckweed in the Great Dismal Swamp Canal



Pre-sunrise glow, leaving Elizabeth City, NC



In line with the southward-bound horde



A swing bridge along the ICW, South Carolina



"First mate, lover, and galley wench"

## Significant Deviation



Anchored in Jericho Creek, South Carolina



Studying ahead for the next day's sights



Heading out in the pre-dawn fog, South Carolina



A fishing boat trawling for shrimp on Port Royal Sound, South Carolina



*Alisios* motor-sailing across Sapelo Sound, GA



ICW, Georgia

## Significant Deviation

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ICW sunrise, Georgia



A manatee by the docks, Titusville, Florida



Anchored off Oleta River State Park, Florida



Lifting *Moondink* off the side to prevent growth



Matt driving *Moondink*, Miami, Florida



The boat anchored next to us, lit up for Christmas under a full moon



# Section 2

## The Bahamas



The Commonwealth of the Bahamas

### 2.1 Bimini, Bahamas, 08 January 2008

The Bahamas sit atop three underwater plateaus called the Bahama Banks. The Banks are quite shallow, 20 feet or less in most places. Jutting forth from them are the 690 islands and cays (pronounced "keys") and 2,387 rocks of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas. Most of these are uninhabited. The Gulf Stream is funneled through the deep Ocean water between the Bahama Banks and the U.S. mainland on the western side. (It's only 50 miles from mainland Florida to the islands of North and South Bimini.) This area, including the portion of the Gulf Stream further south, is known as the Florida Straights. To the east of the Banks lies the Atlantic Ocean proper.

The islands of the Bahamas cover a large territory. However, over 80% of the approximately 300,000 person population lives in either Nassau or Freeport. There are different ways of cruising the area. Most boats target either the Abacos or the Exumas. The Abacos, in the northern Bahamas, are comparatively more populated and economically developed (modern) than the "out island" Exumas which lie further south. Lying roughly parallel to Palm Beach, they are subject to cyclical frontal systems and are not overly warm in the winter. They're relatively close to Florida, so are easier to get to than the Exumas. However, many cruisers wait until the March – April timeframe, when the weather warms up and calms down, before visiting them. During the December to March timeframe in which we were travelling, the Exumas are significantly warmer and the frontal systems less intense than in the Abacos. Furthermore, the water is clearer. The Exumas are relatively remote and unspoiled. One doesn't see many boats there that have just hopped over from Florida for a few weeks (though there are lots of cruisers) and that suited our temperament. Those who have made the commitment to go there have made a commitment to be living aboard for a while and must come fairly self-sufficient. The numerous islands and cays of the chain offer many spots to anchor and a lot of variety, but not much in the way of shopping and development. The only major town is Georgetown at the southern-most end. With its big protected harbor, cruiser-friendly anchorages, nice beaches, good grocery store, and free R/O water, Georgetown has become somewhat of a cruisers Mecca and some people spend the entire winter there. It was recommended that we cross to Bimini, then work our way south through the Exumas, at least as far as Georgetown, then return via the Abacos later in the season if we had the time and inclination. This was good advice and we adhered to this overall plan through our trip.

We woke up at 01:20 the morning of Monday 31 December and pulled anchor at 01:55. The cut by No Name Harbor has some shallow spots. But, we traversed it without trouble and were into the open ocean after only about 25 minutes. The NOAA forecast was SE winds 10 – 15 knots, waves of 2 – 4 feet, subsiding to 10 knots during the day, waves 2 feet. Although it was still on our nose, the winds were reasonable and the waves were light, which is key when plowing headlong into them. NOAA's forecast was true and we had an uneventful crossing. After our various attempts, what we learned regarding a small [slow] boat crossing was: Cross in winds 10 – 15 or less (because 15 often means 20) with no northerly component. The wave height is as important as the winds, if not more so. The seas need a full day to subside after any sort of northerly. If you don't have this day, wait, even if the forecast gives low wave heights. If the seas are on your nose, only go if they're forecast at 2 – 4 feet or less, the smaller the better.)

The Gulf Stream is a river within the ocean flowing south-to-north at about 3 knots. Because it will push one north as one crosses it, one has to add a certain amount of southerly correction to



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one's course when sailing west to east. The amount of correction depends on one's anticipated speed and is somewhat of a SWAG<sup>47</sup>, but works pretty well in practice. There are tables in our cruising guide that tell how many degrees to add for what speed. We added 23 degrees to a course of 86° and ended up on a heading of 109° to make Bimini. If all works out properly, one's actual course over ground ends up looking like a gentle "S", rather than a straight line – Too far south at the beginning, pushed a bit north by the Stream in the middle, then south back to the target once one leaves the Stream. This actually worked, though our "S" was quite lopsided and it looked like we were too far south for most of the journey. We guestimated a speed of anywhere from 4 to 6 knots and hoped for 5. At this speed it would take us from about 8.3 to 12.5 hours to reach Bimini. Our 02:00 departure was designed to get us in there between noon and 13:00, with plenty of daylight to spare. We made the interesting discovery that the limit of our depth gauge is 500 feet. After that, the word "Depth" just blinks and it returns a constant display of whatever its last reading was. For most of our crossing it read 76.3 feet though the actual depth of the water was 2,000+ feet (610+ meters). Because we left at night, we didn't get to see the water change color from pastel green to cobalt blue as we entered the Stream. This was a pity. However, at 04:15 there was a noticeable northerly shift in our course over ground as shown by the GPS, so we think we entered the Stream about then. After that, there were a few more shifts as we moved from the outer edge to the center. The water temperature also crept up from about 84 to 89 degrees Fahrenheit (31.6 degrees Celsius). Another way we could tell where the Stream was by the ships that use it to give them a boost just as airplanes use the Jet Stream. We passed a cruise ship and a couple freighters. On a clear night their lights stand out well. However, one has no sense of distance and without the radar we wouldn't have known whether they were 2 miles away or 12. We kept at least a 6 or 7 mile spread between us and most of them, but one did pass a mile and a half off our bow, both of us fully aware of the other. (Assuming they're travelling at about 15 knots and we're doing 5, these distances can close very quickly.) The sunrise was beautiful. There were a large number of low puffy clouds and for about 20 minutes before it rose above the horizon, the sun lit them up in the most terrific oranges. When the fiery orb finally rose above the edge of the world the colors gently subsided. We saw a few flying fish that would skim over the water for 200 yards / meters at a pop. There were also occasional Portuguese man-of-wars which looked positively man-made. Their bases are bright blue and their sails look plastic. At first glance, one thinks they're floating cups. As the day progressed and the sun rose higher, the cobalt blue of the water became clearer. It was a beautiful day. For much of the crossing there wasn't another boat or any land in sight.

Late in the morning Bimini, Bahamas appeared on the horizon. The Gulf Stream comes right up to it and it was strange to be on a course that pointed our bow well south of the islands we were looking at and heading to. However, the laws of physics held true and we were pushed northward to our target in spite of the optical input. We wanted to arrive mid afternoon because of the coral shoals around the islands and because the guides showed the entrance channel as being somewhat tricky. We wanted the sun to be directly overhead so we could see the coral heads in the best possible light. The water is very clear and with practice one can tell the depth by the color. We were not practiced. So, I stood on the bow with a walkie-talkie and we took it slow. Here is what our "updated every year" 2007 Yachtsman's Guide to the Bahamas cruising guide says about entering Bimini. What it didn't say is that a new, easy, well marked channel was put in a couple years ago. (We soon decided that this particular guide was pretty worthless):

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<sup>47</sup> "Scientific Wild-Ass Guess"

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*"Approach South Bimini on a course of about 85 degrees for a point approximately one-third of the distance from the south end of South Bimini to the south end of North Bimini. Stay in good water until you see the shallow sandbars and other obstructions that lie off South Bimini's western shore and do not proceed through these until you find a range consisting of two orange and white striped poles on the beach. This will lead you in through the entrance channel on a heading of approximately 80 degrees. As you pass through, take care to avoid the shallow sandbar to port and the rocky brown bar to starboard. Shifting sands caused by prolonged high winds and strong tides are known to rearrange the shallow sandbars here, so keep your eye out. Once inside, follow the channel that parallels the beach into Bimini Harbor, avoiding the shoal that extends out from the northwestern point of South Bimini across from the south point of North Bimini. Cautions: (1) Never attempt this channel in strong onshore conditions. (2) Watch out for cruise-ship moorings, which are not particularly prominent and may have gear trailing from them. Caution: A strong tide, ebb and flood, runs through Bimini Harbor."*

RIGHT! – Actually, the above was pretty clear once we arrived. We took this old channel coming in, found the range and motored slowly through the cut, into the channel. We were in between 8 and 15 feet and the water was so clear you could see the bottom as if you were in a swimming pool. However, it was a bit difficult to make out relief and the occasional rocks (brown lumps in the middle of the sand) made us nervous even though they were embedded in the bottom and didn't have much vertical relief. The sandbars were easy to spot as they gave the water a yellowy color. The new channel, however, is the one to use in the future. Once inside the harbor, we had a 3.5 knot current. However, it paralleled the docks so we were able to turn into it and dock easily. We got to pick our own slip, which helped. (Bimini Blue Water Marina, 25° 37.128' N, 79° 17.621' W)

Customs – There is a protocol that must be followed by boats coming into a foreign port. Once in Bahamian waters, we flew a yellow "quarantine" flag from our starboard spreader to indicate that we were newly arrived and had not yet cleared customs. We tied up to the dock of the marina we had chosen based on price (one of the two cheapest) and the fact that it had a swimming pool. Once the boat was secure, I went ashore to get the Custom forms from the marina office. Technically, only the captain ("Master") is allowed to go ashore, but in practice it's quite relaxed. Gail and I filled out the forms at a picnic table in the shade by the office. There is a declaration of health form that is quite amusing due to a few seemingly archaic questions. Our favorite was: "Has plague occurred or been suspected among rats or mice on board during the voyage or has there been an unusual mortality among them?" I can only imagine the chaos that a rat or mouse on board would create – The heck with the plague. As highlighted in the parentheses earlier, the captain of the vessel is referred to as the "Master", which I, of course, was sure to point out to Gail while at the same time reminding her that technically, she shouldn't even be on shore with me ;-). Once we had everything filled out as best we could, as Master, I carried the paperwork and our passports a block and a half down the street to the Immigration Office where they gave us a 90-day entry visa (stamp in our passports) that we'd have to renew at no cost wherever we happened to be at the time. The Customs Office is in a building next door. Here we paid our entry fee, declared the fact that we had a dinghy, outboard, 2 kayaks, and one pole spear on board (but no firearms<sup>48</sup>) and received a one-year cruising permit and recreational fishing license. The fee for the cruising permit is based on the size of the boat – For

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<sup>48</sup> We're often asked whether we carried a gun with us and sometimes questions about piracy also come up. The Bahamas today are very safe and orderly. There are hundreds of cruisers and we never heard of anyone having any problems. As a matter of fact, apart from in Nassau, we didn't even lock the boat when we left it. For this type of cruise firearms are unnecessary and carrying them generates a certain amount of bureaucratic hassle.

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boats under 35 feet, it's \$150. For boats over 35 feet, it's \$300. We have a Caliber 35 LRC which is advertized as 35 feet. We weren't really sure which side we'd fall on as far as the fee is concerned (though we could guess). When we haul for the winter, the yard charges us for 37 feet which is the length from the base of our transom to the tip of our bow pulpit. (We argued and measured, but the yard held fast and won.) However, our U.S. Coast Guard documentation lists our vessel length as 33 feet 8 inches. We decided that the documented measurements, pulled from the builder's certificate, accepted by the U.S. Coast Guard, and listed on our official paperwork should rule, and we listed ourselves as 33' 8". We were charged \$150 because we were a 34 foot boat. (Sometimes smaller is better.) Once Customs has been cleared, the yellow quarantine flag is lowered and the Bahamian maritime flag is raised in its place. This is referred to as a "courtesy flag". At this point, the crew is allowed to come ashore. We actually made it to the Bahamas before the New Year!

The following day's weather was equally good for a crossing. After that the forecast called for a frontal system to come through with strong northerly winds: 20 – 25 knots steady with gusts up to 50 and waves in the Gulf Stream 13 – 18 feet. The transient slips in Bimini are inexpensive (75 cents / foot) and we decided this would be a good time to get one. (Our last transient slip had been over a month beforehand when we visited our friend Joe in Daytona, Florida before Thanksgiving.) So, we stayed in the marina slip and *Alisios* enjoyed a good fresh water rinse-down (which we hoped we wouldn't be charged for<sup>49</sup>). It took us a few days to get used to the clarity of the water in the slip. It was like she was floating in a swimming pool – very strange stepping from the dock to her deck and clearly seeing her hull and the bottom below. This was quite a contrast to U.S. waters.

Due to its proximity to Miami, and the fact that it's quite small, we expected Bimini to be built up. It's not. In fact it's quiet and absolutely charming. The main town is Alice Town on North Bimini (which merges with Bailey Town, so the two are really one for practical purposes). The populated length of the island is only a bit over a mile. There are two one-lane streets – a main street on the east side overlooking the harbor, and a second street that parallels it atop a hill, overlooking the ocean on the western side. We could step off our boat in the harbor and walk to the ocean on the other side in five minutes. While there are a number of cars, vans, and pickups on the island, most people get around in gas-powered golf carts. There are only 4 marinas in North Bimini and we actually overshot ours in the proverbial blink of an eye when we first came in. The houses are modest and for the most part painted either white with a pastel trim or pastel yellow, or pink. Some have tile roofs, some tin, some regular shingles. They're quite small by U.S. standards. Apart from a monster complex being built on the north end of the island (and thankfully out of sight), there are no big hotels. There are a few small hotels with 30 or so rooms and a number of guest houses. A lot of these seem to date to the 1960s and 70s, which appears to have been the island's heyday. If one wants a quiet place to relax, this is it.

As we arrived on New Year's Eve, we felt compelled to go out. We're not late night people at the best of times and this was somewhat painful. We had woken at 01:20 the night before and been up straight. We tried to take a nap at 21:30, setting the alarm for 23:00 and had just reached out-cold REM sleep when the fireworks barge came down the harbor. I can only say that waking

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<sup>49</sup> We carry a roll-up hose on board which is a bit of a pain to use. While I was dealing with customs and immigration, Gail asked the dockhand if the marina had a hose we could borrow. He lent her one with the end cut off. I returned to see her liberally using an unknown number of gallons of R/O water without a second thought. We later found out that the marina charges 50 cents a gallon for water. However, this wasn't strongly enforced and in the end they didn't charge us anything. We didn't use much since we arrived with full tanks and all our showers were taken ashore.

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up this way "hurt" for both of us (i.e. extremely disoriented with heads aching). Nevertheless, we got dressed, and went to the main tourist bar down the street that had a band, lots of Yanks and almost no locals. It wasn't my sort of sort of place. But, we bumped into some other cruisers we had met on the ICW and toasted in 2008 before returning to our bunk. (We later found some places more to our liking.)

Many of the islands celebrate Junkanoo over New Year which is jokingly referred to as "drunkanoo" and is similar to carnival. However, a week and a half before we arrived there was a unique and tragic occurrence that caused Bimini's small Junkanoo to be cancelled. The North and South islands of Bimini are only 9 square miles (not all of it habitable) and have a population of about 1,500. It's a small, quiet place where one can walk around freely at all hours without fear of safety. I was told they have about 14 police officers. On the Friday a week before we arrived, two police officers got in an altercation with a man at a bar at around midnight. They had him handcuffed and on the ground when the small, younger officer, who was apparently drunk, drew his gun and held it to the back of the arrested man's head. The other officer looked up and said "What do you have that gun out for?" at which point the young officer either pulled the trigger on purpose or the gun accidentally went off, killing the subdued man on the ground. The young officer then apparently cried out "Oh my god! I shot him" and ran off. (According to some, both officers ran off, leaving the man dead on the floor of the bar along with the gun.) Word quickly got around about what had happened and no explanations were forthcoming. Apparently the small young officer had a reputation of being cocky and abusive to people, often brandishing his gun, and there might have been a history between him and the man he killed. According to some, he was the nephew of a high-ranking Bahamian police official and had been shifted around to different islands after having trouble in past locations. A number of people also claim he had boasted that he was going to kill someone in Bimini. There were also some other background issues. The police are not from the local populace and a couple different officers had been sleeping with young teenage girls. After news got around about the shooting, a mob formed in the morning and feeling that "justice" would not be done, they wanted to get a hold of the young officer who shot the man and beat him up or worse. The police ended up having to barricade themselves in the station / government office building to protect the young officer and called the main government / other islands for reinforcements. Meanwhile, the mob threw stones at the police car and set fire to a couple small police boats (run-abouts) that were on trailers, then to the police barracks (a row of half a dozen small efficiency apartments just behind the government building). Some have said a 14 year old girl came running out in only a t-shirt when the fire was thrown at the barracks. The building was destroyed along with the belongings of the officers who lived there. It sounded like there was a vendetta aspect for some in the mob in addition to simple reaction to the slaying. Another small building nearby that was used as a home economics classroom also burned. Some said it caught fire the next day because the fire department didn't properly put out the embers from the barracks. The officers tried to disperse the crowd by firing their guns into the air, but the crowd stood their ground and threw rocks and bottles back at them. Someone may have been shot in the foot. They later tried to sneak the young officer out by disguising him, but the crowd noticed him. He tried to run and jump into the water, but another officer grabbed him. Eventually the army came in and quelled the situation. The officer who shot the man was taken to Nassau and an investigation is underway. No looting took place during the entire event. I pieced together the above by speaking to a half a dozen different people, including a couple that were in the mob and the police inspector from Nassau who was investigating it. (We stumbled onto the burnt barracks during a walk, guessed what they were, and bumped into him soon afterwards. He was friendly but very circumspect, as one would expect. We've found all the police here to be friendly and

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professional. All of the original Bimini officers have been transferred to different posts.) The Bahamian newspapers recorded the event, but provided no details of the shooting itself, instead focusing on how horrible it was that a mob formed and destroyed property – So much for free press. (It made us appreciate American investigative journalism, which we take for granted. A shooting like this wouldn't have been whitewashed at home.) Since the fires took place in broad daylight, the officials knew who set them. This event has shocked the whole Bahamas because it is such an aberration. Everything was quite, safe, and calm when we arrived. But, they had cancelled Junkanoo because they didn't feel that having organized crowds of drunken people 9 days after the shooting was a good idea. The funeral for the man who was shot took place on Saturday 05 January while we were there. A number of high government officials, including, apparently, the Prime Minister, arrived along with a significant security force. But the added security was kept very low key. They were there for emergencies and there were none. Saturday morning the streets were filled with people in their black suits going to the funeral. We didn't feel it was appropriate as tourist outsiders to go and didn't. (Many of the tourists were oblivious to the whole occurrence. I guess they drink at the bars, eat at the restaurants, and don't speak to any of the locals.) The islanders are worried that justice will not be done and we were surprised that no details of the shooting were reported in the paper, even in the ensuing days. More sober people (ourselves included) and the government officials note that whatever the details, the law has to be followed and they do not justify either vigilantism or destruction of public property. The whole event is tragic and notable because "this sort of thing just doesn't happen here". (Later, during our cruise, we heard that the officer who shot the man had been indicted.)

The cold front created quite a contrast of conditions. The Tuesday after our arrival we walked over to the beach and swam in the crystal clear, calm ocean water on an 85 degree sunny day – the type of day everyone pictures when imagining the islands. There is a small open bar (just a counter with a couple seats and a palm frond roof) named "Sherry P's" overlooking the beach. It's about as scenic as it gets. At 4:00 we went back to the marina, took showers, changed, and came back to have a rum punch and watch the sun set with three different sets of people we'd met, two of them fellow cruisers. (The cruisers refer to this afternoon cocktail as a "sun-downer") The next day it had dropped down to the low 60s, the wind was blowing a steady 20 – 25 knots at dock. We walked to the same beach and saw an angry ocean with huge breakers that would pound a person into hamburger if they tried to enter the water. The view of the channel was equally impressive – just a wall of rolling waves. No boats would be going out or coming in this day. The front actually arrived at night. We're not used to sleeping on board at dock in these type of conditions. The sounds and movement of the boat are very different than at anchor in high winds. The wind gusts howl through the rigging in both situations. At anchor, the boat heels and rides back and forth on its anchor in a crescent before settling down and making the trip again. At dock there is much more creaking and clanking. The boat tries to heel and dig, but is halted by the dock lines. The lines and the cleats they're attached to groan loudly protest. Also, since the boat is held at an artificial angle to the wind and waves, there's a lot more slapping, banging, clanking, and popping. The movement of the boat is most un-natural – a bobbing from wind and waves that is cut short by dock lines in a jerking motion. The first half of the night we didn't sleep well. The second half we became more acclimated to the sounds and movement. In the morning we checked our lines, noticed one was chafing against the edge of the dock, and moved it to a piling that had a clear run to the boat<sup>50</sup>. We adjusted the spring lines and went

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<sup>50</sup> This was definitely a lesson to look closely at the run of one's dock lines. The line would have eventually chafed through had we not caught it. We didn't make this mistake twice.

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about our business in jeans and jackets (the latter which we had to dig out of the v-berth were they had been "put away for the remainder of the trip").

The next few days were chilly and windy. Occasionally the sky would spit a tiny bit, but for the most part there was no rain. Slowly the temperature came back up into the 70s. But it continued to be windy in the 15 knot range having shifted from the North to the East. There isn't much howling at 15 knots. However, when it was on our beam, it was enough to heel us over a little in the slip and cause the waves to slap broadside at our hull. We walked the island and watched the ocean side change depending on the wind direction. The shops here are interesting. They're all quite small, and apart from the couple liquor stores, don't always keep regular hours. The grocery stores are tiny and depend on boats that come once a week. So, the selection of fresh meats or vegetables is limited. The norther meant a delay in the weekly supply boat, which is a small intra-island freighter popularly called the mail boat. Consequently, the popular deli restaurant started running out of many of the menu items. The east winds kept up for several days. But, they weren't that bad and we enjoyed mellowing out on the island. After all, we were in the Bahamas and no longer stuck in Miami!

We went looking for bread on Friday. The little grocery store was out and told us that they'd have some Saturday morning, any time after 8:00. We returned at 9:30 and they were closed. We went again at 11:30 and they were still closed. So, we started asking around and found out about "Charlie the bread man". Charlie is the baker for most of the island, at least for those that use a baker, and his bakery is his house. It doesn't seem that any of the small grocery stores actually stock bread<sup>51</sup>. You just go to Charlie (or call him and he delivers). So we got directions, walked 3/4 of a mile up the main street into Bailey Town and after asking someone again, finally found his house (no signs, just a normal house). We walked up the stairs and tentatively knocked on the door. When a woman opened it we awkwardly asked: "Is this the house of Charlie the bread man?" It was and we were invited to step into their living room which was similar to what you'd find in a similarly aged home in the U.S. – dark paneling with photos of family all around, along with a couple of white Jesus. There was a TV on and a couple of people hanging out. The soft smell of baking bread came from the next room. The woman asked us how many loafs we wanted, then went back, got us one and charged us \$3.00. That was it. (The bread itself was delicious – a soft white bread, just slightly dense, and a bit sweeter than what we're used to in the U.S.)

We spent our time walking the island, relaxing, puttering, and knocking out the occasional "to do". That evening we got together with our friends Fred and Kathy whom we met coming down the ICW. They have a 41 foot catamaran named *Makai* that was in a marina on the South Island. South Island is pretty quiet and their marina was almost empty. We crossed over with them in their dinghy and had dinner at the restaurant at the far end of the island. The restaurant provides a shuttle bus – an old school bus with a lot of its lights missing and a paint scheme right out of the Partridge Family. At the end of the evening the Partridge Family bus returned, dropped our friends off at their marina and us off at the ferry dock – a completely empty wharf at the northern tip with one light and not another human in sight (not so much as a stray dog). Here we waited and pondered what would happen if no ferry came. Answer: Don't sweat it. Sleep on the bench and catch a ride over in the morning – "You're in the islands". We didn't end up having to do that. After about 15 minutes, a small, run down, diesel dive boat came over and took us back across the small channel to North Island. As we crossed, we passed the normal

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<sup>51</sup> Not a lot of bread is sold in the Bahamas – Most people just bake their own.

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pontoon ferryboat. We found out that the dive shop had long gone under. The guys on the boat said they "help out" with the ferry. We chatted, thanked for the ride over, and gave them the \$2 / person ferry fare. We're not sure they didn't just seize the opportunity to make a quasi-honest buck by grabbing a couple passengers before the real ferry could make it over. But, it was moot to us.

The following day was sunny, so we pulled our primary anchor and all of the chain onto the dock in front of us. When anchoring one pays out chain (anchor rode) based on a multiple of the depth at high tide. We generally try for a 7-1 scope or better. To allow us to tell how much chain we've paid out, we had marked it every twenty feet by spray-painting a couple links white. The marks were not large and after a couple months of heavy use, the first three were almost worn off. So, I washed and wire-brushed the chain at the point of the marks and re-spray-painted nice wide marks – one stripe for 20 feet, two for 40, three for 60, etc. Later in the afternoon, we borrowed a couple 5-gallon diesel jugs from another boat and topped off our fuel tank<sup>52</sup>. About noon, Fred swung by in his dink and handed me a 3 inch long piece of 1.5 inch diameter, thin-walled black rubber tubing without explanation. I recognized its purpose immediately, lit up with a big grin, and thanked him whole-heartedly. Gail looked at us both strangely. So, I explained that the previous day I had mentioned in passing to Fred that we had bought a 2 foot piece of 1.5 inch diameter PVC pipe in Miami to use as an extension handle for the outboard engine throttle. However, our throttle handle was exactly 1.5 inches and the pipe wouldn't grip it, it just slid over the handle and spun. We had spent about 5 hours with Fred and Kathy and the whole exchange about the PVC pipe took about 1 minute. Fred had obviously brought the rubber tube over as a sheave for the inside of the PVC pipe. The tube had come with something, but was not needed. Being a guy, he had looked at it and had said to himself "This will come in useful some day" and stowed it. "Some day" had come. I darted down below, grabbed our PVC pipe, and put a little soapy water on the outside of the rubber and slid it inside one end. It fit like a glove and gripped the throttle perfectly. These sort things make guys exceedingly happy and I was.

The next day a local came around in a run-about selling spiny lobster tails. He originally wanted \$40 a dozen, which seemed kind of steep. (They were small.) We passed. After he hit the other cruisers in the marina and still had some left over, we bought half a dozen for \$10. About 15 minutes after he left, the conch guys came by in their skiff and we bought 8 cleaned conch for \$10 without haggling. (He was selling them \$15 a dozen, but we're only two people.)

As we were at slack tide (in-between currents), I decided to dive on the bottom and wipe away some of the growth that had formed over the last couple months. From the surface it looked like a brown dirty film on the bottom of the hull and I expected it to be all soft growth that I could just wipe off with a car sponge. However, once I was in the water, it was clear that there were hundreds of little barnacles too which originated from the Chesapeake and ICW. This wasn't going to be a quick wipe. I spent over an hour in the water with my fins, mask, and snorkel, a car sponge in one hand and a 1 1/2" scraper in the other skimming off the barnacles then wiping off the slime. If I had had a scuba tank it would have taken me half the time. The day before a 41' fishing boat, owned by a very interesting couple, came in and docked next to us. He asked me if I'd check his skeg and prop for him. So, I swam over and did that too. That evening we invited Fred and Kathy over for a delicious dinner of lobster and conch salad and drank way too much rum.

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<sup>52</sup> Because we carry so much fuel, we didn't think to carry a diesel jerry can on the rail. However, one of our own would have come in useful for such occasions.

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**Conch Salad** – Finely dice some onion, green pepper, and tomato. When you dice the tomato, squeeze the juice out of it by cupping it in your fist as if you're making a snowball and discard the juice. Pound about 4 cleaned conch with a mallet and chop them up. Mix the vegetables and the conch. Sprinkle with garlic salt. Squeeze the juice of one or two fresh limes over everything and mix. (You can use one lime and one lemon if you like it less sharp.) Alter the proportions to your particular taste. Eat. (Yes, the conch is raw.)

The fishing boat that pulled in next to us, *Shack Money II*, was a very interesting vessel. The guy who owned it, Frank, had dropped out of high school many years ago and headed down to the Gulf of Mexico to work on shrimp boats. He obviously had drive and determination to spare. At age 24 he bought his first shrimp boat with the help of someone who believed in him and over the next 40 years he built a fleet of ocean scallop boats, bought a fish house and wharf, and numerous commercial fishing licenses which are traded like a commodity. He and his wife, Wilma, were both from rural North Carolina and had thick accents to match. They married when teenagers, have been together over 45 years, have a house in the water near Norfolk, VA and another in Florida. *Shack Money II* was one of five "play" boats they owned. (The others include a 52 foot Tierra and a big Cigarette boat.) It was outfitted with a 1,015 horsepower turbo-charged Caterpillar Diesel, which is a BIG engine for a 41' boat, and was built strong. They had been out on it for three weeks and were on their way back to their home in the Everglades. To say this guy was outgoing and colorful would be a grand understatement. He liked being the wealthy big shot. But, they were both extremely nice and invited us and the family on the sailboat next to us out wahoo fishing. I'd only been ocean fishing once, when I was about 15. Gail had never been. We gladly accepted and 8 of us headed out into the Gulf at about 7:45 am (me nursing a mild hangover from the night before). Once we were out in open water, he asked me if I wanted to take the wheel. I did, and spent much of the day switching off with Wilma, trying to zigzag at 10.5 knots along the edge of the underwater wall where it drops from 100 feet to 500 and 1,000+. The fish weren't hitting very much. After a while we caught the first barracuda, which is considered a trash fish. Barracuda meat often has a toxin called ciguatera that can make humans very ill. Supposedly the smaller ones are OK (but, what constitutes "smaller"?) and the islanders eat them. I happened to be next to the rod when the next fish hit, so through dumb luck ended up hauling in a 5 foot wahoo. Every rod-holder on board was a strong, steel one, except the one for this rod, which was just a piece of PVC pipe hose-clamped to a board. So I pulled the rod out and spent a while hauling in this large fish as fast as I could while the butt of the rod dug into my abdomen – Ouch, but worth it. When we got the fish along side, Frank gaffed it and hauled it aboard. Big grin for me! That turned out to be the only wahoo for the day. We caught a couple more barracuda and headed back after noon. Upon returning to dock, he bought \$1,200 worth of diesel fuel to top off his tanks in preparation for returning home. (Not the bill from our little outing, but not a full tank either.) Frank filleted the wahoo and we all took some. Gail and I horrified him by eating a piece raw, as sushi. (It certainly doesn't get any fresher.) We gave one barracuda to Sherry P., the owner of the little shack bar overlooking the ocean, and the dockhands took care of giving away the other two. That evening we had a sun-downer at Sherry's and tasted a little piece of the barracuda, sauteed with some spice in lemon & lime juice water (which the islanders call "sour water"). It was delicious.

The fishing trip confirmed what we already knew – If we actually caught a fish of any size, we would need a gaff to bring it aboard. So we walked down to the little one room Bimini General Store and bought a 2 foot gaff for \$34.00 (way too much money) to join the rest of the medium-heavy duty fishing gear that we don't use. We did this even though our friend Reinhart aboard



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s/v *Maia* had pointed to his gaff last year noting how he felt he must have one, but had never used it. At least Reinhardt showed us where to stow the never-to-be-used, overpriced, soon to be rusting gaff. It's tucked into the canvas sleeve of the stainless steel bar that supports the bimini<sup>53</sup>. Here it's readily accessible, but out of the way while it's never being used. Gail bought a little aluminum mallet for pounding conch at the same time for \$15. (While also overpriced, it did see a fair amount of use.)

We had been in Bimini 8 days and it was feeling like time to leave. The winds had lightened to about 10 knots. They were still from the East, but were forecast to shift to the South / South-East over the next couple days and the seas were relatively calm – a pretty good window for crossing the Bahama Banks. Also, as our friend Mike aboard *Windsong* once commented: "being ashore is bad – one spends money ashore". So, we left Bimini at dawn the morning of Wednesday 09 January. Our destination was Chub Cay in the Berry Islands, followed by New Providence (the island Nassau is on), then further south to the Exumas. This would involve one overnight passage across the Great Bahama Bank and two more deep water crossings.

### 2.2 From Bimini to Nassau, 11 January 2008

From North Bimini we headed south down along the western side of the Bank past Turtle Rocks and soon turned east onto the Bank itself using the cut by Triangle Rocks. We passed both Gun Cay and Cat Cay to our starboard as we did this. There's a little lighthouse visible on Gun Cay and Jon, the owner of our marina back in Maryland, had helped build a Coast Guard base there back in the 1980s. (It was later turned over to the Royal Bahamas Defense Force, then destroyed by a hurricane.) The Great Bahama Bank has a constant depth of between 2 and 20 feet. The course we took across the top of the Bank from Bimini to the bottom of the Berry Islands kept us in about 7 – 17 feet. The water is a beautiful aqua green and if the sun is overhead and you're wearing polarized sunglasses you can see the bottom clearly as you sail over it. Some portions are sandy with a few hard spots. Others are covered in growth. As there isn't much height to the islands, any sign of land quickly disappeared after we passed by Cat Cay and it was open water for as far as the eye could see. We only saw four or five other boats the first day out. We were just all alone in the middle of this beautiful turquoise waterscape with nothing but the horizon on all sides. Just after noon, Gail sautéed the remaining conch and some of the wahoo and we tucked in to a great fresh fish lunch. The distance from Bimini to Chub Cay in the Berrys is about 90 nautical miles, which is more than we can do in daylight. It's not recommended that one cross the Banks at night<sup>54</sup>. Therefore, we had the experience of anchoring in the middle of the open water. We pulled a couple miles off the main channel and set our anchor about 10 minutes before sunset in order to squeeze the most distance out of the first day (25° 31.345' N, 78° 27.783' W). The starscape was magnificent. We set a couple cockpit lights in addition to our regular mast-head anchor light in order to make ourselves as visible as possible to any locals motoring through at night. When we got a bit chilly, we went down below for dinner and an early to-bed. There was a one foot chop with a two-footer every now and then. This caused us to bob up and down and our spare anchor was rattling on the chock. We definitely knew we were on a boat. I slept pretty well. Gail had some weird dreams. (When sleeping on board, we both tend to wake up every 2 – 3 hours to check things out, then go back to sleep. We don't plan this. It just happens and we figure it's a good practice. Neither

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<sup>53</sup> A bimini is a canvas sun shade that opens up over the cockpit. In the islands the sun is strong enough that it stays open all the time.

<sup>54</sup> Modern electronics actually make this doable for this particular route.

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of us have slept a night straight through since leaving in October and this was to be the case until our return.)

The following day we woke before dawn and continued through Northwest Channel, cutting across the top of the Tongue of the Ocean to Chub Cay at the bottom of the Berry Islands. In the Tongue of the Ocean the water is thousands of feet deep again and the color changed back to dark blue and the seas built to between 2 and 4 feet. The anchorage at Chub is a small crescent shaped basin on the western side of the island. A sportfisher<sup>55</sup> was having trouble with his anchor as we arrived and dropped and re-set it something like 15 times. All the while, we're doing circles in the little basin waiting to anchor ourselves. Eventually, one is thinking "Come on!" Frankly, he had mediocre ground tackle, and didn't appear to know what he was doing. He'd drop, set, then back up on it at high RPM, and tear it right out (rather than backing down at low RPM and letting it dig in). We finally decided we didn't want to be anywhere behind him and anchored on the other side of a nice catamaran, closer to the point (25° 24.554' N, 77° 54.623' W). We both dove our anchor and found it buried up to its neck in the sand where we had planted and set it – no plowing what so ever, just a straight dig. (We hope it always does so and regularly toast the local water gods (in a poetic and superstitious, rather than a believing sense) to look after us. Speaking of watery gods – Most westerners don't know that the ancient Chinese believed that dragons governed bodies of water. Each body of water had its own dragon and the dragons lived within their own feudal hierarchy. Even a well had its own dragon. I think the imagery is rather nice and is made even nicer by the fact that the dragons loved to play with large magic pearls. Maybe we should be toasting the local dragons and pouring a bit of wine over the side for them. I think Li Bai<sup>56</sup> would have liked that, but only if one saluted the moon at the same time. And why not? Isn't the moon like a large pearl?) Anyway, a decent anchor, a chain rode, and good scope are really the ticket. We had good bottom and a good hold. However, even though the point of the cay blocked the easterly winds, the waves worked their way around it and it was an extremely rolly night where we were literally tossed around in bed.

We hauled anchor before dawn the following morning and continued towards Nassau. Several other sail boats we had seen in both Miami and Bimini soon appeared off an eastern cay and we found our selves travelling a few miles off the starboard the side of a 3 boat convoy, pounding head on across the 4 foot swell of the Tongue of the Ocean towards Nassau's western channel. The other three boats were a bit tentative at first about the slog and we listened in on their VHF conversations as they first contemplated whether to continue. However, they were obviously in a similar situation we were – fed up with all the Easterlies and wanting to get down to the Exumas. We saw we were doing 5 knots, so never second-guessed our days passage. They soon came to the same conclusion and continued along, entering Nassau Harbor just ahead of us. While we were listing in, Colin of s/v *Zhan*, whom we had met and chatted with several times, said something to his buddy boats that resonated deeply with us. Colin is a middle-aged guy from Kentucky who talks with a HARD, Sloooooow Southern drawl much like Huckleberry Hound. We heard him come on the radio in frustration and say: "When I get to Nassau, I'm going to take down these sails and stow them in the deepest corner of the boat that I can find – because I sure as hell aren't using them". We laughed out loud! He was dead on, at least for this point in our journey. We'd come down the ICW (almost all motoring) and faced steady easterlies since. For all who are reading this web log imagining all the

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<sup>55</sup> A popular type of motorized recreational fishing boat, often outfitted with "tuna towers" on top.

<sup>56</sup> a.k.a. Li Po, Bai was one of China's most famous Tang dynasty poets (8<sup>th</sup> century CE). He was famous for loving both wine and the water. In one of his most famous poems, included below, he drinks with the moon.

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romantic leisurely sailing we're doing, all I can say is that we never imagined, we would motor so much or so far. Things should change now that we will shift to a southerly course. And, of course, we'll have the wind to our back for the trip home. At least that's what we keep telling ourselves<sup>57</sup>. Anyway – back to Nassau.

Nassau harbor is the channel that runs between the top of New Providence Island and Paradise Island to its north. The entrance is well marked, but somewhat narrow. Because a lot of big cruise ships dock here, you must radio Nassau Harbor Control for permission to enter, giving them your boat name, documentation number, prior port of call, and destination in Nassau. They keep good records and you must report your departure too. The whole thing only takes a couple minutes and we were welcomed to Nassau. There is a bit of a current running through the harbor. There were also reports of the holding being questionable, and Nassau is one of the few places in the Bahamas where they warn you about theft. (They warn you a lot, the same with Miami.) Consequently, we took a slip at a marina others had recommended that was across the street from a real western style supermarket / shopping center with not so outrageous prices (Nassau Harbor Club Marina, 25° 04.504' N, 77° 18.764' W). As we were only planning on spending a night and leaving at 07:00 the next morning, we quickly went over for fresh vegetables and the like before washing off the boat, taking showers, getting ice, etc. Unfortunately, we missed the propane truck by an hour. He comes around to the various marinas in the early afternoon and fills tanks from a truck. We'd been using the same tank since Ft. Pierce, Florida, over a month ago, and were pretty sure it was near empty. We had a spare so there was no crisis. However, it's not easy to get a fill on the smaller islands. Even on Bimini, one had to put one's tank on a boat and it was returned full the following week when the boat returned. This was rather amazing to us, since all of the local residents cook with propane. (Interestingly, we ran out the next day.) Nassau is the best place in the Bahamas to stop if you need a lot of provisions or anything major. (Yamaha outboard engines are cheaper here than in the States.) It's one of the few places you can find most everything you need. Otherwise, it's a big city with the congestion and problems of one. We didn't need anything and almost bypassed it. We stopped there mainly because it is the best / most direct and expedient harbor when crossing the Tongue of the Ocean to the Exumas and because we felt we should at least have a brief experience of going through it. It wasn't a bad stop.

Saturday morning our plan was to cross over to Allen's Cay and/or Highborne Cay in the Exumas in time to find a safe anchorage for a moderate front that is forecast for Sunday evening / Monday.

### 2.3 Three Poems by Li Bai (a.k.a. Li Po, 701 – 762)

(Translated by David Hinton)

#### 2.3.1 *Drinking Alone Beneath The Moon*

1

*Among the blossoms, a single jar of wine  
No one else here, I ladle it out myself.*

*Raising my cup, I toast the bright moon,*

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<sup>57</sup> This was the case.

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*and facing my shadow makes friends three,*

*though moon has never understood wine,  
and shadow only trails along behind me.*

*Kindred a moment with moon and shadow,  
I've found a joy that must infuse spring:*

*I sing, and moon rocks back and forth;  
I dance, and shadow tumbles into pieces.*

*Sober, we're together and happy. Drunk,  
we scatter away into our own directions:*

*intimates forever, we'll wander carefree  
and never meet again in Star River distances.*

2

*Surely, if heaven didn't love wine,  
there would be no Wine Star in heaven,*

*and if earth didn't love wine, surely  
there would be no Wine Spring on earth.*

*Heaven and earth have always loved wine,  
so how could loving wine shame heaven?*

*I hear clear wine called enlightenment,  
and they say murky wine is like wisdom:*

*once you drink enlightenment and wisdom,  
why go searching for gods and immortals?*

*Three cups and I've plumbed the great Way,  
a jarful and I've merged with occurrence*

*appearing of itself. Wine's view is lived:  
you can't preach doctrine to the sober.*

3

*It's April in Ch'ang-an, these thousand  
blossoms making a brocade of daylight.*

*Who can bear spring's lonely sorrows, who  
face it without wine? It's the only way.*

*Success or failure, life long or short:  
our fate's given by Changemaker at birth.*

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*But a single cup evens out life and death,  
our ten thousand concerns unfathomed,*

*and once I'm drunk, all heaven and earth  
vanish, leaving me suddenly alone in bed,*

*forgetting that person I am even exists.  
Of all our joys, this must be the deepest.*

### **2.3.2 Ancient Song**

*Chuang-tzu dreams he's a butterfly,  
and a butterfly becomes Chuang-tzu.*

*All transformation this one body,  
boundless occurrence goes on and on:*

*it's no surprise eastern seas become  
western streams shallow and clear,*

*or the melon-grower at Ch'ing Gate  
once reigned as duke Tung-ling.*

*Are hopes and dreams any different?  
We bustle around, looking for what?*

### **2.3.3 Song Of The Merchant**

*On heaven's wind, a sea traveler  
wanders by boat through distances*

*It's like a bird among the clouds:  
once gone, gone without a trace.*

## **2.4 The Northern Exumas, 25 January 2008**

Our travels went according to plan on Saturday and our crossing from Nassau to the Exumas was pleasant and uneventful. The entire passage was over the western side of the Great Bahama Bank and we were in clear pastel water. There is one tricky portion called the Yellow Bank that is about 15 feet deep, but known for coral heads that rise to 3 feet below the surface. In order to see the coral heads, one should cross the Yellow Bank at mid-day or early afternoon. Early morning is bad because the low easterly sun shimmers off the water hiding everything below. We crossed over at about 11:00 – a bit early. However, we followed two boats through, the forward one a catamaran with 4 people on the bow watching. I too kept watch on the bow of *Alisios* with a walkie-talkie in hand so I could easily communicate with Gail at the stern. The coral heads look like large black patches in the water. They aren't that numerous. But they are there. Once we passed through them we were back in 20 feet of easy water.

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Allen's Cay is one of many small islands that form a chain and make up the Northern Exumas. The larger ones are Ship Channel Cay and Highborne Cay. Allen's and Highborne are popular arrival points from Nassau. Highborne has a small marina. Allen's is undeveloped and includes a number of small islets and large rocks. We entered through the southern channel and anchored in a fairly protected basin between Allen's and Leaf Cay (24° 44.882' N, 76° 50.291' W). There were 7 other sailboats there when we arrived and about 10 by nightfall. After setting the hook, we began to put the boat back into at-anchor cruising mode. One of the first things to do was take *Moondink* off the deck and put her back into the water. I grabbed the foot pump, crossed my fingers and re-inflated the high-pressure floor then checked the pressure in the main tubes by pressing down on them. In performing this innocent action, I dislocated my right thumb – I pushed down on the tube and in a split second felt a spike of pain, saw my thumb extended at a most un-natural angle, and reflexively pulled it back crying Ouch!. It immediately sprung back into place with an audible pop before I could cradle my injured hand. The whole thing occurred and was over in a second leaving me somewhat bewildered – What did I do? I guess sometimes weird things just happen. I had dislocated the same thumb when I was 17 years old and on the wrestling team in high school. Maybe there was some lingering damage that left the joint weakened. (I'm 42 now.) I was pretty stoic about it. It wasn't that big a deal. However, Gail instantly sprung into Florence Nightingale mode, repeatedly asking if I was "really" OK. (I have a history of down-playing these sorts of things and she doesn't trust me.) We walked back to the cockpit. I popped 4 ibuprofen (as much for swelling as pain) and she made sure I held a bag of ice against it. When the ice melted, I wrapped it in an ace bandage and figured that's about all I could do. Gail also pulled out the first aid book and looked up "Fractures, Sprains, and Dislocations". This was kind of funny because the information was geared for much more extreme injuries. She even remembered the "RICE" first-aid mnemonic (rest, ice, compress, elevate). After an hour or so, we got the dink in the water, Gail doing most of the work, me steadying it left-handed. We got the engine on. Luckily that is also mostly a left-handed job. A bit later she made some off-hand comment about how I would be waited on for the next three weeks. I laughed and told her that her sympathy would wane after only a couple days. She admitted that I was probably right. The thumb aches a bit, is stiff, a little swollen and numb across the top, and there is a small linear red area at the base, where it joins the hand. Apart from that it seems OK. If I was home, I'd see an orthopedist. He/she would X-ray it, not see much, and have me either keep it in a bandage or possibly a cast for a few weeks. I figure the treatment would be largely the same as what I'm giving myself. There are no orthopedists in the Exumas anyway. So, it's all moot.

Allen's Cay is a beautiful spot, known for its rock iguanas. They used to inhabit most of the major Bahama islands, but had been hunted or otherwise pushed to near extinction<sup>58</sup>. They're now protected. The islands of Allen's Cay and the rest of the Exumas are composed of a pock-marked limestone rock and covered with low palms, mangroves, sea grapes and salt-tolerant scrub vegetation. Many have small beautiful clean sand beaches along their shores. Otherwise, the coasts are mostly iron-shore<sup>59</sup> and, while pretty, naturally occurring fresh water is extremely scarce and they are quite inhospitable. Our anchorage had quite a tidal current. But, it was reasonably protected, and the holding was good as long as you anchored in sand. From it we could dink or swim to several different islets. The beach of Leaf Cay next to us was covered with iguanas who were very used to people and don't run away when you approach them. This was obviously a popular attraction because throughout the weekend, several large tourist speedboats from Nassau (imagine a Donzi or Cigarette boat with an open foredeck and seats

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<sup>58</sup> The locals used to eat them. We were told later by one old islander that they taste pretty good.

<sup>59</sup> Jagged, pock-marked, dark limestone

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for 30 people) pulled in, dropped their passengers on the beach, then collected everyone and took off half an hour later. The local cruisers also went over in their dinks (us included). However, the visits are of limited duration and it was easy to get solo time with the iguanas. Rock iguanas have an interesting feature – a third eye which is called a pineal eye located on the median between their two normal eyes. This, apparently, is found in many lizards. They lack the crests of the iguanas we saw in Florida and aren't as "Jurassic Park" looking, but are neat nevertheless.

We took our first conch at Allen's Cay – The day was nice, so we loaded our snorkel gear into *Moondink* along with our little Danforth anchor, a bucket, and the pole spear (collapsed and in its case), then went exploring. We could see a big storm cloud a couple miles away with an obvious line of rain going to the water. So, we didn't go too far. The cloud ended up blowing north of us so we dropped the anchor and went over the side to see what we'd see. We concentrated our snorkeling along the shore line. There weren't any big fish (apart from a 4 foot barracuda) so we never broke out the pole spear. Gail came across a good size conch, picked him/her up and asked "Should I keep it?" I replied: "Sure. Maybe we'll find more. If not, we can always set it back." Soon Gail found another, then I found a third and fourth. We took them back to the dink where Gail cautioned me for the umpteenth zillion time about using my thumb too much. I swore that I wasn't, even though she was probably right. We, then, moved up the coast a bit and went in the water again. We found a really neat lion fish<sup>60</sup> hanging out under an overhang. However, legal sized conch<sup>61</sup> continued to prove hard to find, though there were a fair number of ones that were too small to take. Eventually we found a fifth and figured we had enough meat for a good dinner. Now the hard part: (1) Getting them out of their shell and (2) Cleaning them. While we were in Nassau we had gone to a cafe with Wi-Fi in order to check email and weather and update the blog. Gail had the forethought to also Google "How to clean conch". We had downloaded and saved our findings to the laptop. While in Bimini, we had also tried hard to watch the islanders cleaning conch. However, they move fast and weren't interested in passing on any knowledge. Getting the conch out of the shell proved the easy part. Gail used the claw end of our small hammer to knock a linear hole between the 3rd and 4th rings at the pointy end, then inserted a dive knife and attempted to cut the muscle. The conch is supposed to just pull out. She ended up prying it out with a big flat-head screwdriver. So, obviously didn't get the knife in properly. Someone who knows what they're doing takes less than a minute per shell. Gail was averaging a bit under 10. Still, they all came out and in good shape too. (I was forbidden from playing because of my thumb, so watched and provided "helpful advice" ;-). Next came the cleaning part. This isn't made any easier by the fact that the de-shelled conch are still alive and looking up at you when you start. The instructions said: *"The fleshy black and white mass is viscera, and is no good to eat. First, cut all the viscera away, leaving the gray and white muscle mass. Place the remaining carcass with the eyes face up to you and the claw directly away from you. Now cut off the projection above the eyes and the proboscis. Also remove the esophagus which runs under the skin from the base of the proboscis to the ragged edge of the muscle. Next, cut a line from the back section of the claw's non-pointed side to the ragged edge of the muscle. Then use your thumb to work under the leathery skin and peel it off. Next, cut off the claw and slit the rest of it into two steaks."* Frankly, after cutting all the viscera away, the directions were as clear as mud, though they made sense later on. We never did figure out what projection above the eyes they were talking about. A

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<sup>60</sup> An invasive species that is very pretty, but has no predators and is disruptive to the local ecology. After learning this, and seeing their prevalence, we didn't find them so neat.

<sup>61</sup> A legal-sized conch is full grown and has a well-developed lip to its shell. Conch take about 3.5 years to reach maturity.

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diagram was included. However, it was just a conch anatomy diagram stolen from a biology text – great if you wanted to know where the stomach, kidney, and columellar muscle were, but it didn't tie back to the names used in the instructions. Gail slowly made the best of it. I eventually, decided she didn't need me hovering over her, so came below to document the monumental event and here you have it. We had the conch for dinner and they were delicious.

**Cracked Conch** – Pound the living daylight out of the cleaned conch with a mallet. Slice thin. Squeeze a lime over the meat and let it sit for an hour (You can omit this step if you don't have the lime or the time). Make a mixture of flour, lemon pepper, and garlic salt. Dust the conch in the flour mixture and sautee in a couple teaspoons of vegetable oil until golden.

When cleaning the conch, we found ourselves a bucket short when looking for one to scoop up some seawater to rinse the swim platform. (Cleaning conch is a fairly messy operation.) In my infinite wisdom, I suggested that Gail use the look bucket – bad idea! A look bucket is a painter's pail that has the bottom cut out and replaced with a piece of clear Plexiglas. You hold it in the water over the side of the dink to see what's below, just as if you were wearing a mask and stuck your head in. It's great for checking the anchor or scoping out the reefs below before anchoring the dink to skin-dive. I made ours before leaving home and had glued the Plexiglas on the outside of the bottom with silicone sealant. Silicone was a bad choice because it doesn't have much bonding strength. The correct stuff to use is 3M 4000<sup>62</sup>, but I couldn't find it in small tubes and one isn't supposed to use 5200 or polysulfide on plastic. Everything was OK when we just used it as a look bucket and the pressure was from the outside, pushing the Plexiglas to the bucket. But when it was used to scoop up water (pressure from the inside), the Plexiglas bottom instantly fell out, disappearing into the depths and a 3-knot current. I immediately put on my mask and fins and had a look for it, but no luck. It was all I could do to kick back to the boat in the current. This bummed us out quite a bit. Several hours later, at slack tide, I decided to have another try. I didn't tell Gail what I was doing (just going for a dip). I followed the sand bottom where I thought the current would have deposited it and lo-and-behold, saw it sitting there 15 feet below about a hundred yards behind the boat. Pretty impressive and lucky finding a clear plastic disk on a sand bottom. I didn't tell Gail I found it. I just swam back to the boat with it tucked behind me. She was on the stern pounding the conch she had cleaned that morning when she heard my voice from behind saying: "Can you grab this for me?" She turned around expecting me to be handing her a fin. Boy was she surprised. We still didn't have any 4000, but now the bottom is secured with 4 little stainless steel nuts and bolts in addition to the silicone. It's not going anywhere unless we lose the whole bucket. (And I actually used the little egg-beater hand drill we brought with us.)

Sunday 13 January we celebrated 24 years together. There was a younger couple, Dave and Vickie, on the 36' Pearson sloop *Windfreak* anchored in front of us. We had cocktails with them and soon discovered that she and her parents had worked in Turks and Caicos for the Ramada the time we were diving there 15 years ago. A couple of our old Cayman co-workers<sup>63</sup> had also been working there at the time, so we had a number of mutual acquaintances. It's a small world.

We keep on pinching ourselves. The water's so clear, the sun so nice, and the cays so beautiful. We took *Moondink* to the other side of Leaf Cay and stood alone on the beach looking out across the water and islets thinking: "We're here on the same boat we sail in the

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<sup>62</sup> 3M 4200 would probably also be OK.

<sup>63</sup> When we were in our mid-20s, back in 1989 and 90, Gail and I lived in Grand Cayman working as scuba diving instructors for a year.

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Chesapeake and that is the same dink we use in the Chesapeake. Only now it's pulled up on a beautiful tropical beach on a little uninhabited island and there's no one else in sight – just beautiful aqua water and empty little tropical islands. This is absolutely un-real!"

The flip side is checking the weather daily, trying to keep aware of the regular frontal systems that pass through. We were outside the range of the U.S. NOAA weather radio broadcasts. In the northern Exumas forecasts are given over the VHF twice a day – First at 07:30 by Highborne Cay Marina, then at 08:00 by the Exuma Land and Sea Park, both on channel 06. Highborne's forecasts consisted of a reading of the 5 day NOAA forecast for Dearfield Beach to Ocean Reef extending to the territorial waters of the Bahamas, followed by the Bahamas Met. forecast. The latter one changed in format from day to day. Often it would treat the northern and central Bahamas as one section and the southern Bahamas as another. Sometimes it merged them in seemingly haphazard ways. Sometimes we were given 3 days of local forecasts. Sometimes only 2. The Exuma Park forecast included a local "virtual buoy" forecast which was very useful. However, the woman read it fast and it took a quick hand to transcribe all the days. Interestingly (?) the forecasts stopped during her days off only to resume when she returned. This caught us by surprise, particularly since a front was approaching. Can you imagine the U.S. Park Service doing that? But we're in the islands! (and there's no mandate that they give the forecast at all). The forecasts change slightly from day to day (sometimes not so slightly). Frontal systems roll through on an almost weekly cyclical basis. Just behind any new front there are usually stronger northerly winds that shift clockwise after the front passes. After a couple days of blowing, the weather calms down, then the calm is followed by another front. Some are stronger than others. One always wants to keep an island between the boat and the wind, particularly when it's blowing at 20 knots. Many of the anchorages are just scallops in one side of a cay and are only protected from certain wind directions. The good anchorages between cays that offer 360 degree protection tend to have strong tidal currents that shift during the day causing the boat to hang strangely on anchor. One always tries to stay aware of what ones own boat is doing and the boats around you. In a strong blow you find the best protection you can and try not to think that the only thing holding you there is a length of chain connected to a 33 pound hook in the sand as the wind is howling and the boat is moaning, heeling, and bobbing. We found ourselves in a routine – always check and write down the 07:30 and 08:00 forecasts, track the fronts, and live through cycles of several days of nice, relatively calm, conditions which were good for snorkeling and exploring, followed by several days of windy, choppy conditions. We had to be aware of the various local anchorages and be prepared to move the boat accordingly.

From Allen's Cay, we continued south to Shroud Cay. The first of a couple moderate to strong fronts was passing through and we had great sailing. On the way down, we passed Norman's Cay that had been home to Carlos Lehder, a notorious drug lord in the 1970s and 80s. The marina and airstrip there had been a major distribution point for marijuana and cocaine coming into the United States. A partially sunken, wrecked drug running plane still lies in the harbor. Just south of Norman's are a couple small islands called Wax Cay which mark the northern edge of the "Exuma Land and Sea Park". This is a 22 mile stretch of water and cays that are a nature preserve and known for being very beautiful. We pulled into the lee of Shroud Cay and picked up a mooring ball set by the park service (24° 31.847' N, 76° 47.808' W). The interior of Shroud consists of mangrove-lined creeks that lace through sandy flats that are barely above sea level. For the most part, the creeks are only navigable by dink at high tide, drying out at low tide. (*Moondink* draws about a foot of water with us in her, maybe less.) These mangrove creeks are quite different from those in Florida. There's no visible tannin in the water which is as

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clear as that by the surrounding shores. The creeks / mangroves are very neat to explore. Back in the 1960s a hermit named Ernest Scholtes anchored his small sailboat at the mouth of one of the creeks and lived on the island for several years. He set up a "Robinson Crusoe" type dwelling at the top of the highest hill which became known as Camp Driftwood. The cruising guides made this sound like quite a magical place that "had to be seen to be believed". We got drenched taking *Moondink* across the choppy sound to the northernmost creek, then wove our way through very shallow creeks all the way across the island till we got to a small beach on the ocean side. From here there is a rugged path leading to the hilltop. The 1960s, however, were quite a while ago. While the location was beautiful and you could imagine what a cool hermitage it could have been, there isn't much there now. It did, however, offer spectacular views of all sides of the Cay and was well worth a visit for that alone. There were two other dinghies there and the two couples we met told us of a more direct route back. Consequently, we got the experience of exploring most of the mangrove-lined shallows and avoided much of the chop we experienced on our way out. Shroud Cay is also known for having a good freshwater well, quite a rarity down here. It's at the top of the promenade overlooking our anchorage – more of a natural limestone cistern set in the iron-shore than a real well. We hiked up to it and it was pretty. But, we didn't drink the water.

Our second day at Shroud we hooked up with two other Calibers that pulled in, both 33's, the predecessor to our boat. (The 35 is basically a 33 that was extended by adding a swim platform, though there are system upgrades too). We'd only passed one other Caliber since starting down the ICW and it was a 40. So, this was somewhat exciting for all of us. The two 33's, *Oceanus* and *Largo* were travelling together, at least for the time being. Our friends on *Makai* had spotted them a couple days earlier and we had hailed them on the VHF before they arrived. Interestingly, *Oceanus* is the last 33 that was made and *Alisios* is the last 35. We dinked the mangroves with them, and got together that evening to watch the sunset.

We vacillated over where to go next. We had arrived at Shroud Wednesday and a relatively strong front was forecast for Sunday night and Monday. We eventually decided to move down to Warderick Wells Cay on Friday. This is the main Cay of the park. It's known for good snorkeling, hiking trails, etc. and has a number of protected anchorages and mooring fields. We weren't alone in our thoughts and it seemed like everyone was flocking there to ride out the front. Moorings weren't freeing up and there was waiting list over 20 boats long for the calmer north anchorage. We, therefore relocated to the Emerald Rocks anchorage first (24° 23.074' N, 76° 37.532' W), placed ourselves on the waiting list and moved to the northern mooring field (24° 23.883' N, 76° 38.006' W) Saturday afternoon.

The park was, indeed, quite beautiful with numerous snorkeling spots, clean sand beaches, and hiking trails. The skeleton of a 52 foot sperm whale had been assembled on the beach by the small ranger's station. The station was surrounded by numerous pretty little birds called bananaquits. We sat out the front in the northern basin, snorkeling off *Moondink* before the winds hit, then hiking the weather trails when the water became choppy. Saturday evening, the park hosted a cocktail party on the beach with a campfire. Every boat brought a small hors d'oeuvre. We got to put faces to some of the voices we've heard on the VHF and exchanged several boat cards<sup>64</sup>. These informal get-togethers where everyone brings an appetizer are called "pot lucks".

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<sup>64</sup> Almost every cruiser carries "boat cards" – business cards that include the name of their boat, its occupants, and their contact info. When you meet someone you click with, or just someone you think you'll bump into again, you exchange boat cards. This becomes a valuable crutch, since we all tend to remember the name of the other boats (reinforced by hearing them on the VHF), but often forget the names of the people on them.

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We had more outboard engine problems – conking out, then failing to restart. Luckily this occurred when we were close to shore and around other people. We ended up getting a tow back to *Alisios* Saturday evening. This latest failure was not long after we topped up the fuel. We're hoping this was only coincidence and that we don't have bad fuel. The sparkplug still appears a bit oily, but I'm not sure it's abnormally so. This time, rather than just cleaning it, I replaced it. I also re-adjusted the idle speed and fuel to air mixture. The engine purrs like a kitten now. But, that doesn't mean it won't conk out again. The unreliability is making us a bit nervous. There aren't any real mechanics near by. In retrospect, I wish I had thought to bring an extra sparkplug socket and drive. I have a couple cheap ones in our garage at home where they have never been used. It would be nice to stow one, along with a spare plug, inside the outboard housing where it would be available in case of emergency, rather than using my good Craftsman ones. We're now bringing tools & the handheld VHF with us on any significant excursions.

We did quite a bit of snorkeling. The park waters were the first places we saw lobster (because they are a no take zone). However, the large spotted eagle rays were what caught our attention. They swam throughout the 15 foot channels. We got to snorkel down into groups of two or three of them several times and close enough to really get good looks at their faces. Our prior encounters with eagle rays had always been on scuba off walls where they glided by in formation far below us. We've also seen southern stingrays and small yellow (a.k.a. lemon) rays.

The cube ice we bought in Nassau melted and we finally reached the point where we decided we'd let the remaining block ice core of the ice box melt and do without any sort of refrigeration. A 10 pound bag of ice is \$5.00 in our current location and it seemed silly to spend a lot of money to keep a little butter, a pint of milk, and a few beers cold. The bottom half of the core was the same block ice we started with in Maryland exactly 3 months ago. Not a bad run.

The front passed bringing 20 – 30 knot winds, but only smatterings of showers. Sunday night, as the wind howled through the rigging, someone announced over the VHF that the Giants beat Greenbay and would be playing New England in the Superbowl. We spent Monday holed up below reading. Tuesday was spent hiking the interior trails of Warderick Wells Cay. The trails are quite rugged, but beautiful – pockmarked limestone rock with jagged edges, that climb steeply upward to small hills, then down again to cliffs and small sandy beaches. Mangroves, mosquito bushes, ironwood, and other scrub bush plants cling to life in the little soil that fills the holes in the limestone. There are no fresh water springs or creeks on the island, only rain pools and a thin freshwater lens that sits atop the salty water table. The limestone chimes musically if you strike it. Small lizards abound. Birds and mammals don't. After hiking across the island to the blow holes and Boo Boo Hill, then down about 2/3 of the eastern / ocean shore, we turned inland past a long low stone wall, then down a long path to the ruins of the Davis Plantation – ruined walls from a set of small Loyalist<sup>65</sup> buildings that date to the late 1700s. We couldn't imagine how a group of people could have subsisted here at that time. (Maybe that's why

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<sup>65</sup> Loyalists were colonial citizens who remained loyal to Britain during the American Revolution. Many of them formed or joined pro-British militias and were in open warfare with the Colonialists. In the Carolinas they practiced a scorched earth policy that made them particularly unpopular by the time the British were defeated and pulled out. Facing financial hardship and persecution in the U.S., many immigrated to the Bahamas where the British government provided them with land grants. The Bahamian people are largely descended from these white loyalists and freed black slaves.

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they're ruins.) From there we worked our way around and across several small sounds back to the park office. Since we had to ford several small salt streams and shallow sounds, we wore Teva type sandals – not the best shoes for climbing up and down rock hills in terms of ankle support. Both of our feet were sore and openly chaffed at the ankles when we were done. But, it was well worth it.

Tuesday was my father's 82nd birthday. Late in the afternoon, we returned to the ranger station with the laptop and paid for our first internet access since Nassau. Upon checking email, I learned from my mom that my dad had collapsed a couple weeks earlier and subsequently had a pacemaker installed on 18 January. She assured me that everything was OK. He was back to normal, just not allowed to lift anything heavy for a few weeks. I felt very much less than assured. Something happening to one of our parents while we are gone is a fear Gail and I live with. I sent a birthday greeting that I hope was calmer than the emotional state I was in when I wrote it.

Wednesday we left Waderick Wells and for Cambridge Cay and picked up another park mooring ball (24° 18.111' N, 76° 32.342' W). Cambridge is one of a cluster of little cays and islands just above Conch Cut. It marks the southernmost boundary of the Exuma Land and Sea Park and is the conventional demarcation point between the Northern and Middle Exumas. We came down on the Banks side. The southern entrance is a bit tricky. But we made it through the shallow reefy parts fine with me on the bow. Cambridge Cay is both particularly beautiful from a scenic standpoint and famous for good snorkeling. The park office had provided us with a map of various snorkeling sites. So, after settling in and waiting for something close to slack tide, we loaded up *Moondink* and headed out. The initial stages of this endeavor provided some comic relief for all – We have a small plastic crate that holds the dink anchor(s), our weight belts for skindiving, some tools, and the like. We store this in *Alisios*' cockpit locker when underway. When preparing *Moondink* for use, I generally get on board first with the pump to top off the leaky floor. Gail then hands me stuff. She had pulled out the little crate and leaned over to place it on the front tube of the dink. (It's a little heavy.) She had assumed that the dink's towing bridle was still attached, tethering it on both sides to *Alisios* stern. It wasn't. *Moondink* was only tied to the stern rail by its painter. With Gail's angled push on *Moondink*'s bow, the distance between it and the stern of *Alisios* rapidly increased until stopped by both the painter and Gail, who found herself bridging the gap with her now prone, arched body. This was not a situation that could sustain itself for very long. I looked at her smiling and said: "You're going to have to let go of the box" (which I now had hold of). I could see her mind working fast to figure a dry way out of her predicament. There was none. She finally succumbed to the inevitable, let go, and fell into the water separating the two boats, both of us laughing out loud. Luckily she was wearing her bathing suit. After loading the dink, we headed out. Along the way, we hooked up with three other dinghies / couples with a similar plan and headed about a mile and a half north to a site called the "Aquarium" off O'Brien's Cay. It lived up to its very un-original name and included a small wall with beautiful reefs, plentiful fish, and nice sponges. From there we moved back southwards to another reef by a small sunken plane – not surprisingly called "Airplane reef". It had presumably been running drugs and went down in the 1980s, but details were sketchy. (We assume there were some small planes in the Bahamas in the 1980s that actually didn't run drugs, but we aren't sure about that either ;-). There were no lobster on it, so we inferred that there has been some poaching in these southernmost park waters. A mile past our anchorage, in the other direction were a pair of islands called the Rocky Dundas. The southern one is known for its two small sea-level caves complete with stalactites and stalagmites from an earlier, dryer time. The surge was stronger than we would have liked, but we successfully

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snorkeled into the northern one. There was room for about 4 people in the conditions of the time. Part of the roof had collapsed allowing sunlight in and enabling a good view that was quite impressive. The mouth of the second cave was smaller and shallower than the first and after hovering at it for a few minutes, we decided the ocean surge made it too dangerous to attempt. However, we did get a good look at a beautiful, large elk horn coral off its mouth.

Calm days at the boat still take our breath away. When we look over the side, it's like she's floating on a sheet of glass with a faint aqua tint. Every rock, sand patch, and blade of grass on the bottom is visible. More often there's a slight ripple on the surface of the water that slightly mutes and distorts the landscape below. At Warderick Wells *Alisios* acquired a large remora that hung out for the duration of our stay. We'd see him dart out whenever Gail threw the morning's coffee grounds overboard. We felt a bit sorry for him since that was about the only sort of thing we threw over the side. He never got a meal off us. It's not uncommon to find a 4 foot barracuda hanging out under the boat, as was the case at Cambridge. They seem to like the shade the hull offers. Although they look fierce, they don't bother you and we swim and bathe freely with them there. Evenings at Cambridge, however, were another matter. Thursday we invited Dave and Beth from s/v *Grateful Latitudes* over for wine at sunset. They had been acting as mooring hosts for the park and noted that a reef shark had been trailing their dink during their rounds. As the sun set, we noticed that it had been joined by half a dozen additional sharks between 4 and 6 feet long that were now circling *Alisios* in a pack. (No food for them either ;-). After that we looked for, and noticed, the reef sharks.

We remained at Cambridge for a few more days snorkeling, dinking to empty secluded beaches, and sitting through the passage of another, smaller cold front. Gail made beer bread using my grandmother's recipe. In this way, we closed out our stay in the Northern Exumas.

**Ella Williams' (Matthew's Grandmother's) Beer Bread** – 3 cups self rising flour, 3 tablespoons sugar, 1 (12 oz.) can or bottle of warm Budweiser-type beer (If you don't have self rising flour you can make it by adding 0.5 tsp. salt and 1.5 tsp. baking powder to each cup of regular all-purpose flour. Don't use a heavy beer. If you do, the bread won't taste good.): Mix the flour and sugar in a bowl. Add the beer slowly stirring it in with a spoon until well you get a lump of sticky dough. It should be sticky to touch, but at the same time firm as a dough. You may need to add some extra flour to achieve the proper consistency. Put the dough into a well greased bread pan. If you want, you can embed a few slivers of butter along the center of the top before putting the pan in the oven. Bake at 375 degrees for approximately 50 minutes until the bread is cooked and the top is golden brown.

### 2.5 A Sonnet of the Moon by Charles Best (1570 – 1627)

*LOOK how the pale queen of the silent night  
Doth cause the ocean to attend upon her,  
And he, as long as she is in his sight,  
With his full tide is ready her to honor.  
But when the silver wagon of the moon  
Is mounted up so high he cannot follow,  
The sea calls home his crystal waves to moan,  
And with low ebb doth manifest his sorrow.  
So you that are the sovereign of my heart  
Have all my joys attending on your will;*

*My joys low-ebbing when you do depart,  
When you return their tide my heart doth fill.  
So as you come and as you do depart,  
Joys ebb and flow within my tender heart.*

### 2.6 A Drinking Song by William Butler Yeats (1864 – 1939)

*Wine comes in through the mouth  
And love comes in through the eye;  
That's all we know for truth  
Before we grow old and die.  
I lift the glass to my mouth,  
I look at you, and I sigh.*

### 2.7 The Middle Exumas, 08 February 2008

The morning of Saturday 26 January we cast off from the mooring at Cambridge Cay, headed back through the narrow, shallow southern cut to the Bahamas Banks, and south to "Big Majors Spot". We had 17 knots of wind and were able to make over 5 knots under only a close-hauled Genoa<sup>66</sup>. Big Majors is a large basin, capable of holding 50 – 60 boats, located just north of Staniel Cay in the middle Exumas. It is relatively protected from all sides except the west and is famous for its wild pigs and its proximity to "Thunderball Grotto", a semi-underwater cave where portions of the James Bond film *Thunderball* were filmed in 1965. Staniel Cay, the next island down has a small settlement that includes an airport (propeller planes only), a couple small marinas, including the Staniel Cay Yacht Club (which has free Wi-Fi at its bar), and grocery stores, including Isles General Store which fills propane. There were approximately 25 boats at anchor when we arrived, many of which we knew either personally from earlier stops or remotely from hearing them on the VHF. We anchored in 10 feet of water (24° 11.321' N, 76° 27.602' W) and paid out 75 feet of chain.

Since we were in need of propane, we soon put on our salty clothes, hopped into *Moondink* and drove the mile and a half through a mild chop to Staniel. The island itself is charming with brightly colored tin-roofed, wood houses. Isles General Store is a yellow house with a dock and no signage that fronts onto a creek. It was our destination. We rode right past it, didn't realize what it was, then went back out the creek and south down the coast to continue looking. Finally, we called them with the handheld VHF and asked for directions. (Many of the Bahamian businesses here use the VHF like a telephone, particularly those that cater to the cruisers. It's not uncommon to hear advertisements for a restaurant, happy hour, or a community barbeque broadcast over channel 16. Cruisers can hail the general store, just as they would another boat, switching to another channel to talk. However, the business that most cruisers hail is Loraine's at Black Point Settlement on Great Guano Cay. Every boat "in the know" that passes through the Exumas knows to hail Loraine's and order loaves of bread. No matter how good a baker you are, homemade loaves don't compare to good Bahamian breads like those made by Charlie the bread man on Bimini and Loraine on Great Guano. When one orders from Loraine's, at least one loaf has to be the coconut bread. But, that's the next set of islands and later on) Like almost all Bahamian stores on remote cays, Isles was small and under-stocked. But, they did fill propane. We dropped off our tank, were told they would leave it out front after 17:00 and we

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<sup>66</sup> Sailing close into the wind with just the big foresail out

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could pick it up any time, even if they were closed. We then headed to the Yacht Club to check email and upload some photos and updates to the blog. I called my parents, eager to speak to my dad. As their email had vouched, he sounded fine as ever. After sipping a cold Kalik beer and dealing with the internet, we walked the settlement and stumbled upon the general store that we had dinked to earlier, only half a mile down the road. We were lucky enough to pick up a full propane tank when we arrived again at 15:30. We had assumed we'd have to come back the following day. The woman behind the counter couldn't believe we would willingly carry the tank "all the way back" to the Yacht Club, rather than returning in the dink for it. (The tank holds 10 pounds of propane and only weighs about 15 pounds.) On our way back, we picked up a dozen eggs from another small grocery (the "blue store"), only because we had forgotten to at Isles, and wanted to see what the other stores looked like. Interestingly, there are no liquor stores on the Cay, though the bars do sell bottles. There is also no bank, not even an ATM (something we didn't expect, but have learned to deal with). Upon returning to *Moondink* at dusk we found the Yacht Club docks swarming with half a dozen nurse sharks – very neat. They obviously clean fish there. The hour approaching sunset appears to be a good shark watching time in the Bahamas. We returned to *Alisios*, dropped the full propane tank off, quickly made some rum punch, and headed to one of the small beaches off the anchorage for a pre-arranged sun-downer with several other boats. It was a quiet beautiful night at anchor.

I must admit that on days when a front is passing or when I'm talking to another professional about "what I do for a living" (a topic that is somewhat rude to bring up down here and one that we try not to), I sometimes miss work. However, not on days like the one above.

That evening we also realized that we haven't been managing our trash properly. What to do with trash is a problem in the Bahamas. Americans take it for granted that garbage just disappears (even though it really doesn't). However, there are no public trash services or large incinerators on the little islands of the Bahamas and the limestone ground is not well suited for land fills. As a result, it's a bit difficult to dispose of garbage. Nobody wants it. Marinas won't take it without charging a fee unless you're renting a slip and this fee is usually \$5.00 a big bag / \$2.50 for a small one. Many communities don't provide places for public drop-off (though some do). For this reason, one should be dutiful about dividing one's trash between food waste that can be thrown overboard, cardboard and plastics that can be burned, and bottles and cans that can't. Although we had heard this along the way, we hadn't actually been doing it, though food waste does naturally go overboard in order to avoid odors. The sun-downer and campfire on the beach was as much an excuse to burn garbage as it was to get together and socialize. We weren't prepared with a contribution to the fire.

Personal diatribe – The problem of garbage isn't limited to the islands. It is also an enormous problem in the U.S. that Americans fail to take seriously. When provisioning for this trip, Gail and I were shocked by the huge amount of excess packaging that we had to deal with. Everything is wrapped in cardboard that is wrapped in plastic, then sold to you in a plastic bag (sometimes double-bagged). One doesn't even buy a green pepper at the grocery store without transferring it from the vegetable bin at the store to its own clear plastic bag that is discarded half an hour later when one gets home. As a couple living at home with no kids we used to be dismayed at how much garbage we placed onto the curb every week. "How could two people create this much trash?" While convenient, plastic grocery bags, and particularly plastic soda and water bottles are quite an environmental hazard. Americans new love affair with bottled water (even though we have good, safe, free tap water everywhere – think of what Evian spells backwards) has compounded this problem exponentially. During our cruise we've been shocked

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and saddened to find the ocean facing beaches on little uninhabited islands full of plastic jetsam. I'm not talking about a little. It's everywhere and completely inescapable. In "civilized" areas it's far worse. Miami's beaches were literally garbage dumps. As soon as the visible trash was picked up, more washed in. The toll on wildlife and the environment is not exaggerated. In fact it is only semi-acknowledged quietly then swept under the rug so people can go on consuming without thinking about it. We are a strange species that knowingly destroys its own planet in this and so many ways but lacks the collective will power to do anything substantive about it.

We set off Sunday morning in *Moondink* to see if we could find wild pigs then snorkel Thunderball Grotto. The small beach with the pigs was near our anchorage, just south of the one we had sundowners on the evening before. We approached the empty beach at about 10:45 with a bit of apprehension. We'd heard the pigs could get a bit aggressive, even swimming out to dinghies in pursuit of food (which we didn't have) and that they had been known occasionally to bite people. When we got to the beach, I let out a good old fashioned American pig cry: "Sueeeeeeee! Here pig pig pig pig pig!" This is a true pig cry and yes, it does work. This is the second time in my life I've used it and just like the first, it was greeted by a galloping pig that emerged from the tree (shrub) line – a big galloping pig – a BIG brown galloping BOAR pig (no tusks) who ran right down to the water and didn't look like he intended to stop at the edge. We were floating in neutral about 3 feet from shore as this large floppy-eared beast came charging down the beach at us. Gail quickly shouted: "put her in reverse!" Her instructions were unnecessary. I was already reaching for the transmission lever, which unfortunately, my sore bandaged hand wasn't able to engage. I quickly changed hands, engaged the transmission, and throttled up in reverse. The dink doesn't go very fast in reverse and has horrible steerage. Its shape is designed for moving forward. Our lack of purposeful movement wasn't a good feeling. I swiveled us half way around and changed to forward as the pig bore down on us and quickly throttled up. Once we had pulled a "safe" distance from the shore, Gail and I watched him on the beach and laughed at each other, joking: "Be sure not to show any fear! They can sense fear!" The boar soon lost interest with us and returned to the shade. But, a white sow came out next and rooted around the beach as we hovered watching. We were later told that you can scrootch their bellies – right!

The pig trip didn't last as long as we thought it would and we continued around the point to Thunderball Grotto. The grotto is inside a large rock located in the cut between Big Major and Staniel Cay. Because of the current, one has to explore it at slack tide, preferably slack low when the entrances are above water. Unfortunately, slack low wasn't until 17:40 (almost sunset). So, we had to content ourselves by aiming for slack high, around noon. We arrived about 45 minutes early in a fair chop and there was still quite a current flowing into the cave. The entrance was already completely under water with about eight feet of rock overhang before one could surface inside. Swimming in with the current (diving underwater holding one's breath) was significantly easier than swimming back out against it. At high tide, this is neither a dive for novices nor poor swimmers. It really should be done at slack low. However, it was within our comfort zone, so we continued. I sounded it out first, going in and out. Then the two of us went in together. It was beautiful. Part of the ceiling is exposed, providing plenty of light to see the main cavern and several small sub-grottos that branch off providing multiple entrances and exits. Two of these are good-sized. The others are small, just large enough for one person to swim through. The underwater portions were full of bright fish and sponges. It wasn't large, but we could easily imagine how a film crew could shoot different portions from different angles to make it look like quite a sizable and complex on the big screen. The tide rose noticeably while



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we were inside and we decided to make good our escape through one of the narrow side crevices while portions of them were still barely above water. The forecasted morning calm before the front didn't arrive and the seas kicked up a bit more. We returned the mile + back to *Alisios* in 3 foot waves – quite a chore for little *Moondink*. We got drenched, but were wearing wetsuits, so who cared? The winds had shifted to the west, precluding the frontal passage. So, we spent a bumpy afternoon reading down below until they continued clocking around to the (protected) north, then northeast as the front passed.

Tuesday 29 January we pulled anchor at 08:30 and swung by Staniel Cay Yacht Club to top off diesel, water, and gasoline for the dink. (26.565 gallons of diesel (yes, their pumps are calibrated to thousandths of a gallon) cost us \$129.64. 7.298 gallons of gasoline cost us \$36.80. 47 gallons of water cost us \$18.80. We were also charged \$2.50 to throw out our garbage – \$187.74 total.) After a quick check for email and a call to Gail's dad from the pay phone (reasonably priced at 46 cents a minute with a Batelco calling card), we pulled away from the fuel dock and headed down to Great Guana Cay. The day was beautiful, sunny with 13 knots of wind out of the east, and we had a great sail. On the way down we radioed Lorraine's and ordered a loaf of coconut bread. Early afternoon we dropped our anchor in a basin on the west side of the Cay, across from Black Point Settlement (24° 05.983' N, 76° 24.151' W).

Interesting discoveries – Our combined water consumption since Nassau has averaged at 2.76 gallons a day. (We were using melted ice from the ice box to rinse dishes for part of this. So, we figure we're really averaging closer to 3 gallons<sup>67</sup>, still not bad for two people) Milk will keep in a cool shaded place for a good day – day and a half without refrigeration. We also confirmed that eggs, cheese, butter, and even mayonnaise do fine without refrigeration<sup>68</sup>. The butter is soft like margarine, but not at all runny. The mayo was completely normal and OK. You just have to be careful not to contaminate the jar (i.e. don't lick the knife). Rum punch without ice also isn't bad. We have no attraction to warm Kalik though. Ale may be served at room temperature in Britain (which is really "luke-cool", not "warm"), but lager beer needs to be cold, particularly in the sunny Caribbean.

Black Point Settlement on Great Guana Cay is a nice one-street town with a good anchoring basin that offers protection from all sides except the west. It is very much a Bahamian settlement – colorful houses, a small school, library, post office, police station, and government clinic. It's not overly tourist-driven, but you can't say they aren't tourist-conscious. They've made all the major steps to make cruisers welcome and this is considered a must stop cay – There are free trash receptacles and a public R/O water faucet. (They ask you to make a small donation to the community if you use them.) They have the "best laundromat in the Exumas" (and it really is). The grocery store, though small, is bigger than the ones on other similar cays and gives the illusion of being comparatively well stocked (lots of cans, but not a lot of what you need or want). There's a small restaurant named DeShamon's that serves pretty good pizza. Scorpio's bar had just started offering Wi-Fi and advertizes a two-for-one happy hour a few days a week. Finally, Lorraine's Cafe sells homemade bread to order. It's really Lorraine's mom's and

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<sup>67</sup> This was wishful thinking. After giving up the ice box, we were really using about 5 gallons a day (2.5 gallons each). We never resorted to washing dishes with saltwater and that contributed strongly to our usage. However, getting good fresh water down here is not that much of a problem if you plan ahead. But, you do have to jug it back to the boat.

<sup>68</sup> Unrefrigerated eggs are really good for about 2 weeks. After that, there's a bit of a Russian roulette quality to using real eggs. We ended up with a handful of bad ones interspersed over several months. You learn to crack them into a separate bowl first. If the yoke has dissolved into the rest of the egg you toss it overboard immediately without smelling it first. There's a belief that bad eggs float and good ones sink. We didn't find this to be a reliable test.

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is sold from her house behind the cafe, as it should be – coconut, white, cinnamon raisin, and/or wheat. Like most small cays there were no banks or ATMs and most places don't accept credit cards. The economy of the Exumas runs on cash. If you didn't bring enough, you're in trouble until you get to Georgetown.

We went in to scope out the town, tying off *Moondink* at the public dock. One turns right to walk the main settlement and in the course of about a quarter mile we checked out all of the above. Our bread wouldn't be ready until after 15:30. So, Lorraine recommended we continue on and see "The Garden of Eden". This is a driftwood garden created by Lorraine's uncle Willie Rolle (Rolle is perhaps the most common name in the Exumas and one assumes most long-term island residents are related at least at the distant cousin level). The garden truly was wonderful – gnarled driftwood of all shapes and sizes often matched with odd shaped stones, set along a limestone path that zigzagged throughout his property and around his house. It was one of those sites you gaze at from the road, but if you start walking through it, a grey bearded man soon appears and offers to "give you a tour". Our initial reaction in these situations is often a polite "no thank-you". However, we've learned to stop and think twice. We've been in several situations in India, China, and other places where formally organized tours offer little better in the way of sites yet siphon big dollars off the tourists with little of it returning to the local populace. In contrast, one can find oneself haggling excessively with poor people or nervously skipping past them when they offer something genuine that they've put a lot of labor into. While Willie Rolle was obviously not poor, particularly by island standards, he had put a lot of labor into his Garden of Eden. We asked him "how much?" He replied: "Whatever you feel like when we're done. How can I ask a price when I haven't done any work?" He brought us back to the entrance and explained that he had spent the last 30 years building the garden. Then, he evoked the imagery of clouds, how people see shapes in them, and transferred this concept to the driftwood sculptures in his garden. This is a pretty common tour guide trick, particularly with natural formations, and can get a little old. Sometimes things just are what they are and don't need to be compared to lions, parrots, dancers, etc. to be appreciated. However, we benefitted from his guidance. Rather than glancing quickly at the pieces and moving on, as we would have done on our own, we examined each one and drew out images we wouldn't necessarily have seen, not all of them the ones he offered. From the driftwood, we moved into his actual garden. It quickly became apparent to us that our image of a garden is clouded by Euro-American perceptions of squares of cultivated earth with neat rows of plants. That sort of garden simply isn't possible down here. The ground is solid limestone and the only earth that exists are shallow smatterings of sandy loam that collect in the craters. Plants grow where they can. A cabbage plant lives in one hole, pigeon peas in another. A tamarind tree here, mango trees there. Pumpkins in one, sweet potatoes in another (though we couldn't image enough earth for the potatoes to actually grow). This continued on, dozens of different plants scattered willy-nilly – a few corn stalks here, a hot pepper there, banana trees here and there, a plantain tree, a guava tree, a lime tree, and plants we only had some vague recollection of hearing of. (We later learned that this is called pot-hole farming.) We tried to imagine how the old Loyalist plantations could both subsist and export in such an environment. Willie said they had plantings scattered all over their islands wherever they could make things grow. It must have been a terribly hard and harsh living. We asked where he got all of his cuttings. He said he planted the seeds of what he ate and they grew. Once they grew, he ended up with his own seeds. When we were done, I looked in my wallet and had two \$1 bills, a ten, and a few twenties. I gave him the ten and thanked him very much.

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On our way back we picked up our coconut bread and ordered a loaf of whole-wheat for the next day. When we waited in line in Lorraine's mom's kitchen to pay for our loaf, we only saw a single, normal household gas oven / range. A stack of darkened, well used bread pans sat on the kitchen table. It's interesting to think that someone can run a small bakery out of their kitchen producing several dozen loaves of bread a day with just one household oven. At the grocery we picked up a couple 454 gram (almost 1 pound) tins of New Zealand butter (\$4 a can), half a pound of bacon, and some green peppers. We provisioned pretty well with a lot of thought before we left Maryland and aren't finding that we need much from grocery stores. This gives us satisfaction, but is also good because the average grocery store in the Exumas is the size of a tool shed and the shelves are half empty. Many things just aren't available. The cost of almost everything sold is very high.

It turns out that coconut bread is Bahamian white bread with a swirl of coconut & sugar laced throughout the loaf. It's good, particularly hot from the oven with some real butter. If you like breakfast breads like cinnamon raisin, this will be to your taste. However, we prefer white, wheat, and nut breads. As noted earlier, Bahamian bread, by nature, is sweeter than U.S. and European breads. Lorraine's mom's whole wheat was made with cinnamon. It was good, but not what we expected. The white is genuine island bread (what the locals eat) and the others are made to satisfy foreign demand.

Wednesday we did lots of laundry – pretty much every pair of shorts, shirt, sheet, and towel we own. The machines were clean and new. The building has a prime waterfront location overlooking the basin and even has its own dock to dink up to. It's a beautiful view. The cost was \$3.50 each for a washer or dryer, which we've been told is quite reasonable for the Bahamas. We crammed everything into three loads. Part of cruising is actually caring about laundromats. It was also a great spot for bumping into other cruisers, many of whom we knew by now. These included two boats, *Hispaniola* and *Sea Belle*, that shared the marina with us in Bimini. These mini-reunions are nice.

BTW – I have jokingly self nicknamed my bandaged hand "the crow". (Opposable thumbs are over-rated anyway. ;-)

Black Point Settlement was one of those comfortable, friendly places one could hang out at for a while. We didn't however, because the next cay down had the 22nd annual 5 F's – "The Farmer's Cay First Friday in February Festival". Even though we were in a protected, comfortable anchorage, we couldn't be so close and miss it. So, we pulled the hook Thursday morning and headed down in 15 knots of wind on great close-haul, finally anchoring in the lee of the island (23° 57.336' N, 76° 19.517' W). We dinked in that afternoon to check out the landscape, hooking up with a couple we'd met earlier, Preston and Chennie from s/v *Wy'East*.

Little Farmer's Cay makes Black Point Settlement look large. We were told by one person that there are only about 55 full-time residents and these are dispersed across the island. The Farmer's Cay Yacht Club is on the northeast corner. The town docks and a couple tiny stores are at the center of the eastern shore. There is a tiny grocery store and even tinier liquor store (a building about the size of a walk-in closet that has a 4 seat bar with a glass-front fridge and some bottles behind the counter). Ocean Cabins and a church sit on the overlooking hill and this pretty much constitutes town center. Our anchorage was at the center of the western shore by the small airstrip. The anchorage included a "red zone" so the masts wouldn't interfere with the small propeller planes as they landed. (Several boats ignored this and had to move – there's no

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incentive like looking up and seeing a small plane skimming past just 10 – 20 feet over your mast) A half mile walk gets you anywhere on the island. This isn't the most conducive geography for a festival. However, a lot of Bahamians from other islands fly or boat in and these were supplemented by about 60 cruising boats. The main event Friday were the races between about 20 local Bahamian sloops (some from neighboring cays) off the west end. These are full-keeled wooden boats about 24 feet long. The masts are far forward, like cat boats, and they hoist a single gaff-rigged main. The gaff is very small, to the point that they barely look gaff-rigged. They carry a lot of sail area for the size of boat and consequently have two boards that are run out over the sides so the crew can shimmy out, acting as a counterbalancing weight to the force on the sail. The Bahamians are proud of their sailing heritage and there were two races which were a lot of fun to watch.

Saturday we went in a bit after noon and at Gail's urging I ended up participating in the men's best legs competition. It was a silly thing. About a dozen men from the "cruising fleet" participated (no locals) and the prize was a liter bottle of rum. We were asked to come up with stage names. I decided that if I was going to humiliate myself for a bottle of rum (a respectable cause for a sailor), I might as well do it right and chose the name "Johnny Le Tigre" (shamelessly stolen from a scene in a Carl Hiaasen novel). I hammed it up real well, egging the crowd of women on and even running over to the three judges waiving my wallet and a wad of bills pretending to offer bribes. The result was that I won. In addition to the rum, I received a fair amount of gentle ribbing and several offers to help me drink my winnings. The ribbing far outlasted the festival – news travels and for weeks and weeks people who weren't even there, many whom I didn't even know, came up to me saying "Hey – aren't you Mr. Leggs?".

We had spent as much time as we wanted to at Little Farmer's Cay. With the festival over, the Cay had little to interest anyone. The anchorage was somewhat exposed and the holding was poor. Another one of the small cyclical fronts was forecast to come through Monday and Tuesday. After a fair amount of vacillating over where to go we decided to return to Black Point Settlement to watch the Superbowl while toasting my brother a happy birthday in absentia. The wind was 15 knots from the south-east and we had a fantastic broad reach<sup>69</sup> sail back up. We spent the afternoon snorkeling from *Moondink* then washed up and went into shore for a buffet dinner at Lorraine's where we watched the Giant's return from behind with only 29 seconds left to beat the Patriots in the best Superbowl, game-wise, I think we've ever seen. It was the only TV we'd watched in over 3 months (and ended up being the only video (TV or movies) that we would watch during our entire 7+ month trip).

Over the next couple days the anchorage at Black Point filled up to the point where I counted 46 boats. For the past few weeks we'd been travelling with the same wave of cruisers. Since we'd turned back north, this pattern was broken and we encountered many new boats and couples, including some we'd seen on the ICW. It's interesting how we're zig-zagging in and out of each other's lives. Gail and I snorkeled, failed to find any conch, but did find a pretty, secluded beach with more iguanas, and also took some lengthy hikes across the cay.

Thursday 07 February we left Black Point for the second time and tacked into southeast winds past Farmers and down to Cave Cay (23° 54.142' N, 76° 16.230' W). This is one of a set of small cays (Galliot, Cave, Musha, and Rudder) interrupted by several cuts that link the Great Bahama Bank to the open ocean. The cuts are extremely narrow with strong currents and

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<sup>69</sup> wind from the aft quarter

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sometimes, standing waves. They can be completely impassible in bad weather. Even in moderate conditions, if the wind and currents oppose they can generate what the Bahamians refer to as “rages”. However, they usually calm down pretty well at slack tide. (It’s impressive watching the Bahamian cargo ships go through them with only a few feet on each side.) The cays themselves are beautiful with a number of anchorages and channels interlacing behind and between them. Unfortunately, all but Cave Cay are privately owned. This is not uncommon in the Bahamas. The ultra-wealthy buy up islands and seal them off from the public at large. The Bahamians haven’t been particularly long-sighted and sell the islands to foreigners outright rather than offering 50 or 100-year leases. There are large stretches of the Bahamas that are off limits to the Bahamians themselves. One often sails by miles of semi-deserted islands with beautiful small un-blemished beaches. We were initially unsure whether we were allowed to land on these, but later heard that all beaches are open to the high water line. We land on the secluded ones when they appeal and we leave only footprints. The water off all of the islands is open.

We had decided on Cave Cay Cut as our exit point for the southward trek to Georgetown because the cruising guide said it was less treacherous than the others. The cay itself has a number of big caves and grottos, one of which had been mined for guano in the distant past giving the island its name. We dinked around much of the island. Did some snorkeling, and entered a couple of the smaller caves. However, we couldn’t go very far inside without a flashlight and proper shoes and clothing. There were a number of boats waiting for the morrow’s promised weather window for the passage to Georgetown and another impromptu sunset cocktail party was thrown on the beach that we attended until the sand fleas drove everyone off. That night we had our first real rainstorm since arriving in the Bahamas over a month ago. We woke up happy that the salt was being washed off our decks and unhappy to notice that some water was coming in past the mast boot<sup>70</sup>. This is a common occurrence on boats with keel-stepped masts – just another thing to look into, monitor, and fix.

### 2.8 The Southern Exumas: Georgetown I, 19 February 2008

Georgetown on Great Exuma is the final destination for a large percentage of the cruising boats. It’s sometimes referred to as “summer camp for adults”. A hilly barrier island, “Stocking Island”, lies about 3/4 mile off Great Exuma creating a several mile long sheltered bay named “Elizabeth Harbor”. There are a number of protected anchorages and associated beaches inside Stocking Island with names like “Hamburger Beach”, “Monument Beach”, “Honeymoon Beach”, “Volleyball Beach”, and “Sand Dollar Beach”, in addition to a set of true hurricane holes<sup>71</sup>. A couple of the beaches are empty of any development. The others have a single restaurant / bar each. Volleyball Beach is the hub of activities. The “Chat-N-Chill” restaurant has set up hammocks, picnic tables, numerous pastel-colored plastic Adirondack chairs, a message board, and, of course, volleyball nets. You’d be hard pressed to find a nicer place to hang out. Around the corner, on the shore by the entrance to the hurricane holes, is the St. Francis Resort – a nicer bar / restaurant that offers occasional live music and very friendly service. The musicians are often pulled from the cruising boats. The other beaches are short dink rides in either direction. Georgetown itself is a 3/4 mile dink ride across the harbor. There is a semi-protected cove off its shores (“Kidd’s Cove”) in which some boats anchor. The town itself surrounds a saltwater pond named “Lake Victoria” with a single sea / harbor entrance that is about 10 feet

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<sup>70</sup> A PVC fabric water barrier that covers the point where the mast goes through the deck

<sup>71</sup> Protected basins surrounded on all sides in which a boat could anchor in order to [with luck] ride out a hurricane

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wide and traversed by a low concrete two-lane bridge. It's a claustrophobic entrance, only big enough for a dink or small skiff, that sometimes has its own little tidal bore<sup>72</sup> at the entrance. The town and grocery store have setup a substantial floating dinghy dock for the cruisers just inside the lake. There are dumpsters for no-charge drop-off of trash at the government dock and a free R/O water spigot on the dinghy dock which is really nice because you can fill your jugs without removing them from the dink and hauling them. (Water weighs 8.3 pounds per gallon. So, each 5 gallon water jug weighs over 40 pounds full.) The town itself is much smaller than we imagined. However, it's got a couple banks and many good stores. There are also places that facilitate flying in parts. It's a dusty place stuck in quiet island time (where nothing happens quickly), yet offering most of the amenities that make life easy and comfortable. Its southern location makes it warmer during the height of winter than the northern Bahamian islands. For these reasons a large number of repeat cruisers bee-line it directly to Georgetown and drop their hook here all winter. Others, like us, feel we must stop here to see what all the fuss is about but have no intention of staying there for extended periods. At the height of the season (early March) there may be 300 – 400 cruising boats anchored here. Georgetown is the actual "Tarpit Harbor" of Eileen Quinn's song.

The long-termers expend their pent-up energy by organizing every activity they can think of. All of this is coordinated through a morning "cruiser's net" broadcast on VHF channel 72 at 08:00. The net has a coordinator who acts as a traffic controller working through an itinerary. It starts with a weather report and an opportunity for local businesses to advertize their services. Then, the mic is handed over to various committee chairs who report on their activity of interest. These include trivial pursuit nights, yoga and pilates on the beach, volleyball, softball, total immersion swimming lessons, around the island races, cruiser rallies to other islands, bridge, crafts, beach church, alcoholics anonymous (quite a test of will in this environment), beach parties, dances, seminars on various technical topics from ham radio to weather, etc. etc. The largest activity is the Georgetown Cruisers Regatta in early March. A huge amount of the work and effort leads up to the regatta. Finally, the net provides an opportunity for any boat to announce their arrival or departure, offer to share cab rides to the airport when guests arrive or depart, offer to send flat mail back to the U.S. with guests (the Bahamian Postal Service is notoriously slow), ask for help with problems, or offer to trade or sell equipment. (The latter item is disingenuously preceded by a warning that it is absolutely illegal to buy or sell anything in the Bahamas without paying local customs duties – right!) It all ends with a thought of the day. Some are cute. Most are so saccharine sweet you feel like retching if you have a trace of cynicism in your soul.

Great Exuma, the island on which Georgetown sits, is the beginning of the "Southern Exumas". We arrived Friday afternoon 08 February, part of a small flotilla of 20 or so boats. They didn't arrive all at once. In fact, we came in solo, so navigated the entrance channel without the benefit of a lead boat – not difficult in good conditions, despite dire warnings in the guides. (The Bahamas are interesting in the almost universal lack of aids to navigation (lights and buoys). It's strange to enter primary harbors lined with shoals and coral heads without any marks. The few marks listed on the charts often aren't there as the government doesn't seem to maintain them after they're first installed. Every now and again you encounter a navigation buoy. But, because of their general absence, questionable origin, and lack of official maintenance you don't know whether to trust them when you see them. However, the GPS coordinates in our *Explorer* chart were dead on.) We pulled into a spot across from Volleyball Beach near *Wy'East* (23° 54.142' N, 76° 16.230' W). However, the other boat we had left Cave Cay with, *Snow Shoo* (that arrived

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<sup>72</sup> A tide and wind-driven wall of standing water

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an hour ahead of us along with *Wy'East*) had balked at the tight quarters and continued a half mile down to Sand Dollar Beach. After settling in, we drove *Moondink* through the anchorage looking for boats we knew, looped through the hurricane holes, landed on Volleyball Beach, and finally checked out St. Francis before heading back. The next day we crossed the harbor and spent several hours walking Georgetown, bumping into acquaintances, and picking up cash, groceries, and rum before returning in time for a shower and a BYOB and hors d'oeuvre cruiser rendezvous / pot-luck on Sand Dollar Beach.

*"For those readers who are not of the sailing persuasion, let me explain that there are two types of sailors: There are the racing types who race sailboats and drink a lot. And then there are the cruising types who go on cruises and drink a lot."* – Capt. Bill Braden, *Blue Water Odyssey, Highlights of a Seven-Year Sailing Adventure*

The soma holiday drug of choice for the cruiser's "sun-downer" is alcohol and the alcoholic beverages of choice are either beer or rum. The Bahamian beer, "Kalik", costs \$36.00 – \$40 a case. It's not bad. Budweiser or Heineken is about \$40.00 – \$45 a case. Rum is a brown spirit made from sugar cane (think molasses) and real rum comes in either "gold" or "dark". The dark is generally more flavorful and is what we prefer. The taste can vary considerably from brand to brand / island to island. A liter of unpretentious Bahamian rum costs between \$6.50 and \$10.00. The major Bahamian brands we've found are "Ron Ricardo", "Ole Nassau", and "Fire In De Hole [Erotic Rum]". Ron Ricardo is the rail drink rum in many of the bars and isn't up to much (a bit of a lighter fluid after-taste). Ole Nassau is much smoother and the dark has a slight vanilla overtone. Fire In De Hole is the cheapest, tastes OK (but not great), and wins hand's down for shelf appeal. A lot of the cruisers drink it because – well, with its name, equally cool label, and cheap price "you have to". Many of the common rums found in the U.S. (e.g. Bacardi, Cruzan, Mount Gay) are also available and popular here. The Bacardi is made in the Bahamas, but is more expensive than the ones I mentioned above, though not by much. The Haitian rum, Barbancourt, (where "rum" is spelled "rhum") is also sold everywhere. A final note on rum, since the name is now used loosely. White rum is not real rum. I believe it was created in the 1960s or 70s by Bacardi as a neutral spirit that would appeal to the American market. It has no taste other than alcohol (lighter fluid) and its prevalence in the U.S. may account for many American's aversion to rum. (We hate the stuff.) Flavored rums (coconut, banana, mango, etc.) are what they are – sweet, flavored alcohol, great in some drinks, but not to be confused with regular old-time rum. Spiced rums like Captain Morgan's also fall in this flavored rum category, but have really developed into a sub-category unto themselves.

**Caribbean Rum Punch** – Mix orange juice and pineapple juice 50 / 50. Add a splash of grenadine so that the mixture takes on a coral pink hue (don't over-do). Add gold or dark rum to taste. Some bartenders also add a splash of Angostura bitters. (This is the basic rum punch recipe found all over the Caribbean.)

**Alisios' Rum Punch** – Mix 2 oz. guava nectar with Tang (orange drink made from powder). Add a splash of grenadine and gold or dark rum (preferably dark) to taste. (In the islands the mixer costs almost as much as the alcohol. For example, a 2-liter bottle of Coke is \$2.50. A 12 oz. (Coke can size) can of juice is \$1.25 – \$1.50. A full-sized can is \$4.50. This Tang recipe leverages an easily portable mixer that can be pre-stocked in the U.S. at Costco prices and tastes pretty good. The little bit of guava nectar and grenadine makes a huge difference.)

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The End of "The Crow" – After 3 1/2 weeks, I stopped wearing the bandage on my right hand. The thumb is still a bit weak, but it's healing OK and tempered use seems to be helping a lot. I've been good, have taken care of it, and the recovery appears to be the same as if I'd been in the U.S. which is very good because there are no medical services to speak of here. The larger settlements have a small government clinic (that may or may not be open) staffed by a single nurse. A single doctor may visit once a week. An American high school literally offers the same or better medical care that an entire town receives here. There are no hospitals to speak of. If you have a major sickness or injury, you have to be air-lifted to either Nassau (assuming it's commonplace) or Miami (if it's complex or significant). Though there are emergency services, getting air-lifted out can often be an expensive, grass-roots affair with the local yacht club trying to track down the pilot on the next cay and coordinate a powerboat to take you there to pick up the plane. If someone has a heart attack down here, the response is literally "take two aspirin and wait".

*Moondink's* air floor sprung another leak which rapidly got worse to the point of near total failure. This one's on a front seam where the floor bends (continually flexes) across the air keel, another particularly difficult spot to patch. We've starting calling her "Ole Squishy". I guess one should expect this with an 8 year old dink. We bought a small C-clamp and some acetone at the local hardware store (which is surprisingly good) and will apply another field patch with the hope of holding the leak to a trickle. Finding a full sunny day during which we can do without the dink is a bit of a problem. So far the main tubes are holding up great and structurally, the dink itself is fine. It's just the floor that's giving us trouble. I'll add inflatable repair to the list of new skills I'm gaining. On the positive side, my last repair to the outboard seems to have done the trick and the engine hasn't failed us since (though we're still apprehensive with it and carry tools and the handheld VHF on long outings).

Monday and Tuesday everyone hunkered down for another frontal passage (all activities cancelled due to weather). We awoke instantly Monday morning at 06:30 when we heard the sound of a windlass and chain. The boat next to us had dragged a bit and decided to move. Glad he was on top of it. Another boat, a couple hundred meters in front of us had left a big rain shield up over his bow hatch that was filling in the 25 knot gusts and causing him to sail violently back and forth on his anchor. From our vantage point, his stern seemed only a few feet from the bow of the boat behind him. We could see someone in the cockpit of the aft boat monitoring the situation. I'm not sure I would have been so calm. However, it is a tricky thing asking someone else to move, particularly a couple days after they've set their anchor and when the conditions are rough. The owner eventually came up top and removed the canvas shield, but the boat stayed put. Throughout the day showers came in waves and a couple other boats moved, presumably since they were dragging or didn't feel secure. (The ones I could see were using CQRs which are good anchors in sand or mud, but don't hold well when there is sea grass. There's lots of sea grass in the Bahamas. Fortresses, a light aluminum version of the Danforth, also seem to have problems down here, though regular Danforths seem to do OK.) Crowded anchorages are a bit nerve-racking in these situations. It rained and blew. We sailed on our anchor, read, discussed options for the rest of our trip, baked bread, made soup (my bread, Gail's soup), and twiddled our thumbs (at least one of mine ;-). Tuesday was a repeat, but without the rain and only one boat dragging at 2:00 am. (Rain of any quantity is actually quite rare here this time of year.) When the showers all passed the dink was like a quarter-filled bathtub and it took me 20 minutes of steady pumping with a hand pump to drain it. A couple days later I dove our anchor. The anchor and first 20 feet of chain had completely disappeared



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into the sand. I couldn't even find it. (This is very good.) So far our ground tackle (Bruce anchor + 100 feet of chain) has worked very well for us<sup>73</sup>.

Georgetown / Great Exuma is our mental half-way point. We had a skeleton plan for the first half of our trip that stopped here. Now we must face the prospect of sketching out the return portion of our voyage. We still intend to travel a bit further south. However, our destinations are now controlled by the need to return home in June. The route we've taken to-date is reasonably heavily travelled. We honestly hadn't realized when we started out just how heavily travelled it was. We're very much part of a cruising community – much more so than we anticipated. This is both good and bad. It's great to meet and share time with people with common interests. However, solitude also has its place and the reefs to-date have been quite picked over – no big fish, no lobster, and few conch. Our urges now are to "experience" Georgetown for a couple weeks, then break free of the pack. The main obstacle for us is the need for weather forecasts. Before arriving, we hadn't adequately grasped the frequent cyclical nature of the frontal passages. Many of the cays offer very little protection and one needs forewarning to select an appropriate and safe anchorage when the weekly northeasters pass. The Bahamian government doesn't offer any equivalent to the U.S. NOAA weather radio, although there are certainly some other forecasts that we haven't yet found. There are VHF cruisers nets in the populated areas, but VHF only has a range of about 50 miles. The main alternative is SSB (single side band radio / short wave) broadcasts. For a moderate fee, one can subscribe to semi-customized SSB weather forecasts (including question and answer) from meteorologists like Chris Parker. Those who don't subscribe can always listen in. A full fledged (send and receive) SSB costs a couple thousand dollars and requires complex installation. A basic receiver (no ability to transmit) costs \$150 – \$300 new, though there are mixed reports on their efficacy. While someone mentioned a receiver as a good thing to have before we left, the need hadn't been strongly stressed. We thought about it and even identified a model, but it fell to the bottom of our preparation / to-buy list. After vacillating, we decided not to buy one and now regret it. Now our range is constrained by the need to receive weather forecasts through others.

In the meantime, there is no lack of ways to kill time. Basic activities eat up a lot of the day. For instance, the 3/4 mile trip across the harbor in the dink followed by dropping off trash, a poke into the grocery store, hardware store, straw market, etc. filling a few water jugs and returning easily becomes a half-day or longer event. The trip also often results in a major soaking (small, non-planing dink + chop = many many splashes over the bow and sides). We now maintain a set of "salted" semi-clean clothes in addition to our "non-salted" clothes. Access to the Internet is also a job and a half. Most of the boats, we included, anchor off Stocking Island. However, the Wi-Fi APs are across the harbor in Georgetown proper. There is one that illuminates the harbor and offers a subscription at an affordable rate (\$15 a week when it works), but one needs to be anchored near Kidds Cove and have an external high-gain antenna to pick up the signal. The alternative is taking the laptop into town and finding an internet cafe<sup>74</sup>. We don't have an external antenna and are somewhat loath to risk the laptop in overly wet crossing conditions, even though we enclose it in a thick plastic ziplock bag. Because of this, our access to email

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<sup>73</sup> In retrospect, I wish I had outfitted Alisios with 120 – 150 feet of chain. We like to anchor with an all chain rode (it makes a huge difference) and there are times when we could have used an extra 20 feet. We chose 100' of chain + 200 of line to save on weight in the bow. I now don't think an extra 50 pounds would have mattered much. Similarly, if I had it to do over again, I'd get the next larger anchor. Nevertheless, our ground tackle did its job very well and consistently. It held through several decent blows. We have nothing but praise for the Bruce anchor.

<sup>74</sup> Everyone goes to J&K Computers in Georgetown, a small run-down hut with a board table mounted along one wall, an assortment of old chairs pulled up to it, and Wi-Fi for \$10 a day. It's actually got a lot of charm – Its reasonably priced, the service is good, and the owners are really nice.

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and ability to upload photos and updates was as sporadic in Georgetown as it has been in other, less populated locations. To tell the truth though, it's rather nice slipping out of the "need to be in touch" mode of the current times and we don't go to excess trying to get access. Our big fear is something happening to family at home while we go about in blissful ignorance. But, there's not much we could do about such a situation if we had reliable communication.

Georgetown, BTW, like all large Bahamian settlements, has its bread person too. Here it is "Mom's Bakery". Mom cooks up various loafs and sweets and sells them out of her van in front of the market on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. We bought a regular loaf of wheat bread for \$3.75 and a small coconut filled bread for \$2.50. Mom struggled with the math for a few seconds then said she was tired and asked if we could calculate the total for her. After completing the transaction she gave us each a big hug and wished us a safe, blessed voyage. The bread was only so so, but Mom was charming. At this point we bake most of our own bread and I do the baking (more patience than Gail ;-).

Regarding activities – I heard a couple announcing "total immersion swimming" lessons at the neighboring beach. Gail and I have met a number of cruisers who barely swim and some who don't at all. I assumed the class was aimed for that group. I'm a fairly strong swimmer, though the last time I did laps under any sort of formal supervision was at age 17, my freshman year of college. I figured it would be nice to volunteer and help out with something, so hailed Bob and Gail on s/v *Star* offering to help. My offer was accepted. However, you know what they say about assuming – I found myself billed as a "coach" in a heavily technique-oriented method swimming class. Everyone knew how to swim at some level, but were looking to swim better and more fluidly. The idea behind total immersion is to teach balance, body extension, and slipstreaming while expending minimal effort. Think of the grace and seemingly effortless strokes of an Olympic swimmer. The method involves learning a series of drills meant to ingrain the correct balance, form, and movement. It was developed in the mid 1990s, well after I graduated college. The first two days were pretty straightforward for me. However, as the drills progressed, I found myself having to un-learn the freestyle strokes I'd been taught as a kid. I soon morphed from quasi-coach to more of an advanced student. The class was only 4 sessions of 2 hours each focusing on learning the drills. However, to really get something out of it one needs to practice quite a bit to make the movements second nature. It was informative and I'm glad I did it. I learned a lot. Interestingly, those two hour sessions were the first time Gail and I had been apart since starting our trip.

Gail, meanwhile, went for a walk on the beach on the other side of the island (which is a short hike away and very beautiful). In the course of her walk, she saw a local dog viciously rush two women ahead of her, barking and snarling and backing them into the water. Wisely, she decided to turn around and return from whence she came. However, the dog saw her and chased her next, backing her into the water too. No harm was done. However, it was frightening. (All the more so because Gail is a "dog person" who grew up with a golden retriever and a lab mix.) There are occasional instances of wild or semi-wild dogs on the islands and we know one cruiser who was bitten. (The dog that chased Gail was wearing a collar and we found out later, is known for going after people on the public beach. The owners know this and still let it loose.)

That evening, Gail managed to drag me to the Valentines Day dance and a good time was had by all. (The class I really need is "total immersion dancing". However, I think that is a hopeless cause.)

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Time kind of passes in Georgetown without your realizing where it went. More boats arrived steadily and the number anchored off Stocking Island rose to the mid 200s. We decided that Sunday would be "attempt to repair the dink day". This meant stranding ourselves on Volleyball Beach. So, we made up a list of tasks and materials to keep us occupied with the hope of not forgetting to bring any key stuff we'd need. Then, Sunday morning, we headed over. We pulled *Moondink* well up onto the unused side of the beach and went to work. We removed the floor, pumped it up, and submerged it in the water to re-check the leak which now took up about half an inch of the seam (a lot more than a trickle). We then rinsed it well with fresh water we'd brought in a gallon jug and let it dry in the sun while Gail cut my hair. Gail had never attempted cutting hair before, but had watched the guy in Miami closely a couple months ago in preparation for this moment. We figured we'd use my beard trimmer to give the equivalent of a #2 or #3 clipper cut on the back and sides, then she'd blend it in with the scissors. That was the plan at least. "How hard could it be?" ;-) Well, it turns out that beard trimmers work OK on beards, but jam up pretty quickly when you attempt to cut regular hair with them. This meant we had to take the head off after every couple passes and clean it out / un-jam it. After quite a bit of this the bottom half of my head eventually became reasonably trimmed and mostly balanced. She then doused my dome from the gallon jug of fresh water (taking excessive pleasure in the action) and went to work with the scissors. It was the longest haircut I've ever had, lasting well over an hour. I gather it's not as easy as it looks (despite my frequent helpful hints ;-) Everything came out pretty well and no one looked at me twice when it was over. It was, therefore, both fun and a success. I'm glad we gave it a shot, though in retrospect, we have a couple of friends at our marina who used to cut hair professionally and should have asked one of them for a hands-on lesson before we left. After my haircut, I wrapped a bit of t-shirt rag around the end of a piece of coat hanger, doused it with acetone and cleaned out the gap where the seam had separated. I then roughed it up with a bit of emery cloth, spread a good gob of inflatable cement inside, and clamped everything snug with my new C-clamp and a couple flat wood strips I'd cut from a paint stirrer. We then carried our bag of stuff to the shade and settled in for an afternoon of waiting for glue to dry. Gail settled into a hammock with her book and I pulled up a chair and a piece of 5/8" diameter 3-strand line with the intent of splicing in an end loop to make up a new dock line. I'd carefully watched a guy splicing mooring lines at Exuma Park a few weeks ago and felt I really understood it this time around. It turns out I actually did. I methodically tied off my starting point, numbered my strands, and went to work with the fid creating a nice rigger-worthy splice. When I was done, I pulled out the sail palm, a large needle, and some waxed whipping twine and added a pretty whip to the opposite end. I find marlinspike very calming and wished I'd had more line. However, the hardware store was out.

We were yanked out of our Georgetown stasis by our friends Menno and Liz on *Snow Shoo* who decided to take a several day side-trip to Long Island on Tuesday along with some other boats. (Long Island is about 40 miles to the southeast). They asked us if we were interested on Saturday and after humming the Clash's *Should I stay or should I go?* for a couple days and flip-flopping several times, we decided Monday afternoon to pull anchor and go with them before our chain developed any growth. (There's nothing like definitive planning. ;-) This was exciting, but also a bit sad. We were happy and ready to leave Georgetown. However, a number of the boats we've been informally travelling with are taking the weather window opportunity to split off and head their separate ways. We've bonded strongly with a number of these couples. Some of the full-time live-aboards are continuing southward so they can be well below the hurricane belt by June. Others are heading to the more eastern out Islands, then north on an earlier schedule than us. This is a situation that repeats itself over and over. We don't know whether we'll ever

see these new friends again. However, we hope that our home's location in-between Washington, DC and Annapolis, Maryland will improve our chances of receiving guests in the upcoming months and years. The cruising community is also small and, as we've already seen, people have a tendency to bump into each other over time. There's also a huge boat show in Annapolis in the Fall that draws cruisers like a magnet.

In this way we ended our first stay in Georgetown, Grand Exuma.

### 2.9 The Out Islands and Jumentos, 05 March 2008

"It's much better being in the Bahamas dreaming of a hot shower than being in a hot shower dreaming of the Bahamas."

Tuesday 19 February we woke up before dawn and prepared the boat for a 06:50 departure. Long Island is a full days sail from Georgetown and we wanted to get a half an hour to forty-five minute jump on our friends, some of whom have 40+ foot boats that travel faster than we do. We were one of the first boats to leave and it soon became obvious from the radio traffic that a lot of people had the same plan. It turned out that we were part of a loosely organized 22 boat flotilla, all headed to Thompson Bay / Salt Pond (23° 21.756' N, 75° 08.271' W). One of the boats had kept a list of everyone going which was updated during the crossing. They coordinated with one of the faster power boats to call a restaurant on the island to arrange dinner for 44 of us. We were on this list without having spoken to anyone. Dinner was great. It started off with a cocktail hour. Then, the restaurant set out fried grouper, fried lobster, ribs, chicken wings, coleslaw, potato salad, and, of course, baked macaroni and cheese. (Real, baked macaroni and cheese is practically the national dish of the Bahamas – odd, but it does give me pleasant flashbacks to my childhood. My mom never would have dreamed of using Kraft from a box.) The place was set up with long tables and everything was served buffet style. We even had live music provided by our friend Jim from s/v *Freedom* who brought along his guitar and fake books<sup>75</sup>.

One of the challenges of cruising is remembering and matching faces to names to boats. Neither of us is particularly good at this and it's not uncommon for us to have forgotten someone's name within a minute after we've been told if we're not conscious to try to register it. Add this to a situation where you're meeting new people every single day. It can get rather of embarrassing when people march up to you with a big smile and outstretched hand saying "Matt ... Gail ... How are you doing!" and you're forced to reply "Great! How about you?" while thinking "Who the heck are these folks?" We're not alone here, which is one of the reason everyone carries boat cards. Our ships log is kept in a 3-ring binder. At the back of this, we have plastic sleeves for the cards of people we've met along the way. With the prospect of 22 boats converging for dinner, we had spent the last hour of the passage quizzing each other on the names associated with the various boats we knew were coming. It helped.

The following morning we headed to shore again. Sunday's patch to *Moondink's* floor had held all of about half an hour and she was back to being *Ole' Squishy* again. She doesn't ride as well without a hard floor. But, at least she's completely functional. Long Island is aptly named and the population is dispersed along its 76 mile length. As Bahamian islands go, this is exceptionally large. One really needs a car to see it adequately. Unfortunately, there was a big

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<sup>75</sup> Music books containing the chords and lyrics for popular songs

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intra-island youth basketball tournament starting the next day and rental cars were scarce. (There's no Hertz or Avis on these islands. One dinks to shore, walks up to Fox's garage and asks "Do you have a car to rent?" Or you talk to the restaurant owner and she tries to track one down for you, getting back to you the next day via VHF.) We walked from the dinghy dock, past Fox's Garage, to a well stocked grocery store and a gift store / hardware store / post office. We, of course, forgot to bring the post cards Gail had written the day before. After a bit of grocery shopping with our friends followed by a bit of a walk of the area, we returned to the boat, put everything away, I started some bread, and we headed out again to fill our gasoline jerry cans [for the outboard] at an area further south. While there, we met a woman who was living on her boat at anchor with her husband. They had bought land and were building their own house. In the course of our chat, she told us of a cave just off a beach on our way back. Luckily we had both a flashlight and the camera with us.

We pulled *Moondink* up onto a little beach and walked up a little path labeled "Cave". It was movie-worthy with a craggy, easy opening. It could have been the set for "Clan of the Cave Bear". There were several places where the ceiling had broken so there was enough light to see within the main areas. Fig tree roots trailed down these skylights forming a curtain that reached the moist, guano-rich soil of the cave floor. The main room(s) had plenty of height to stand up in and there was a lower, completely dark tunnel branching off on one side. Gail pulled out the flashlight, crouched down, and started heading in until she realized that the walls and ceilings were literally crawling with 2-inch long cockroaches. Further exploration down that path was promptly aborted ;-). After the cockroach incident, we became acclimated to the silence and sounds enough to notice the high-pitched squeaking of bats. The ceilings were relatively smooth and we hadn't noticed any before then, though we had looked. We've all grown up with horror movie images of cave ceilings covered with hundreds of bats looking like writhing little black stalactites. It wasn't like that. Within the ceiling were a number of natural holes in the rock. Upon closer inspection, we noticed that these were often stained in contrast to the whitish flat portions of the ceiling. So, we poked the flashlight up and found small clusters of little bat faces peering back at us. It was kind of neat. Thankfully they stayed put. That evening we spoke to others who had been in the cave. Apparently the cockroach covered tunnel was short and led to a couple other large caverns. We should have gone down it.

With our spelunking behind us, we returned to *Alisios*. I gave the dough a fold and transferred it to the bread pan for its second rising then went to work on the dink floor again, re-gluing the seam, then adding an outer patch so it was double-layered and clamping the whole thing to dry tight. The bread was ready to go in the oven when I finished. Gail, meanwhile, started a beer-basted lamb stew in the pressure cooker. Within half an hour the boat smelled heavenly. The evening ended with a bonfire on the beach followed by a total lunar eclipse that was made particularly spectacular by a full moon. With almost no light pollution the moon and stars are amazingly crisp and clear. The eclipse occurred in the 21:00 – 22:00 timeframe and the hatch over our v-berth offered us a perfect view as we lay in bed. A shadow slowly worked its way across the moon's surface, first cutting it in half, then turning it into a glowing crescent, and finally covering it completely. The outline of the moon was still visible throughout this, but its surface transformed from bright yellow / white to a glowing dark red the color of coals that have burned well down long after a fire's flames have extinguished. What a fantastic way to fall asleep. We woke in the morning to find it full and bright again, low on the horizon.

***Alisios'* Minimal Knead Wheat Bread** – 1 3/4 cups warm water, 1 Tbsp. honey, 1 Tbsp. molasses, 1 1/2 tsp. sugar, 1 packet ( 2 1/4 tsp.) dry yeast, 1 1/2 tsp. salt, 1 Tbsp. vegetable oil,

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2 cups whole wheat flour, 1 1/2 – 2 cups all-purpose flour, 1/2 cup of shelled sunflower seeds; Mix honey, molasses, sugar, yeast, and water in a bowl. Let the mixture sit for 10 minutes. Add salt and oil, stir until the salt is completely dissolved. Add flour slowly (wheat first) and mix well with a strong (e.g. wood) spoon, until you get a lump of firm, slightly sticky dough. Sprinkle in the sunflower seeds as you are mixing the dough. Hand-fold / knead the dough in the bowl sprinkling in additional flour until the texture is consistent. Cover with a towel and let rise in a warm, not hot, environment (75° – 85° F best) until the dough approximately doubles in size (between 1 ¼ and 2 hours, varies according to conditions). Oil (Pam) a bread pan. Fold the dough again, dump into the pan and let rise another 45 minutes. Bake at 350 degrees until brown (approx. 50 minutes). Remove from bread pan and let stand on rack at least 30 minutes before cutting. Don't bag until it has cooled completely. Makes a medium-heavy, tasty wheat bread that is really good as buttered toast.

As we had a particularly good weather window (moderate winds from the S / SE for the next 5 days), we decided to pull anchor and head for the Jumentos. The Jumentos are the northern end of the Ragged Islands, a chain of cays to the south of Great Exuma that are small, remote, and for the most part uninhabited. The areas surrounding them are shallow and some parts are strewn with reefs. Because of their small size, they offer little protection in the event of a passing front. They're beautiful and unspoiled, but not a place for the non-self-sufficient to go. In other words – Bring everything you will need because if you get into trouble you're pretty much on your own. We pulled anchor at 06:50 and had a great run, wing on wing<sup>76</sup> for hours. Then we turned port onto a beam reach increasing our speed to 7+ knots in 14 knot winds and 4-foot seas. There were 5 boats heading down – us, three others from our group (s/v *Freedom*, s/v *Veranda*, and m/v *Meermin*) and a Caliber 40 named *Delphinus*. We had seen our fellow Caliber at anchor earlier, but had only spoken to them on the radio. They hailed us as we sailed down and we had a nice chat. Gail's and my original plan had been to pull into the lee of Water Cay. However, as we were only reasonably sure of four more good weather days, and were making great time, we chose to sail the extra 12 nm to Flamingo Cay. *Delphinus* pulled off at Water and we and the other boats continued on.

Jim from *Freedom* was eager to get to Flamingo Cay. He had a friend who had wrecked a small Lake Buccaneer sea-plane there 12 – 15 years ago and he wanted to bring back a souvenir for his buddy. I rudely asked, with a smile, whether his friend was being chased by the Coast Guard at the time of the crash. Jim matter-of-factly replied – No. He had flown down here with a girlfriend and spent 4 days camping on the cay. During that time they hadn't seen a single boat. When they took off, the wing caught a wave and he crashed near the beach, injuring himself. As luck would have it, a cruiser in a trawler just happened to pass the cove as this happened, saw the whole thing, and rushed in to help. They pulled him from the plane and got him to Nassau for medical assistance. He's lucky to be alive. Anyway, Flamingo Cay looked great on the charts and was praised in the cruising guides, but was no where near as protected from the SE as Water Cay (the one we passed) had been. Furthermore, in most areas of the anchorage(s) the bottom sucked! It was hard scrub and our anchor just bounced along it until it would jam in low ledges of coral rock (one foot high rises of algae-covered dead coral). We attempted two sets, moved the boat up one cove to an area called "Two Palms", then attempted a third. This time our anchor became jammed so badly that I had to put on mask and snorkel and dive down 17 feet to pull it out by hand and carry it over to the open sand so Gail could haul it back up. She noted in admiration that there aren't many cruisers down here who could dive that deep then

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<sup>76</sup> Wind behind us, mainsail flat out on one side, Genoa jib sail flat out on the other – like a bird's outstretched wings

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move a 35 pound anchor and chain 20 feet across the bottom. (It's a skill I'm somewhat proud of.) Meanwhile, Jim, who has a shallow-draft catamaran, had said he and his wife Deb were anchored in good sand close to the beach. After our initial experiences, I was dubious, so snorkeled over to verify. Sure enough the bottom started out hard and gradually developed a firm sand base with thin sea grass close to shore. We moved in real close and re-anchored within spitting distance from their boat (22° 53.084' N, 75° 52.141' W). Gail was really embarrassed. But the anchorage was small and there were no other options short of moving down island. In fact, we were quite close to the iron shore on the other side too. I re-dove the anchor and verified that we were set well. It was buried.

While motoring in to anchor, we had noticed that the prop seemed to be vibrating strangely when the engine ran at just over idle speed. I had looked in the engine compartment and watched the prop shaft. Everything seemed OK from that side. Since I was in the water anyway, I dove down and checked the prop. It, too, looked fine at first glance. However, when I grabbed it and shook it, the cutlass bearing<sup>77</sup> seemed a bit loose. It was then that it occurred to me that the propeller shaft looked wider than I had remembered. I grabbed the shaft and found that the cutlass bearing had actually slid out as far as the sacrificial zinc – Not good! Luckily we have a short shaft with only an inch and a bit before the zinc. The next day, I dove down again, pushed it back in, tightened the lock nuts that hold it in place, then bolted a second collar zinc to the shaft, thereby eliminating any space should it wish to come out again. This should easily hold it throughout our trip and until our next haul-out. (It was also to cause us some other problems later on.)

The night was bouncy. We were well protected from the wind, but a pronounced south-westerly swell made its way around the cay and rocked us strongly, then bounced off the shore next to us and rocked us again. All three of us re-anchored in the morning. Gail and I dinked to shore and located a trail that went across the iron rock over the hill and to the beach on the northern end where Jim's friend's plane had crashed. Jim and Deb joined us and we headed over. The interior of the cay was beautiful with the normal sea grapes and mangroves plus small cactus with little red flowers. Chipmunk-sized lizards scurried out from under us as we walked the path. We passed a couple shallow salt ponds full of inch-long bright red shrimp before finally reaching the beach. We saw the plane wreckage instantly. The nose section had broken off and was on the beach. The outline of the body was clearly visible in the water a few feet away. It all was pretty broken up and stripped. This was to be expected as it had sat at the shoreline exposed and beaten by waves for over a dozen years. We were able to pull the front wheel out of the nose section and Jim cut out some of the instrument panel. After walking the beach, we all headed back, we with our memories, Jim with his mung and some photos for his friend. He later went back and got some of the numbers from the tail section to boot.

After our salvage expedition, we headed straight to the next cove in *Moondink*. Just south of it was a cave that opened up on the water. We gauged the surge, then went for it, bringing *Moondink* inside – Very cool! After leaving the cave, we pulled up to the beach of the cove and hiked a trail to the highest hill of the cay, where a modern light beacon stood (one that actually functioned). Upon return, we took a trail from the other side of the beach and found a land entrance to the sea cave we'd just been in. However, it was set in the side of the hill and

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<sup>77</sup> A rubber-lined sheath that surrounds the propeller as it goes through the hull

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required a bit of climbing. We figured our Crocs<sup>78</sup> weren't up to it and headed back. The early afternoon was spent snorkeling, then fixing the cutlass bearing, and scraping off any remaining little barnacles we saw. We all had sun-downers on the beach over a camp fire.

The following day was spent dinking the north side of the island. Here we bumped into a couple on a power cat named *Magic* who both gave us a lobster and told us where the conch were – Now that's hospitality! We followed their directions and soon picked up our limit of 10 in about 15 feet of water. As we don't have refrigeration, our plan was to offer some to our fellow cruisers and set any extras free. Unfortunately for the conch, there was interest all around. On the way back we stopped by a cove with the wrecks of both a steel island freighter and a reasonably large Haitian hand-made wooden sailboat. One of them must have carried a cargo of clothes because the water and rocks were strewn with shorts, shirts, belts, book bags, and ladies undergarments. We snorkeled the freighter then grabbed some tools from *Alisios* and headed to the beach to clean conch. This time around it was a joint effort and we'd been studying. I very quickly figured out how to punch the shell, cut the muscle, and pull them out as easily as the Bahamians do it. That's where the effortless portion of our new found skills ended. Cleaning the actual snail is the hard part, particularly skinning the lower portion of the body. Mid-way through Jim pulled up in his dink with one he had caught. He'd never cleaned one. So, we reveled in our new-found expertise and showed him how, even giving him one of ours to practice on. This was just an even trade, though we did joke about pulling a "Tom Sawyer" on him. He grabbed an old pair of pliers from his dink which helped with the skinning and volunteered to make conch salad for the group. We gladly gave him 4 for the salad + a couple extra for his ice box and saved the rest for ourselves. Thankfully, lobster are much easier to clean (though we haven't been too successful finding them on our own) – a scooping sweep of a knife blade inside the top edge of the tail, into the carapace, and the tail drops right out with all the meat.

The local island gods must have been angry over our bountiful harvest and the complete lack of corresponding thanks, for they sent a plague of mosquitoes of biblical proportions to descend upon us. We all met at 17:00 on the beach for sundowners and conch salad. The folks from m/v *Magic* even hiked the path over from the north side to join us. All was wonderful until 20 minutes after sunset. Then the mossies descended in clouds. We had had a bit of this the previous night, but not like this. I was chatting with Art from *Meermin* when all of a sudden Gail looked at me and said "We've got to go!" From the tone of her voice I could tell that she didn't mean "soon". She meant "now!". All of a sudden, blurry black dots hovered everywhere around us. Getting in the dink and motoring away from shore out into the basin didn't help. Once they found us, the mossies just followed, hovering, waiting for their chance to land. The wind had subsided and they were out in force. I watched a dozen envelop Gail as she boarded *Alisios*. We ran down below, quickly pulling the screens into place (leaving the mosquito repellent we'd brought ashore topside – of course). This effectively sealed most of the horde out, but also sealed about 30 in. We spent the next half an hour dancing around the cabin swatting at black blurs that hovered over the walls and our appendages. Every time Gail cried "got him!", I was sure to point out that "technically it was "her" since only the females bite. (I sometimes marvel over the fact that I'm still alive ;-). Just when we had everything stabilized, Murphy struck – We ran out of propane while cooking the conch. We checked the log in disbelief, and sure enough, we had last changed the tank at Allen's Cay six weeks ago. 5 – 6 weeks from a tank is about right. We looked at the companionway screen and it was clear. Gail pulled out the wrench from the tool

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<sup>78</sup> A rubber, flip-flop material version of clogs – Ugly as sin and overpriced, but very popular amongst cruisers because they're comfortable, versatile, surprisingly durable, and completely waterproof. You can walk for miles in them and we have.



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bag and said "If I go for the spare tank, will you change out the old?" We darted outside to feel a dense cloud about our ears. She ran forward to the anchor locker and grabbed the spare tank while I de-coupled the old one at the aft of the cockpit. I quickly doused the flashlight. But, they found me anyway. Gail handed me the new tank saying "see ya" then leapt below pulling the screens back into place behind her. It occurred to me that I'd been snookered, but at least I'd remembered to toss the repellent below. I reconnected the tank as quickly as I could, verified that it worked, then dove below myself. That was our last experience with Flamingo Cay as we left the following morning.

*"You run and you run to keep up with the sun, but its sinking – Racing to come up behind you again. The sun is the same in a relative way, but you're older – shorter of breath and one day closer to death." – Pink Floyd, Dark Side of the Moon*

From Flamingo, we headed back up to Water Cay with one other boat (*Freedom*), anchoring on the northwest side in a roomy anchorage across from a beautiful beach (23° 01.790' N, 75° 42.910' W). The water was spectacularly clear. It was my birthday – 43 years old. We were one of only 3 boats anchored off the cay and a more beautiful spot would have been hard to find. After settling in, Gail and I and Jim and Deb headed north in our dinks to Little Water Cay where we hiked across the iron-shore and set about walking the beaches in search of shells and sea beans. This is a whole thing down here, particularly with the women. Sea beans are drift nuts and seed pods that originate in Africa and South America. They float in the ocean currents for long periods of time before finally washing up on the ocean-facing beaches of the Bahamas along with all the other jetsam (garbage). In addition to weathered coconuts and almonds, there are a number of hard beans between 3/4" and 2" in diameter that are quite pretty and can be polished to a high gloss. They include "hamburger beans", "purse beans", "heart beans" and others. There are several websites and even a couple little books dedicated to their collection – Who knew? Often groups will get together and spend a morning or afternoon walking the beaches digging through the drift trash looking for these in addition to pretty shells and interesting sea glass<sup>79</sup>. Finding the beans becomes somewhat of an obsession. Consequently, they aren't easy to find on any of the remotely accessible beaches. Both of us find walking the ocean-facing beaches depressing. Broken plastic is everywhere and it's like poking through a garbage dump (see earlier rant). However, we were interested in finding a couple sea beans. We walked for a couple miles and I likened the search to a "Bahamian snipe hunt". (I was actually taken snipe hunting as a kid when visiting friends of my parents in North Carolina – I'm glad to have had the experience.) However, unlike snipe, sea beans do really exist. Jim, had barely heard of them and had never seen one. So, he, of course, found the first one – a heart bean wedged in a rock. The mid-day sun was hot and they headed back soon after. We continued our search while slowly retracing our steps back around the island to *Moondink*. Conventional wisdom says that one looks in the dried sea grasses that have washed to the top of the tide line. But, that zone has almost always been searched and picked over by the others who came before. We finally started looking a bit higher, in the base of the scrub brush where it was difficult to poke around and we finally hit pay dirt. It was not long before we had about a dozen heart's, a couple hamburgers, and a purse. We were pretty excited. Once you know they're there, you have to look for them. To do otherwise would be like sitting down with a box of Cracker Jacks and ignoring the possibility of finding the prize. Still, there are degrees of interest and shelling / beaning isn't our thing. Now we have to figure out how to polish a couple up. We had brought our snorkel gear and after our hike we continued along the northern shore of Little

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<sup>79</sup> broken glass that has been polished by the sand and surf

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Water Cay and went for a dip enjoying the solitude. We found a couple more conch, one of which became conch pizza that evening, best birthday present ever!

Both Freedom and the other boat in the anchorage left the next morning leaving us the entire cay to ourselves. We can now claim to know what it's like being on a deserted island. This was what we had naively expected the Bahamas to be like before we left. While we love our friends, it's nice to have paradise to yourself every now and again (though one does risk getting sun-burned in sensitive places ;-). We grabbed the handheld GPS, extra water, and took *Moondink* to a blue hole a mile and a half out on the banks where we anchored and snorkeled our way around the wall until a shark joined us for our swim. It was either a reef shark or a silky, about 4 feet long. We've dived with much larger ones on scuba and they don't generally bother you. I'm not sure why, but one feels much more vulnerable when snorkeling. So, we climbed back on board, pulled anchor, and headed a mile or so down to another reef, then finally back to shore on the southern side of the island. Here we pulled the dink onto a couple beaches and took some hikes before returning to *Alisios*. We'd picked up 4 more conch, since Gail wanted to give conch fritters a try.

People from home sometimes ask us about fishing – About 50% of the time we bring a collapsible pole spear with us when we go snorkeling. However, we have yet to use it. We haven't seen any lobster large enough to take and our time in Cayman left us with an appreciation of healthy, fish-filled reefs. I may still pop a schoolmaster snapper, a large grunt or hogfish if I get the chance. But, I don't see myself going after the one large grouper on a small reef. We occasionally drag a lure while sailing, but have only succeeded in catching seaweed. When trolling on the shallow banks the most common fish caught is barracuda. We're not eager to land a 4 foot barracuda in our little cockpit. We envision it as one of those "now what?" situations. For us, fishing gear is largely something you pour money into then don't use.

**Conch Fritters** – 4 conch, 1 large onion (diced), 1/2 of a small green pepper (diced / optional), 3/4 cup – 1 cup flour, 1/2 tablespoon baking powder, 1/2 cup evaporated milk, salt, pepper, thyme. Clean and tenderize the conch, chop into fine pieces. Add all remaining ingredients. The mixture should be slightly thick but drop off the spoon easily. Drop large spoon-sized lumps (about the size of a dollar pancake) in a hot frying pan with a little vegetable oil. Sautee until golden brown on each side. (These are very good – better than any you will ever get in a restaurant because they are mostly conch, rather than filler.)

Unfortunately, another front was forecast and the anchorages within the Jumentos offer only limited protection. So, Tuesday we headed back to Long Island in order to sit it out there. We had terrific wind and only saw one other boat on the entire passage. Thompson Bay was much quieter this time around (six boats when we first arrived) and we nuzzled in close to shore with the hope of a bit more protection, or at least dryer dink rides when the winds hit (23° 21.709' N, 75° 08.190' W).

Wednesday the winds hit, working their way to the west / southwest and just stayed there for a day. This was strange in that when a front approaches they usually clock pretty quickly from southeast past west to the northeast. Our anchorage was exposed to this direction and the 3-foot rollers that came in made for a very bumpy ride as *Alisios* hung on her little piece of chain hooked into the bottom. We stayed onboard because one should in these situations in case the anchor drags. We also would have gotten drenched had we tried to motor to shore. Moving around involved walking across a bucking platform. However, after over four months of living

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aboard, we're pretty used to this and the movement didn't particularly bother us. (It's steady land that sometimes gives us a problem now. I imagine it will take us weeks to stop rocking when we move back ashore in June.) The front itself didn't arrive until after nightfall and boy was it spectacular! The winds picked up even more. To the north lay a line of clouds with lightning bolts going off about every 1 or 2 seconds within. These were manifest as broad, strobe-like flashes illuminating the dark, cloud-draped horizon, rather than individual bolts. Any thunder was lost in the wind and distance, so all we saw was this light show accompanied by the wind's howl. It was beautiful. We caught some rain at about 22:00 from the passing edge and towards midnight the winds finally clocked to the northeast. At this angle, we were largely protected from the waves and the boat's rocking eased considerably. After 01:00 everything became strangely calm, though it had picked up again before dawn. From that point on, it stayed 15 – 20 knots, cloudy, with an occasional passing shower for the next 5 days, with the winds stronger at night.

We re-visited the cave we'd seen earlier and walked with flashlights through the cockroach-covered tunnel into the further caverns, all the way to the end. It was wonderfully fun. We saw a number of complete stalactites, stalagmites, and flying bats that circled in a swarm around the cavern ceiling occasionally breaking off and zipping by our heads. Later we arranged for a car rental and spent the afternoon of 29 February (leap day) and the morning of 01 March (St. David's Day) exploring the island in two long, half-day excursions.

The Queen's Highway stretches from one end of the island to the other with side roads branching off occasionally. Long Island boasts no large towns, but has dozens of settlements. Many have interesting names like "Hard Bargain", "Burnt Ground" and "Deadman's Cay" We got a smile when we passed the Deadman's Cay Health Clinic – kind of says everything that needs to be said about medical care down here. One can drive through many of these without seeing more than a house or two. However, there's no lack of churches – mostly Anglican and Catholic, with a few Baptist and other Pentecostal types thrown in for flavor. (Other Bahamian islands have heavier Baptist concentrations.) In Clarence Town we visited two churches built in the mid-1800s by Father Jerome, the first when he was an Anglican missionary, the second after he had converted to Catholicism. The Catholic one was clearly designed to out-do his earlier Protestant creation. We searched for a well known blue hole. They don't have street maps, so we brought along our chart, which includes some (but not all) roads and other land features. Signs are nearly non-existent and we took the wrong road, getting wonderfully lost, resulting in hikes down old overgrown jeep paths and a couple ocean beaches (on which we picked up numerous hamburger beans), before we finally found it late in the day. Along the way we found propane and water, but not rum. Long island is better suited for agriculture than the other Bahamian islands, meaning there actually is some soil mixed in with all the rock (maybe a 20/80 ratio, unless it's only 15/85). Nobody ever made money selling plowshares down here. But, the island is, nevertheless, a source of produce exported to the rest of the Bahamas and there used to be at least one major pineapple plantation. Though the Queen's Highway is in pretty good shape, many of the side roads are unpaved or if paved, are in poor repair. They are more suitable for a 4WD than a normal car and we felt guilty taking our rented 2000 Chevy Cavalier with over 110,000 miles on the odometer down some of the paths we did. We searched for the Pineapple plantation, getting deep into the brush before establishing that it was no longer existent and that the land had returned to its natural state. Similarly we searched out the old Diamond Salt ponds, now ruins, driving down their abandoned and well overgrown runway to the sluice gates and

rectangular basins in which seawater was first converted to brine, then to hard salt<sup>80</sup>. The infrastructure was there and you could see how it had worked. But, everything was crumbling, decaying, and overgrown after 25, 50, ?? (we never did find out how many) years of disuse. This had been a comparatively modern facility. Most people aren't aware of what a critical strategic commodity salt used to be. In the days before canning and refrigeration, salt was one of the only ways to preserve food. Salt literally made nations because without it, explorers could not explore and armies could not campaign. Many islands within the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos had built their old economies on salt production back in the colonial days. The ruins of several, hundred year old, salt pond evaporation-type salt works abound down here.

As leap day afternoon had been spent exploring to the south, we headed north on St. David's Day morning. Long Island is reputed to be the third island that Columbus landed upon. The northern most tip is named Cape Santa Maria because his ship grounded here. Upon a hillside overlooking the Cape is a rather basic cement obelisk with both a spectacular view and the rather strange inscription: "This Monument is Dedicated to the Gentle, Peaceful, and Happy Aboriginal People of Long Island, The Lucayans, and to the Arrival of Christopher Columbus on 17th October 1492." One can't help but mentally add: "Who Enslaved and Killed ALL of Them" (which I suppose is the intent).

Saint David (Dewi Sant) is the patron saint of Wales (Cymru). Aside from our explorations, we celebrated this national holiday by having a classic Welsh breakfast of cockles (baby clams), laverbread (cooked seaweed), fried eggs, bacon, toast with fresh New Zealand butter, and one piece of fried bread. (The latter was for me alone as Gail considers it too evil.) We hung our large Welsh flag from the halyard and Gail even found fresh leeks at the market and made leek and potato soup for dinner. The only thing missing was a pint (or two) of warm (luke cool) bitter beer.

After a couple more days at Long Island, the weather finally eased a bit and we headed back to Georgetown in time for the Cruiser's Regatta. In the meantime, we'd made new friends, read a few more books, changed the oil, re-done the mast boot, and learned to polish sea beans by hand to a gem-like luster (a very time consuming pastime).

### 2.10 The Saga of the Conch Shell, 05 March 2008

As you've no doubt surmised, conch are a big part of the Bahamas. Although the shells tend to be sandy and overgrown with algae when you find them, some of them can clean up pretty nicely and have bright pink enamel interiors. The locals often set them into doorways and exterior walls to provide a pleasing accent. Another popular thing to do with them is create horns which the cruisers blow at sunset. Gail decided it would be nice to have one of these and asked me to make her one. Finding the shells is the comparatively easy part. The problem is getting the snail out while leaving the shell intact. They don't willingly come out and the normal way to extract them is to pound a 1" hole near the top through which to cut the muscle. I've gotten pretty good at this. But, unfortunately, it renders the shell unusable as either an ornament or a horn. The islanders put a hook through their foot, hang them from a tree, and let gravity do the job. Another method of getting them out is to freeze the live conch for a couple days then thaw it out again. Small boat fridges aren't like the ones in your house and, as a rule, only power boats with large diesel generators have freezers capable of doing this. Well it just so happened

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<sup>80</sup> We toured a functioning evaporation salt plant in New Zealand 18 years ago.

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that we were travelling with m/v *Meermin* when we visited the Jumentos. Other friends on *Veranda* had given them some conch and this was their method of removing the snail from the shell. They were cleaning several on the beach in Flamingo Cay when we arrived for sundowners and Gail asked for one of the empty shells. So began our conch shell saga – It turns out that when the snail is removed this way, only most of the animal comes out. There are still some guts far up in the twists of the shell that are completely inaccessible. They can't be hooked out or washed out. Add a couple days of warm sun to catalyze any bacterial action and the result is a rotting fish smell that has to be experienced to be believed. We found this out a particularly hard way when we placed our fresh shell inside the cockpit locker next to the hot engine so it would be safe during our trip from Flamingo Cay to Water Cay. There is conventional wisdom on how to deal with this problem, some of which strikes of old wives tales. It includes both burying the shell for a week and placing it on an ant hill. (BTW – There are surprisingly few ants in the Bahamas. It isn't like Florida.) We tried leaving our, now rotting, shell ashore for a day and a half, hoping the local lizard and insect life would have a go at it. However, when I picked it up a day and a half later there wasn't a bug on it. Reluctantly, I brought it back aboard and set it in the sun. After a few days, travelling with it became a problem. We definitely became conscious of which parts of the boat were upwind vs. downwind. Furthermore, it tended to leak a particularly foul liquid. I finally decided that the sea creatures might do what land creatures had failed to. So, when we reached Long Island the second time we threw it overboard. Thompson Bay, Long Island has the most turbid, silty water we've seen in the Bahamas. You can't see the bottom at 6.5 feet. (This is the only location we've experienced this.) So, we also threw over a little weighted float to help us find it again. Over the next five and a half days the wind shifted several times moving *Alisios* in relation to our treasure. Furthermore, several dinghies tried to pick up our float out of curiosity and it was pulled out of the water and re-set at least twice. Consequently, when I finally went in to retrieve the shell, I wasn't sure I'd be able to find it. With 4 feet of visibility, I ended up having to execute a search and recovery grid pattern, diving down over and over and scanning the bottom with a very limited field of view. It took me about 20 dives to finally find the shell. However, the bottom critters had done their job and it came up completely clean.

(Now I have to actually figure out how to make a functioning horn with only the tools on board.)

### 2.11 The Southern Exumas: Georgetown II, 22 March 2008

In some ways it was a shame to return to the hubbub of Georgetown and the hundreds of boats anchored off Stocking Island. On the other hand, it was a bit exciting. Georgetown has a strange allure to it (for us it's a simultaneous attraction and repulsion) and we did have some chores to do, not the least of which was laundry. Cruisers get pretty adept at stretching out their clothing supply. (I won't go into details.) But, there comes a time periodically where one has to fill laundry bags with everything one's got, including sheets, towels, trash towels, and bath mats, tie everything up in lawn and leaf bags, and head to shore to a laundromat. By the time one gets to this point, the task has become a half-day project. In addition to laundry there was the need to find an internet hotspot (It had been almost 3 weeks since we'd checked email or updated the blog), extend our entry visas, replenish the rum supply, and, as always, top off water. Because of this, we anchored off Kidd's Cove directly, across from Georgetown, for the first day and a half (23° 30.486' N, 75° 45.723' W).

We were successful on all counts except our entry visas – When we cleared customs in Bimini 2 + months ago we were given a one year cruising permit, but only a 90 day entry visa even

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though we told them we planned to be here 5 months. (We knew they could have given a 120 day if they wanted to and apparently Nassau gives them regularly.) At the time the woman said it would be "no problem" – just go to any immigration office and they would extend it at no charge. The catch is that renewal requirements vary according to the whim of the particular immigration office / officer you go to. In Georgetown, Grand Exuma the guy is not enamored with cruisers and wants you to come in no more than 1 week before it expires. This sort of timing requirement is very difficult to meet when travelling on a sailboat that averages 6 – 7 mph through widely spread small cays that don't have immigration offices. We tried to be good doobies and renew a couple weeks early. Our argument fell on extremely bureaucratic, deaf ears. As a matter of fact the actual immigration official wouldn't even come out in person (after he returned from his lengthy mid-morning break). He was obviously too important a man to hear this sort of request in person – king of his 3-person office. Our request had to be relayed through a woman at the front desk and no amount of smiling and butt kissing helped. She suggested that we could change our itinerary. I told her we would "do the best we could" (while thinking that our consciences were now clear and there would be no heroic efforts made). The frustration was minor because this sort of thing just happens down here and nobody checks papers anyway. We would "do the best we could".

Meanwhile, the wind had clocked to the SE overnight at 15 – 20 knots. Consequently, the ride back to the boat was quite choppy even though we were on the close side of the harbor. Given that *Moondink* was laden down with four 5-gallon jugs of water, two lawn and leaf bags of laundry, another of groceries, a box of booze, life jackets, anchoring gear, a fuel tank, and the two of us, we were pretty pleased that the clean laundry made it back to the boat still dry. The same couldn't be said for Gail and me, though we navigated the chop very slowly to minimize splashes. That afternoon we pulled anchor and moved to a more protected and crowded spot off Hamburger Beach (23° 31.728' N, 75° 46.058' W) and spent the evening with others at an "AHOY" gathering on the beach – Alcohol, Hors d'oeuvres, and Other Yummies (i.e. a pot-luck). In prior years the organizers had named their gatherings the Alcohol Appreciation society and announced them over the net as "AA meetings". Some other cruisers, quite rightly, complained that this was in bad taste, so the group started referring to themselves as the "Outlawed Alcohol Appreciation Society" (a name they still occasionally use), then the "ARC" ("Alcohol Research Committee"). A naming contest was actually held and the more neutral, and nautical, "AHOY" was chosen. Anyway, there were about 50 people and each boat brought hors d'oeuvres which were laid out on the couple picnic tables for all to share. One couple brought a fiddle and guitar and played mild bluegrass tunes in the background (pretty well). They were soon joined by a woman with a banjo who was rusty but did an OK job of quietly picking along. A small camp fire was lit when night fell and when it burned down the gathering slowly petered out. It was great fun. This sort of thing is more likely to happen at the outlying beaches (Hamburger or Sand Dollar) than Volleyball (where the core activities take place). It is the sort of thing that redeems Georgetown for us.

The main cruising event in Georgetown is the annual Cruiser's Regatta which took place this year 07 – 15 March. As noted earlier, there's a group of boats that rush down here, drop their anchors in late December or early January, and don't move until April. In effect, they come down with their floating mobile summer home year after year and plant roots. Activities are organized to pass time and there are cliques and squabbles, just as you'd expect in any established community, along with many acts of generosity. I guess this isn't too different from owning a winter home in Florida and isn't all that bad a life, though it isn't our vision of cruising (which includes occasionally moving the boat). Maybe we'd feel differently if we had done this

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sort of trip several years over. Anyway, these are the people who structure cruising life at Georgetown, organizing many of the activities and overseeing the morning net, though transients do volunteer and assist as they pass through. (This may account for the poor weather forecast that is provided on the daily Georgetown VHF cruisers net. The SSB weather services all give 5 day + forecasts. However, the guy who does the weather for the cruiser net only provides 2 – 3 days and will skip significant occurrences if they don't fit into this format. This is near-useless for planning and consequently very frustrating. So, even though a weather report is given daily for all to hear, we still have to find someone with an SSB and ask them for a "real" forecast every few days. Nobody seems to complain. In light of the community here, I guess this is natural – Why provide a bigger weather picture if all you need it for is going to the beach and you don't plan to actually sail anywhere? We eventually found a way around this problem.) This year's regatta was the 28th and the culmination of their winter's effort.

As we returned to Georgetown on the 5th, we passed 20+ boats leaving. This number was replicated the following day. In the past there have been 400 – 500 boats anchored here for Regatta. This year there was something over 200 and it diminished a bit through the week. We were told by everyone that this was very low. Many repeat cruisers we've met complain that the whole thing has become too structured and competitive and that it was "better in prior years". This may be true. However, it may also be that they've just already done it. We've found that repeat trips to places we've had great vacations in never compare to the original experience when everything was new and the good memories have had time to overshadow any annoyances. How true this must be your 6th season down. It also may be that fewer people are cruising now and the younger ones move about more. Nevertheless, we found Regatta pretty disjointed and a bit anti-climatic. The overall schedule was posted on Volleyball Beach and at the Exuma Market. But, it wasn't announced as a whole on the net (although individual community chairs would haphazardly announce individual events if they were imminent). Unless you went in with pen and paper in hand to transcribe the schedule, and no one carries pen and paper, you only remembered the few events that specifically interested you. Consequently a handful were very well attended while others limped on. (You can look at the schedule and guess which ones fell on which side of the attendance scale.) Opening night was supposed to have been Friday. However, weather conditions were not conducive. The wind was SE 20 and there was a 2 – 3 foot chop that would have soaked anyone going to shore. As Robbie Burnes said: *"The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men gang aft agley an' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain for promis'd joy!"* So, both it and the pet parade were postponed to Saturday. The Regatta schedule follows. With a few obvious exceptions, the activities were not very different from what goes on here all the time and Regatta week wasn't that different from non-Regatta weeks, just more hectic.

- Thursday 03/06 – Registration
- Saturday morning 03/08 – Coconut Challenge
- Saturday afternoon 03/08 – Pet Parade
- Saturday evening 03/08 – Opening Ceremony followed by a "black and white + mask" dance on the beach
- Sunday afternoon 03/09 – Scavenger Hunt
- Sunday evening 03/09 – Texas Hold-Um (poker)
- Monday 03/10 – Stocking Island [sailboat] Race
- Monday evening 03/10 – Ultimate Trivia Challenge
- Tuesday 03/11 – Fun Volleyball
- Tuesday 03/11 – Bocce Ball

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- Wednesday 03/12 – Elizabeth Harbor [sailboat] Race
- Thursday 03/13 – Regulation Volleyball
- Thursday evening 03/13 – Dance with "Rockin Ron" (cruiser DJ)
- Friday 03/14 Tennis (at February Point)
- Friday 03/14 – Childrens Day
- Saturday 03/15 – Beach Golf
- Saturday 03/15 – Bridge
- Sunday 03/16 – Softball
- Monday 03/17 – Sand Sculpture
- Monday 03/17 – Arts & Crafts Day
- Tuesday evening 03/18 – Variety Show

We joined another couple from s/v *Pea Soup* for the Saturday morning Coconut Challenge. This was done with little pre-planning – Sharon and Reg put out an announcement on the net Saturday morning at about 08:15 desperately looking for another couple to make up the required 4-person team. We responded and met them an hour later on the beach for the start of the event. (If you're going to commit to humiliating yourself in public, you shouldn't give yourself too much time to think it over.) There were two parts to the Coconut Challenge and 20 teams participating. The first event involved picking up floating coconuts from a dinghy with no engine or oars. Each person was allowed one swim fin to place on their hand to paddle with and had to have a life jacket physically attached to them (most people wore them on their backs – no inflatables allowed). Each dink was encouraged to carry a bucket to drench the other dinks with. We all lined up with our backs to the water while several hundred coconuts were released into the water of one of the hurricane holes. There was a "Le Mans" start where all teams simultaneously ran to their dinks, pushing them into the water, and paddling furiously to reach the floating mass of coconuts that was rapidly dispersing with the current. We got 37 which placed us comfortably in the top quarter of the contestants. We hadn't known about the second portion when we signed up (which was a good thing). This was a set of relay races that took place on the sand volleyball court in which couples had to run the length of the court sideways, pinning a coconut front to front between them (no hands allowed), then back to back (much harder). Four teams competed at a time and it turns out that we were naturals. Team *Pea Soup* won our set and made it to the finals. The finals was an out and out relay race where each member had to clench the coconut between his/her thighs and run the length of the volleyball court and back (ducking under the net when you reached it). This was NOT a comfortable activity. Team *Pea Soup* came in second in the finals and 5th overall which, unfortunately, wasn't good enough to win either a bottle of rum or one of the regatta flags. Oh well . . . It served a good purpose because we had participated in one of the few events we were interested in.

The opening ceremony was fun, as all of the parties tend to be. It's hard to throw together alcohol, music, and dance on a beautiful, bug-free, tree-canopied beach and not have fun. The dress code was a bit of a problem. One doesn't normally wear black or white clothes down here because black stains with salt and white just stains. I happened to have a black t-shirt and light khaki shorts, so made it. Gail didn't have anything, but wore a pink sun-dress with her hair down and looked beautiful. We didn't have masks. But this wasn't an issue. Most people didn't. (The crafty people had spent the last few weeks having mask making workshops on Volleyball Beach where they played with scissors, cardboard, glitter, and other implements of construction. Not exactly our thing – we sailed to Long Island and the Jumentos instead. But, there was a runway-type exhibition of masks and costumes and a few of the creations were impressive.)



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To be honest, the only things that interested us after the opening day were the races, the dance, and watching the fun volleyball. (I've intentionally stayed away from playing any volleyball because of my recently dislocated thumb. The 10" steel plate and 6 screws in Gail's leg limits her<sup>81</sup>.) I should probably state up front that, although we've owned a sailboat for the past 10 and a half years, we've never sailed in a race. *Alisios* is somewhat of a hybrid – a little bit heavy for her size when compared to the production boats. She's designed for safety and comfort while trying not to overlook performance. The result is that neither our handicap (PERF rating) nor our performance are particularly high (though, in her defense, she holds her own). A lot of the racing types can get a bit excited (read "overly competitive" and "wound up very tight"). If we're to play chicken with a 15,000 – 20,000 pound boat, we'd rather it be someone else's. Still, this was a cool event that was relaxed as races go and we knew a couple of the boats participating, so spent the ENTIRE day as spectators. It was a staggered start – 5 groups with about 10 minutes between each, the slowest boats first and the multi-hulls last. We took *Moondink* to the starting line, anchored, and cheered on each boat. Then we motored to a little beach, crossed the island on foot, and watched from the ocean side. The committee boat and a couple others provided commentary on channel 78 the entire time. We took the opportunity to walk the beach southwards until it ended. At this point we took a trail back across the island to Sand Dollar Beach, then returned to the ocean side and took a fork up to the top of a hill that gave a great view. When the lead boats started rounding the Island, we headed back down and north, crossing back to *Moondink*, at which point we drained the water bottle, swung by *Alisios* for more water and sunscreen, then motored to and re-anchored by the finish line. We were soon joined by 4 other dinks, all RIBs, and ended up with the 5 of us hanging off *Moondink*'s little Danforth anchor – talk about testing your ground tackle. We forgot to bring the camera, of course. We didn't get back to *Alisios* until after 18:00 (6 pm) and got way too much sun. Our arms and legs are quite acclimated by now. However, our faces still feel it a bit after an entire day, even using SPF 45 sunblock, and our lips very much so. The faces get over it quickly. However, sunburned lips are tender and uncomfortable for days.

Another popular activity in Georgetown is losing your dinghy. I don't mean occasionally either. There was one boat that lost their's 4 times in 20 days. I guess a lot of folks don't take tying knots seriously. But, this sort of thing is no joke and the old saying: "If you can't tie knots, tie lots." doesn't cut it in practice. Losing \$4,500 worth of dinghy and motor that just happens to be your only form of to-shore transportation will ruin a good number of days of your cruise as you seek to replace it. However, it seems that one or more go floating off about every other day. One day we heard 3 reported missing. Luckily the harbor is contained and there are many boats to keep an eye out and help retrieve strays. So, when someone comes on channel 68, with their tail between their legs, announcing: "Did anyone find a 10 foot Caribe with a 9.9 hp Yamaha outboard and Florida numbers?" someone usually spots it pretty quickly. Similarly, when one is discovered floating, it is always announced and returned to its rightful owner. (We're actually amazed at how many sailors don't seem to know how to properly tie off to a cleat. There is a proper method and mounds of half-hitches isn't it. Similarly a clove hitch + half hitch is the proper way to tie off to a post or rail. The half hitch afterwards should never be skipped. Knowledge of these knots isn't optional if you're going to cruise.)

A late cruising friend of ours once introduced us to the "rule of threes". The premise is that every project on board a boat generates 3 more projects and each of those, in turn, generates 3 more

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<sup>81</sup> Gail broke both bones in her lower right leg in two skiing many years ago. She still has the plate and screws.

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and so on, and so on and so on. We decided to make 3-bean salad. We were down to our last can of kidney beans and it was hiding. Consequently, we spent an hour and a half re-arranging all of the canned provisions on board, breaking into left over cases, re-filling our staging crates<sup>82</sup>, and throwing out quite a bit of packaging. This made us more aware of what we had and didn't have and resulted in a situation that reminded me of another quote (or at least a story) from a different friend. He had grown up in a rural area and used to hunt squirrels as a kid, tossing his catch into his parent's freezer upon returning to the house. One day his dad saw him getting ready to leave with the shotgun and intercepted him saying: *"no more until you eat what you've already caught"*. We knew we had over-provisioned when we left and haven't bought much apart from some fresh vegetables and a little meat since leaving the U.S. However, real cheese has successfully tempted us. The quantity of vacuum sealed Velveeta still in our settee prompted us both to agree *"no more until we've eaten what we brought"*. In addition to Velveeta (which is processed "cheese food" and isn't really cheese) we had brought a couple 30 oz. cans of "real" cheese made by the Washington State University Creamery which has pretensions. We'd been curious about this for months, but let's face it – a 2 pound can of cheese is a bit intimidating for two people. We finally opened one up and were very pleasantly surprised. It would hold its own at any cocktail party. (This is not to be confused with the Australian, Bega brand, white cheddar cheese product sold by survivalist stores. The WSU Creamery cheeses are the real deal.) Having said this, we still go for the occasional cracked conch and cheeseburgers on shore. The Jimmy Buffet song Cheeseburger in Paradise has made it quite a cliché. But, one really does jones for a cheeseburger after weeks / months living on a small boat and fire grilled burgers are only \$4.50 at the Chat-N-Chill. Their main bartender is so surly and the service so bad that it's almost an attraction in and of itself.

On Tuesday 11 March we picked up a slightly used Grundig Yacht Boy 400 PE AM/FM/SSB (short wave) radio receiver from our friends on m/v *Pendragon*. We should feel a bit guilty about this – Another boat had announced over the net that they were looking for one. Dalton hailed him afterwards, but the guy didn't respond. We swooped in, getting it first. The ironic thing is that we've been loosely travelling with *Pendragon* for well over a month, seeing them regularly all the while we were yearning for a receiver. Had we but known . . . Anyway, we rationalized our piracy by figuring that friends should come first and are now using it to listen in on Chris Parker's, Caribbean Weather Center, weather forecasts. The unfortunate thing is that the forecasts start at 06:30! (And to think I used to get up every day at 05:00 to shower and leave the house for work by 6.) It turns out that using a short wave receiver is very much like the images portrayed in old B-grade war movies, only ours has a digital tuner so we're not twisting dials. We sat below in the pre-dawn darkness with whistles, pops, and plenty of background static as the voice of Chris sort of came over the speaker. It faded in and out and we continually tweaked the placement of the antenna wire, turned off lights, re-positioned our bodies, and did anything else we could think of to improve the reception. A stand-alone receiver with a little roll-up wire antenna clearly isn't anywhere as good at receiving as a properly installed full-fledged SSB. However, Chris gives several staggered morning broadcasts and we did get him clear enough to copy down the complete 5-day forecast. I'm sure we'll learn some of the idiosyncrasies of reception in the days and weeks ahead. (Hoisting the little roll-up antenna up the flag halyard or clipping it up in the cockpit helps.) Interestingly, the Caribbean Weather Center was founded by David Jones in 1993. We think it's appropriate that sailors seek out Davie Jones for their weather forecasts.

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<sup>82</sup> We have a large milk crate under both the port and starboard settees that we store canned goods in – meats on one side, veggies on the other. This keeps them accessible while preventing them from rolling around when we're under way.

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After picking up the SSB receiver Tuesday morning, we made our first final trip into Georgetown, checked email, and had pretty much decided to leave the following morning. Then we got hooked in again. Georgetown does this – It seems that the guy on s/v *White Diamond* works for one of the inflatable companies and he announced that he was going to give an "inflatable repair seminar" on Thursday afternoon. He encouraged people to bring their problems and clinched it for us by saying he would have a portable generator, a heat gun, good 2-part glue, and plenty of patch material. That afternoon, as if to accentuate our need, we experienced another partial failure in *Moondink's* floor – a new opening in the front seam. We ended up learning about glues (the best 2-part glue is apparently made by Mercury / Quicksilver) and use of a heat gun to catalyze the contact cement when applying patches. We used his materials to seal the new leak and bought ourselves some more time. This turned out to be a very good thing. The real glue, applied properly, really holds. There's no way our field patch kit with its tube of contact cement would have held for the rest of our trip.

The second Regatta race on Wednesday was a much shorter, harbor race and we again watched it from *Moondink*, this time with our camera. These events are particularly fun because there is such variety in the boats competing. A handful of the boats are very hard-core about it. Most are in it for fun. There were 4 or 5 classes and our friends Arne and Bev on *Scandia* came in third in their class.

At this point we started forming our exit strategy, deciding to work our way back up through the middle Exumas hitting some of the smaller quieter spots we missed on the way down. However a front followed by a relatively strong northeaster was forecast for Sunday evening through Wednesday. The latter part of this was accompanied by unusually high 12-foot Atlantic swells from the north Wednesday through Friday. (Yikes! – the mere thought of trying to navigate any of the small cuts between the cays while surfing a 12-footer gives us shivers. We're very thankful we picked up the SSB receiver because, while Chris Parker forecast these for a week stressing how dangerous they could be, the guy who gives the morning weather on the cruiser net made no mention of them.) So, we delayed again, making a second final trip into Georgetown and attending both a dink raft-up (party) and another AHOY off Hamburger Beach on Friday evening, all the while humming the tune *Tarpit Harbor* in the back of our minds. The raft-up was really neat – A group of cruiser musicians created a band jokingly named "White Folks on Boats" in order to play at the Bahamian Music Festival Saturday (and boy could the female vocalist belt it out!). They held a practice concert on a catamaran anchored in the middle of the harbor. About 40 dinghies tied up in front of them in one giant raft-up, many passing hors d'oeuvres. Now how fun is that? After the concert the entire group headed to the beach in one giant swarm to continue the party ashore. We did, however, manage to get out of Dodge – sort of . . .

Saturday morning we pulled anchor and headed south about 6 nautical miles to an area called Red Shanks, anchoring in a beautiful, secluded basin in between Great Exuma and Crab Cay in only 5.5 feet of water (23° 29.071' N, 75° 44.088' W). Although it's only an hour or so from Georgetown, Red Shanks is a different world. There are no amenities and very few boats come here. Those that do (us included) want peace and quiet. The entrance is a bit intimidating when looking at the charts and even though our entry was fairly straightforward (no coral heads), we passed over some extremely shallow spots and had to dodge a number of shoals. The morning had been quite cloudy. However, as if by divine providence, the sun emerged just as we entered illuminating the shallow bottom through the clear water as if someone had flipped a light switch.

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This was helpful. We proved conclusively that *Alisios'* depth sounder has about a 1-foot buffer, because according to it, we should have run aground a couple times. But, the bottom is sand and we came in on a low but rising tide, so knew we could get off again without damage if we touched. After settling in and checking the anchor, we took off in *Moondink* to explore the numerous basins created by large rocks and small cays, then went snorkeling, including a trip Sunday to the Atlantic side of Guanna Cay inside Dog Cay and Puppy Cay (got to love the names – and yes, there are multiple Guanna Cays scattered across the Bahamas). Monday the winds behind the front settled in and we hung out on board for the next three days while a 20 – 25 knot north / north-easter blew around us. There were no boats anchored right on top of us. The basin was very protected and *Alisios* hardly bobbed, though we could see the waves raging in the harbor through the shallow cut next to us. During this time our depth sounder suddenly stopped functioning. This was a bit worrisome as it and the GPS are the two pieces of navigation electronics that we really rely on. However, I guessed what the problem was and before her shower, Gail went over the side in the winds and light chop with scrub-brush in hand to have a look at the transducer at the bottom of the hull. Sure enough, a nice little garden of sea-grass had sprouted on its surface and reached critical mass. She scrubbed it off and everything started working again. We hadn't short-hauled to repaint the bottom before leaving and our anti-fouling paint was starting to lose its "anti". There were no barnacles (they may be more of an "up north" problem). But, the algae and grasses were making their presence known. When it's sunnier and calmer, we'll have to spend some quality time in the water with snorkel and scrub-brush to freshen everything up. Meanwhile we read a lot, discussed our next moves, Gail polished the top-side stainless (which develops rust spots quickly in the salt environment and is a job both of us loathe) and I worked out a recipe for pizza dough now that the few packets of mix we'd brought from the U.S. were almost gone.

**Pizza Crust** – (This recipe is meant to emulate the packets of pizza crust mixes one can buy in U.S. grocery stores. The proportions are sized for use with a 9" \* 13" cookie sheet / the oven of a small boat.) 1.25 cups self-rising flour (If you don't have self-rising flour use 1.25 cups all-purpose flour, 1/2 tsp. salt and 2 tsp. baking powder), 1 Tbsp. powdered milk, 1 Tbsp. powdered egg (about 1/2 a mixed egg), 1 Tbsp. olive oil, 1/2 cup water; Mix the dry ingredients. Add the water and olive oil. Mix, then hand-fold until the dough is firm but sticky. Let stand for 10 minutes. Grease (Pam) a 9" \* 13" cookie sheet and stretch dough from edge to edge. Add a light coating (approximately 6 - 7 oz.) of sauce and any desired toppings. Bake at 450 degrees for 15 minutes. (For whole wheat pizza, use white and whole wheat flour in a 50/50 ratio.)

**So-So Pizza Sauce** – 1 (6 ounce) can tomato paste, 6 oz. water, 1/2 tsp. sugar, 1 tsp. oregano, 1 or 2 cloves minced garlic, 1 Tbsp. olive oil, dash of salt, dash of black pepper, dash of red pepper (optional); Combine all ingredients. Makes 1 ½ cups, enough for two of the pizza crusts above. (Sauce is better when cooked. However, this recipe is easy and doesn't require bulky ingredients.)

Meanwhile the front abated and the ocean swells raged. Thursday 20 March we left Red Shanks and moved back north to Kidd's Cove right in front of Georgetown (23° 30.247' N, 75° 45.903' W). We made our third final / true final trip into town for laundry, water, and internet. As we motored up Elizabeth Harbor we could see the spray of ocean waves leaping above Stocking Island (which has some sizable hills). They must have been truly impressive. We were sorry our anchorage prevented us from seeing the ocean beach on Wednesday at the height of the swells. But, we were sheltered and comfortable. Good Friday is a government holiday down

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here and everything is closed, so despite a good chop on the harbor, pretty much every cruiser was in town doing the same thing we were.

Friday we moved and anchored off Sand Dollar Beach (23° 30.890' N, 75° 44.667' W), thereby hitting all of the major Georgetown anchorages during our stays here. There was a gathering on the beach at 16:30 in support of a rather interesting fellow – Kamo is a 40-year old French Canadian who sailed here a year and a half ago aboard a 20 foot sailboat, Minoun, on which he lives. He's got a small, wiry build and looks like he weighs about 120 pounds (though he says he's dense-boned and really comes in at about 135). His form is accented by a craggy face, a sandy mullet with a short ponytail and scattered rat-tail braids, and mutton-chop whiskers. His entire back sports an intricate tiger-stripe-inspired tattoo, that he did himself with a mirror. He also has a small dolphin and counter-balancing shark on each collar bone. These sit atop white tattoos in the shape of CQR anchors that frame another trident-shaped white tattoo upper-center-chest, under his throat. Let's just say he stands out amongst the white, middle-class, mostly retired cruisers down here (some of whom feel they own the place). He's of a class of sailors we refer to (not disparagingly) as "solo hobos" and to say he lives a minimalist existence would be a gross understatement. He's a gifted artist and makes about \$2,500 a year selling reproductions of his water colors along with a few of the originals. He uses this princely sum primarily to buy food to supplement any fish he catches and edible plants he gathers. He lives without any modern conveniences. His boat and dinghy have no motor. He has no running water and no stove to cook with. (Water is stored in gallon jugs and he uses the sun to cook.) He always appears clean. He's doesn't drink at all or do any drugs and doesn't ask anyone for anything, though some give him a few provisions. Many of the people here don't know how to take him. Those who have gotten to know him find him friendly, generous, and willing to give of his time and skills. He always brings an hors d'oeuvre to the pot-lucks, and whenever he catches a large fish (he sometimes fishes for shark off his boat) he always shares the meat because he can't store it. Others look at him like some sort of stray dog with derision and speak to him to his face either patronizingly or with barely concealed condescension (and with non-concealed condescension behind his back). I understand that last year it wasn't like this, but this year some words have been said to him that have been quite hurtful. He has his supporters who are outraged by this and go overboard in the other direction. By the end of this season it got to the point where there were pro-Kamo and anti-Kamo factions that occasionally spilled over onto the VHF cruiser's net with the pro's making him sound like some charitable neo-Mother Theresa and the con's treating him like a vagabond parasite. Caught in the middle was a sensitive outcast guy who's perhaps a bit over-focused on how long and in how many ways life has shat on him. The pot luck on the beach was an effort by those friendly to him to try to cheer him up as everyone leaves, him included. (He's stated that he plans to go to the Turks and Caicos in April. We guess that his Bahamian immigration status and cruising permit aren't current and that he had similar issues in the Florida Keys before coming to the Bahamas. But, that's only conjecture.) I have no idea how good a person he is or isn't. However, we were happy to treat him with the same dignity and open friendship we did anyone else. The pot-luck was moderately well attended (a lot of boats left this morning) and we were happy to count ourselves present.

With our chores done and the swells diminished, we finally left Georgetown Saturday morning and began our northward, return trek, part of the post-Regatta mass exodus.

A few more observations on the Bahamas cruising community – The majority of the cruisers are American, the main exception being a sizable, and very visible, contingent from Canada – most from the French speaking regions. Many of the French Canadians speak English quite well.

Some don't. Language naturally creates a sub-community and a large percentage of the French Canadians tend to hang together, though this is far from universal. (About 1/5 of the people we've been hanging out with are Canadian.) Unfortunately, there is also occasional friction between the French and English speakers and in a few cases words have been spoken over the VHF at Georgetown that mirror race-based bigotry. We're younger than most of the people here and having grown up after desegregation, can't help but wonder: "How can you think that way?". We've been told that most of the vocalization is between the English speaking and French speaking Canadians themselves, between whom there is quite a history. However, when someone makes an anonymous small-minded comment over the VHF, you can't tell what nationality they are. (The English speaking Canadians don't always end their sentences with "eh".) We've only heard open conflict in Georgetown where there is a heavy concentration of cruisers who hang around for a long time. When people sit in one place with too much time on their hands, petty quarrels tend to surface. It shouldn't be over-stated. For the most part everyone gets along very well and take pride in going out of their way to help anyone in any way they can. There's almost no mechanical or electrical problem that someone more skilled than you isn't willing to help you fix for free down here. I'll make one stereotypical observation regarding the French Canadians – American's (ourselves included) are overwhelmingly conservative and tend to wait until they have a large boat and a comfortable cruising kitty<sup>83</sup> before setting forth. Consequently, most American cruisers are 55 and over and retired. The Canadians go when they're younger in whatever sound boat they can afford. Their boats tend to be less heavily laden with toys. If you see a 26 – 30 foot boat down here (and you do), you can almost guarantee that it will be flying a maple leaf flag off the stern. Sometimes there will be a family of four on board. (BTW – All the kids we've met cruising have been mature and very well-adjusted, regardless of their country of origin. They stand in marked contrast to many kids at home.) I'll close by adding that Gail and I are jealous of the Canadians because they can and do sail to Cuba (which is tantalizingly close). In our opinion the Cold War relic U.S. embargo against Cuba is misguided and harmful. There is no military threat and had the U.S. allowed regular trade, capitalism would have done ages ago what the 40 years of embargo hasn't. As things stand now, the embargo has only succeeded in causing decades of suffering for Cuba's populace.

### 2.12 *The Fool's Prayer* by Edward Rowland Sill (1841 – 1887)

*The royal feast was done; the King  
Sought some new sport to banish care,  
And to his jester cried: "Sir Fool,  
Kneel now and make for us a prayer!"*

*The jester doffed his cap and bells,  
And stood the mocking court before;  
They could not see the bitter smile  
Behind the painted grin he wore.*

*He bowed his head and bent his knee  
Upon the monarch's silken stool;  
His pleading voice arose: "O Lord,  
Be merciful to me, a fool!"*

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<sup>83</sup> pot of money

*"No pity, Lord, could change the heart  
From red with wrong to white as wool;  
The rod must heal the sin: but, Lord,  
Be merciful to me, a fool!"*

*" 'Tis not by guilt the onward sweep  
Of truth and right, O Lord, we stay;  
'Tis by our follies that so long  
We hold the earth from heaven away.*

*"These clumsy feet, still in the mire,  
Go crushing blossoms without end;  
These hard, well-meaning hands we thrust  
Among the heart-strings of a friend.*

*"The ill-timed truth we might have kept—  
Who knows how sharp it pierced and stung?  
The word we had not sense to say—  
Who knows how grandly it had rung?"*

*"Our faults no tenderness should ask,  
The chastening stripes must cleanse them all;  
But for our blunders – oh in shame  
Before the eyes of heaven we fall.*

*"Earth bears no balsam for mistakes;  
Men crown the knave, and scourge the tool  
That did his will; but Thou, O Lord,  
Be merciful to me, a fool!"*

*The room was hushed; in silence rose  
The King, and sought his gardens cool,  
And walked apart, and murmured low,  
"Be merciful to me, a fool!"*

### **2.13 Back North: Exumas, 08 April 2008**

There's no escaping it now. We are officially on our return trek. However, the question that arose was by which path we would return. We seriously entertained three options, the first two of which are quite conventional – One would have taken us east across Exuma Sound (deep, open water) to Conception and Cat Islands, then northwards up all of Eleuthera, over to the Abacos, across the Gulf Stream to the U.S, up the coast, and home. The second was to back-track northward through the Exumas, hitting some of the smaller, less stopped at spots that we'd missed on the way down, then cutting over to northern Eleuthera, the Abacos and home. The third, somewhat unconventional, option was to head south back to the Jumentos and Ragged Islands and come up across the shallow Bahama Banks behind the Exumas, working our way northward then, as with the other two, over to Eleuthera, the Abacos, and home. As it

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turned out, we ended up with a series of passing frontal systems and never got a great weather window. So, we settled on option two.

We were one of a few dozen boats leaving Georgetown once the weather settled after Regatta. But, unlike the others, we only went as far north as Adderly Cut (about 30 miles north-northwest) before tucking back in behind Lee Stocking Island. The cuts I'm referring to are narrow gaps between the cays linking the open ocean / Exuma Sound to the east with the shallow Bahama Banks to the west. All of the cuts tend to be narrow, lined with rocks that lie just below or barely above the surface and, as noted earlier, have strong tidal currents funneling through them. If conditions are rough on the ocean side or if the currents oppose the winds, there can be standing breaking waves at the entrances or, in extreme cases, "rages". The cuts range from glass-calm, to quite tricky, to completely impassable, depending on timing and conditions. In our case, there was still a diminished Atlantic swell of about 4 feet which made us apprehensive. We attempted to time our entry at slack low, but arrived a little early and crossed our fingers as we went through. We surfed a couple waves, but it was over fast and overall our entry wasn't bad at all. At 14:45 we picked up a mooring ball in a nice basin by the Caribbean Marine Research Center (23° 46.291' N, 76° 06.325' W). The area here is famous for being quite beautiful. Lee Stocking is the largest of a cluster of cays that separate Exuma Sound from a particularly shallow section of the Banks on which sit more cays and an area called Barreterre. We can vouch for the shallow part as we found the bottom. Luckily we were going slow. It was soft, mounded sand and we backed right off, carefully re-tracing our steps before finding the 5.5 foot deep channel. (We draw 4.6, so were only playing with a foot of water under our keel during our low tide approach.) We understand that the Marine Research Center used to be a thriving place supported by a multitude of universities. However, post-9/11 hasn't been a good time for non-defense-related research grants and they're now barely managing to remain open on a skeleton staff while awaiting more funding. Shore visits to the facility are no longer permitted and we didn't see much activity in the buildings.

There were three moorings (available at no charge on a first come, first serve basis). We were the first boat to arrive and succeeded in choosing the only one without a pennant, which made hooking up to it quite a challenge. Now, one takes strange moorings at one's own risk. (For all you know, under water there's only a piece of half-rotted kite string tied to a cinder block.) So, I put on a mask and snorkel and dived it to make sure it was OK. I didn't particularly like what I saw. The mooring appeared to be of a proper type<sup>84</sup>. However, the stem stuck well above the sea floor, causing me to question how well it was anchored in place, and the 3/4 inch line (which is a bit light to begin with) was frayed half-through at one spot. By the time I observed all this, two other boats had come in and grabbed the other moorings. The forecast was for light winds. So, we also dropped our anchor with a suitable amount of chain as a safety measure. Since I was already in the water, I asked Gail for the scrub-brush and spent the better part of an hour

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<sup>84</sup> There are several types of "proper" moorings – With hard rock or coral bottoms, a hole is drilled and a multi-foot long stainless steel eyebolt or U-bolt is inserted and cemented in place. In sand bottoms, a long stainless steel shaft with an eyebolt on one end and a hinged, spade-shaped, plate on the other may be driven below the bottom then pulled upwards, setting the spade. Another, similar system uses a stainless steel rod with large angled flanges that is literally screwed into the bottom. At other times, a large mushroom anchor is used, the bell of which gradually sinks well beneath the sand. In all of the above cases, the mooring tackle (usually heavy 3-strand nylon line with spliced, chafe-protected ends (though sometimes chain) and a white, center-striped, mooring ball with floating pennant) is shackled to the eye-bolt protruding from the bottom. Unlike anchors, a mooring is designed to hold a boat in place using minimal scope. In contrast, a non-proper mooring consists of mooring tackle secured to cement blocks, old engine blocks, tractors, or any other piece of heavy junk placed on the bottom. These are bad because they tend to reposition on the bottom when it blows hard taking your boat with them.



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cleaning our bottom. Then we settled in for the evening. We had forgotten that in areas with strong currents, mooring balls are often pushed under the hull and smack against the side loudly. The dull thud under our sleeping quarters is (and was) quite annoying and you can't help but wonder whether it's causing any damage, though it usually doesn't. The next morning the other two boats left and we moved to a better mooring closer in where this wasn't a problem.

Lee Stocking was delightful. The morning of Easter Sunday we found ourselves one of only two boats and soon took off in *Moondink* to explore. We climbed to the top of Perry's Peak, which at 123 feet is the highest spot in the Exumas. This gave a nice view of both sides of the various cays. We also hiked some of the "Loyalist trail". But, it was quite overgrown and not fun going. Once we were finished with the trails, we headed a mile out to a set of large rocks named "Tug and Barge", which we circumnavigated before going conch diving over the Banks. There was a good 2+ knot current. So, we put a loop in *Moondink's* painter and went over the side, drifting over the 8 foot deep, sea grass bottom with *Moondink* in tow (unless it was vice-versa). It was obvious that the locals harvested this area regularly, because the pickings were lean – plenty of undersized conch, but very few legal ones. However, the current swept us over quite a large area and after close to an hour we had half a dozen which was enough for appetizers, dinner, and breakfast. At one point we had a small reef shark check us out, circling back for another look. But, he lost interest and moved on after the second pass. After that, we became much more alert to our surroundings, spending less time focused solely on the bottom and more making 360 degrees scans around us – ha ha.

Initial forecasts had Monday being nice. However, we woke to dark clouds. A front was set to roll through that evening, preceded by scattered squalls and followed by a couple days of gale force, north-easterly winds. In spite of the ominous clouds, we took *Moondink* across to Norman's and Leaf Cays<sup>85</sup> searching for a reported reef we hoped to quickly skin-dive. We never found the coral heads. The lack of sun made it difficult to read the bottom and when the rains came, they drove us home. As soon as we left the lee of Norman's we experienced quite a messy chop. Even though our new mooring had looked safe, given the forecast, we decided to set a "safety" anchor. So, I dove in and swam it out while Gail helped from the deck. This was actually quite fun in the rain, wind, and waves – much more so than it would have been in calm conditions. At this point, we knew we'd be holed up on board for a few days. So, we showered and made the best of it.

Having to hide below at anchor for days at a time while it blows outside is one of the parts of cruising that no one talks about much. It's a larger part of the package than we had realized before setting out. I find the experience a bit surreal in practice – One locks oneself inside a floating plastic bottle and goes into a quasi-hibernation. Time ceases to move normally when you lose most of your connection to the outside world. We read quite a lot and I write. We do little chores and time passes in spurts – sometimes "where did it go" fast, sometimes agonizingly slowly. Our anchorage proved to be exceedingly well protected and we didn't feel the brunt of the wind or waves. It was mostly sunny, which made the wait more frustrating. We had to make an open-water hop and couldn't in high winds and swells, largely because of the need to traverse the cuts. Gail worked on an itinerary for the next couple months and it became evident that, given the distance we had to travel, we didn't have the gobs of time we thought we did. This added to the frustration. After all, days spent hanging out below waiting out frontal

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<sup>85</sup> Not to be confused with the cays of the same names further north

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passages are days one isn't spending exploring small cays and making homeward progress. During this time we had to make emergency repairs to our anchor windlass . . .

We have an electric windlass that is used to haul our anchor and chain. Heretofore it's been reasonably reliable. However, it is a moving part that sustains heavy loads and is used a lot. At Lee Stocking it suddenly it started making a metal on metal grinding noise – It's possible that squeaks are OK. Metal on metal grinding, on the other hand, is almost always bad. This was one of those "must deal with it now" problems. The owner's manual proved particularly worthless as manuals go. Its minimal maintenance instructions basically told you to clean it with fresh water regularly and grease the outer rotation parts every 6 months or year depending on usage. Nowhere did it say how to disassemble the unit to get to these parts and the only helpful diagram was an all-windlass exploded parts schematic at the back. Luckily, I had downloaded electronic copies of both the manual for our windlass and its predecessor. The one for the earlier model provided a little more detail, so I spent some time cross-mapping the older parts to their newer equivalents and getting a good mind's picture of how everything pieced together. Then, Gail and I carried some tools, a toothbrush, a fresh water sprayer, WD-40, winch grease, and a roll of paper towels to the bow and went to work. I got everything dismantled (the capstan drum, the gipsy assembly (cogged wheel grabs and feeds the chain), the stripper (stainless steel plate that keeps the chain from back-feeding) and the clutch cones (cones that allow the gipsy to engage and release the gears) and didn't even drop any of the smaller parts overboard in the wind. It was in need of basic cleaning and lubrication, but that wasn't the cause of the grinding. The stripper had bent considerably and was scraping against the gipsy. I'm not sure what caused this. We have a relatively shallow anchor locker and the chain tends to pile up under the windlass. If it piles too high, the windlass jams. I try to clear the chain regularly, but this still happens occasionally. My theory is that repeated jams bent the stripper over time until it hit a critical point. But, I'm not 100% wedded to this theory. Anyway, the stripper is made from a 3/16 inch thick stainless steel plate that is 5/8 inch across at the point where it bent. Whatever caused it, the force required to bend a steel plate lengthwise along a point this wide must have been considerable. It's got quite a little motor. As we had no replacement stripper on board, I had to remove it and we'll just have to be extra careful when anchoring until we can order new parts and either have them shipped to somewhere in the Abacos or possibly even wait until we return home. In the meantime, this means hand-tensioning every foot of chain whenever we haul anchor. Luckily, we caught it before any serious damage was done.

Friday 27 March a 3-day gap between frontal systems materialized, so we exited Adderly Cut back into Exuma Sound and made a northerly hop, re-entering the Banks through Rudder Cut between Little Darby Island and Rudder Cut Cay. Our other option had been to stay inside and take a longer, zigzaggy route across the Banks at high tide. This path would have involved weaving through numerous 1 – 2 foot deep shoals via a maze of narrow, shallow channels, depending on 15 GPS waypoints and a sharp lookout to keep from running aground. We met people who had done it and had plotted both routes, just in case. But there were good conditions at the cut as we passed, so we took the more straightforward, outside route at the last moment.

We anchored on the west side of Rudder Cut Cay about a mile above the cut, completely to ourselves (23° 52.371' N, 76° 14.543' W). Darby Island to the south is interesting in that during World War II it was owned by a wealthy German sympathizer who had built a large lime green house / neo-castle. During the war he dredged the basin and built a harbor that he intended to make available for German U-boats. It's doubtful that any used it since he neglected to also

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dredge the cut. However, he is rumored to have ferried supplies to U-boats in Exuma Sound and to have assisted survivors of one that had been sunk by the Allies. The government finally got fed up with him and asked him to leave. Over the years his abandoned house was stripped of anything useful. (This is a very sparsely populated area.) The grounds have returned to a natural state and the view now is of a large decaying building that emerges out of dense undergrowth. We took *Moondink* to the island and walked a long narrow trail to the ruins. The area fauna includes big red and black spiders about 4 inches across that build large webs across the trail and hang motionless in the center. Luckily, someone had advised us to find a long stick and wave it in front as we hiked to the house – I don't care how strong your nerves are, walking full-frontally into one of those bad boys dressed in nothing but a bathing suit and sandals would be a hard thing to take calmly. The house had no intact windows or doors, so was somewhat open to the elements. However, it was still structurally sound overall. We walked through the falling apart rooms and wondered at how magnificent it must have looked in its day when there was literally nothing and hardly anyone out here.

We explored the waterfront of Rudder on the way back. The island is privately owned, largely undeveloped (though we gather there have been some failed attempts), and as far as we could tell, nearly uninhabited. Almost every beach had a large, red, American-style "Private Property, No Trespassing, Violators Will Be Prosecuted!" sign. These seemed particularly jarring and offensive in this tranquil setting. How much nicer it would have been to simply say "Private Property, Thank You For Not Trespassing".

The following morning we explored a few of the small islands on the Banks side of Rudder (Dove Cay and Goulin Rock). Dove Cay is actually two little islands as it's cut in two by a shallow channel. The current rushing through this channel had created a beautiful tiny beach on the back side of the southern island that was protected from the current by a horseshoe-shaped sand bank. We pulled *Moondink* to shore and walked our way around. Sometimes the natural beauty of these little islands takes our breath away. At about noon (near high tide) we moved *Alisios* through the shallows about 2 1/2 miles north, past Musha Cay and Cave Cay Cut and re-anchored in the lee of Cave Cay (23° 54.141' N, 76° 16.264' W). After settling in, we backtracked in *Moondink* hitting spots just north of where we had gone in the morning. This included skindiving the wreck of a small twin-engine airplane off Lansing Cay and snorkeling the 2-foot deep sand flats between Musha and Rudder, and collecting sand dollars with the hope that some will make it home in one piece. (After they've been dead and in the water a while they get quite brittle.) Musha Cay has a small private resort on the north-western end that looked quite nice from the water. We saw a number of sailboats pass by since Cave Cay cut and the neighboring Galliot Cut are popular entry points onto the Banks. However, we somehow managed to be the only boat in our anchorage again. We could definitely get used to this. (Actually we were used to this, because it's common on the Chesapeake, at least on weekdays.)

Our 3 days of nice weather was not to last. Chris Parker's forecast foretold a frontal trough settling in Sunday evening and ugly weather for the entire following week. For this reason we made a dash past Big Farmers and Little Farmers Cays and up lee side of Great Guana Cay to a spot in the lee White Point where thought we would ride it out in peaceful seclusion (24° 02.330' N, 76° 22.559' W). The spot was quiet and sheltered. Unfortunately, when we dived the anchor we discovered that the bottom was a hard marl with only about an inch of sand on top. Although from the boat the anchor felt like it had set well, we found it lying its side completely exposed and not the least bit dug in. We skin-dived the surrounding area looking for good sand,

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but found nothing. Because of the poor holding, there was no way we could ride out a frontal passage here. So, after a walk along the beautiful empty beach, we regretfully pulled everything up and headed a few miles north to Black Point Settlement (24° 05.876' N, 76° 24.241' W). Here the bottom had great holding. However, we were one of about 30 boats in the large basin (which is significantly fewer than we saw the two times we stayed at Black Point on the way down). With a good set and plenty of chain out we settled in to wait for the front's evening arrival and sit through a few more days of limbo.

After 30 March we officially became illegal aliens. However, there wasn't much we could do about it. The only immigration office in the Exumas is in Georgetown which was now comfortably in our wake. Our next shot at becoming legal again would either be in Eleuthera or the Abacos. We had said we'd "do the best we could" and this we did (while humming the 80's Phil Collins song *"It's no fun – being an illegal ail-e-un"*).

Black Point is a special place. The people here are particularly friendly and this little one-street town has grown on us. It will be one of the special places in our memories of the Bahamas. We went to shore Tuesday with an agenda. At the top of the list was to arrange for shipment of a replacement stripper for our anchor windlass to Marsh Harbor in the Abacos. After a bit of trial and error, I'd figured out how to operate the windlass without it jamming. But, this involves hand-tensioning every foot of chain as the anchor is raised which is a pain in the you know what. We could easily switch to our secondary anchor which only has 20 feet of chain and could be hauled by hand. However, the clear water has allowed us to see what a difference an all-chain rode makes – better to fix the windlass as soon as possible. So, we set off to a pay phone with a new \$20 Batelco phone card and a list of numbers for marinas and shipping companies in the Abacos. The first marina in Marsh Harbor that we called was useless. You'd think they had never heard of a cruiser having to receive a spare part. The FedEx Express office was more helpful and left me actually feeling there was a place we could have something sent to. However, they weren't overly keen on holding packages with no funding for return post should the recipient never show up. Imtra in the U.S. (the windlass importer / representative) turned out to be very responsive. The Moorings, a large charter company with a base in Marsh Harbor, has an account with them and they maintain a direct shipping channel. They suggested shipping it there and as long as the Moorings would permit it, this would be the best option. The parts were covered by Imtra under warranty (no questions asked). However, we would have to pay for the international shipping (an unknown, but not insignificant charge). All that remained was to get a copy of our cruising permit scanned and emailed to them so that it could be included with the parts so they'd get past Bahamas Customs. We accomplished that in the afternoon and wrapped things up with some follow-up emails and a phone call to the Moorings the following morning. Other items on our list included getting me a haircut, checking email, picking up a few onions and grapefruit (the pickings were slim), and a couple trips back and forth juggling water. (Nothing reinforces water conservation like lugging heavy containers from a spigot on shore to the dink a quarter mile away.)

A number of squalls passed overnight with heavy rains and lots of thunder and lightning. Rain has been a relatively rare occurrence this trip, thunder and lightning even rarer. However, the frequency of wet squalls seems to be increasing (maybe something to do with "April showers bring May flowers"?). The sound inside a small boat during a heavy shower is somewhat like rain on a tin roof. ("Rain on a fiberglass deck" doesn't have the same romance.) The sound of the individual drops uniformly hitting the deck is mixed with the louder, haphazard thumps from larger drops and sporadic streams that pour off the rigging. If you put your ear to the mast you

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here the sound of a river. The lightning was like a camera flash through the v-berth hatch over us. Without thinking, I found myself counting the time in-between each flash and the rolling thunder that would follow – 1, 2, 3, 4, . . . The thunder rolls were very loud and would last a full 7 to 12 seconds each. I found myself thinking of the fairy bowling game witnessed by Rip Van Winkle as I drifted off to sleep.

The winds continued throughout the week. On Wednesday we spent several hours hiking the island. South of town, not far from where we originally anchored, an American has built a modern white castle overlooking the water. We decided we'd find it. The [paved] King's highway exits town and ends abruptly after about a mile as there is nowhere for it to go. At this point a wide dirt road to nowhere branches off to the right. This was an interesting walk because as we continued on for another mile or two we came upon quite a maze of additional, wide dirt roads branching off this trunk road. Along these we came across a great deal of heavy equipment lying dormant and rusting in the sun. There was an abandoned construction trailer, numerous cargo trailers, at least 5 heavy dump trucks, several back-hoes, a large bulldozer, and a Caterpillar road grader. All in the middle of island wilderness on a cay that doesn't have a gas station or a fuel dock. It was clear that someone had lost a great deal of money here. After hiking this maze of unfinished roads we found a large pink house overlooking the water. Not long after that, we found the white castle a bit further north tucked alone in the corner of this grand, abandoned construction site. (We don't think there is any connection between the two.) There was a no trespassing sign at the driveway, so we turned to the right down an overgrown start to a road that crossed over to another dirt road that we hoped would take us back. As we walked across this connector trail it became apparent why it was only partially finished – looking at the limestone potholes that lined the bed and the sides, we realized that we were walking over a cave system. It probably was not large, but one could easily image a vehicle disappearing suddenly into a sinkhole. Once back at Black Point we asked several locals about the site, but didn't get a clear answer. No one seemed particularly interested in it. As far as we could discern, someone had grand plans to build a huge marina and began clearing the land in preparation. This project went belly-up and the land was bought up cheaply by a local who lives in the U.S. Reading between the lines, we got the impression that money was gathered from a number of investors and squandered or siphoned off. We never did figure out why the inordinately large amount of equipment was brought in or why so many roads to nowhere were carved out of the ground.

That afternoon the mail boat came in. These are small island freighters / bulk carriers that draw between 5 and 8 feet. They're quite nimble and the one at Black Point managed to weave silently through the anchorage and nose up to the government dock without the notice of anyone who wasn't in their cockpit. The islands depend on these boats that come from Nassau once a week with occasional disruptions in schedule. Almost everything is imported and usually special-ordered. I imagine it to be somewhat akin to living in a small town out west in the 1940s and mail-ordering everything from a Sears catalog. A retail economy has arisen that bypasses local businesses, which consequently tend to be amazingly undeveloped. The small grocery stores don't stock much – a few canned goods and a chest freezer with re-packaged, unlabeled, non-dated meats. Hardware stores are non-existent in all but the largest towns. Propane and gasoline often isn't sold locally even though everyone uses it. (In Black Point, they jerry-can the gas for their cars from Staniel Cay via small boat. The government obviously delivers diesel for the power plant on the outskirts of town. One wonders why they didn't install an extra tank for petrol and use the same delivery infrastructure to kill two birds with one stone.) Still, the mail boat was fun to watch. There is a bustle of people. Most of the few cars on the

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island are pick-up trucks<sup>86</sup> and most of these drive down to the dock as the small crane on the bow of the mail boat unloads pallets of supplies which are loaded into the trucks and driven to the houses and few businesses. After a couple hours everything was quiet again and the next day the grocery store still didn't have fresh vegetables.

By Friday we were ready for a change and even though the weather was still a bit unsettled, we hauled anchor and headed north 33 nautical miles. The wind was good for sailing and we ran in 3 foot seas, much of it wing on wing, to Hawksbill Cay in the northern end of the Exuma Land and Sea Park. We had spent a fair amount of time in the cays in between on the way down so didn't miss much, though we would have also liked to have seen Pipe Creek. Pipe Creek is a maze of small islands and sand bars just south of the Park. It's known for being very beautiful, shallow, and somewhat tricky to get into – one of those places you enter on a calm sunny day at high tide. Hawksbill, too, is quite beautiful – about 3 miles long with a couple of nice beaches, caves, and a number of Loyalist ruins. The Park had installed 4 mooring buoys and we grabbed one of them rather than mess with the anchor (24° 29.080' N, 76° 46.412' W). Soon afterwards we put the motor on the dink and headed to a cove just north to hike up to the Russell ruins which date to 1785. There was quite a cluster of foundations. But, even though these farms are sometimes referred to as "plantations", they never live up to the image such a name conjures. Building was too hard down here for grand structures and Loyalist ruins on the small cays almost always tend to consist of remnants of quite small, one-room stone houses and occasional low walls. Inevitably they're in an advanced state of decay and quite overgrown. The trails may cut right through them, but as often as not, one is peering through dense scrub at a one-foot high pile of rocks wondering how people eked out a living with little water or soil and no modern support systems.

The wind didn't really abate and the anchorage was quite rolly which caused some amusing lurches when attempting to walk about in the cabin. Nevertheless, it was a pretty spot and we stayed a second day, hiking a couple of trails ashore. At this point in our journey, all of a sudden we started to see a fair number of mega-yachts – about 5 in the Hawksbill area alone. Heretofore, sightings have been fairly minimal. We wondered whether April marks a change in season for them.

In the meantime, Gail developed a bit of lumbago in the lower left side of her back, shooting down her butt and leg all the way to the heel. It caused her a fair amount of numbness and discomfort over the preceding and ensuing weeks. She popped a couple ibuprofen and attempted to stretch it out as there wasn't much else to do but wait for it to get better. (I told her I had always found a long hot shower helpful – something to fantasize about ;-)

The morning of Sunday 06 April we dropped the mooring and headed north again, this time to Norman's Cay. Because of its Carlos Lehder / drug smuggling past (see earlier section – "The Northern Exumas, January 25"), Norman's is well known and we didn't want to miss it. There are three anchorages – one on the western side, another inside and just off the channel to the cut, and a third which is a salt water pond. The pond is entered from the ocean side at high tide. Although it's beautiful and protected, we've heard of people becoming stuck there for weeks because tides and conditions can make the entrance / exit channel impassable. We chose the one by the cut. Although it had quite a current (we made over 4 knots coming in with no throttle), it had a good sand bottom and was protected from the waves. We anchored with plenty of chain

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<sup>86</sup> Golf carts are the primary mode of motorized transportation.

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at 10:30 (24° 35.448 N, 76° 48.770 W) and waited for slack tide and the forecasted calming of the winds before doing some shore and dink exploring.

The small airstrip once used by Lehder is actively used today by the very small Beach Club resort and a handful of foreigners who maintain second homes on the cay. There's not much infrastructure, so we set out on foot about half a mile, from the old, now decaying, Norman's Cay Club which fronted on our anchorage, through the airstrip to the Beach Club resort on the other side of the island. On our way there we came across a bit of a calamity. A woman had turned an Isuzu SUV onto its side bloodying her eye a bit in the process. But, otherwise, she seemed OK. We hung out and helped flip the SUV back over. The couple Bahamians suggested that all the guys (about 5 of us) push against the roof, rocking it back and forth, until it flipped back over. An SUV isn't a Miata and, not surprisingly, this didn't work. I politely suggested using a chain and a pickup truck with a towing hitch. This did the trick and the vehicle was soon righted with amazingly little apparent damage. The resort has a bar / restaurant named MacDuff's (which we jokingly referred to as MacGruff's after the "crime dog"<sup>87</sup>) that's famous for it's expensive but good hamburgers. We dropped too much money on lunch and a couple beers then continued our explorations in *Moondink*. We had waited till slack low (for reasons of current). However, there wasn't enough water to snorkel in. So, we inspected the well-known wreck of a drug-running plane by dink, then decided we would try to reach the pond across the flats. We motored, then poled *Moondink* as far as she would go, before setting out on foot. The ground consisted of mounds of powder-fine sand, with tidal water flowing through the maze of little valleys between the mounds. The sand proved so soft and moist that it swallowed our feet whole and it was all we could do to keep our shoes from being sucked off – a type of mild quicksand. The only semi-firm footing was the tops of the little mounds while they remained air-exposed and somewhat dry. From the dink, we had the illusion that there was only a short span of these before a firm sand beach was reached. This wasn't the case. So, we slogged about a quarter mile with difficulty until we could see a small cut, then turned back before the tide rose a few inches and made our return even rougher.

The plan from Norman's had been to sail to Ship Channel Cay to position ourselves for a crossing to Spanish Wells at the northern end of Eleuthera the following morning. The weather, however, didn't cooperate. The winds had shifted to the southwest and there was a 3-foot chop. While it was great sailing, our proposed anchorage was completely exposed and we would have been miserable had we tried to stay there. Even though we could foresee this, we sailed up there anyway with a hope against hope. But, upon arrival there was no denying the fact that were deluding ourselves. So, we turned back 4 miles and pulled into Allen's Cay for the evening (24° 44.919' N, 76° 50.273' W). This is a pretty spot we had spent several days at on the way down. It's got good holding and is well protected for the northern Exumas. However, it's also got a strong tidal current that causes boats to lie on their anchors in funny and seemingly haphazard ways. It's not uncommon to see half a dozen boats near each other all pointing in different directions. We got a good set in front of a 42 foot Grand Banks trawler named *Spartina*, the owners of which we chatted with a bit and later joined for cocktails. During the afternoon a couple sport cruisers (a 50-foot SunSeeker and a 48 foot SeaRay) pulled in. These are expensive, sleek, go-fast cabin cruisers with lots of bells and whistles. They are designed and marketed for wealthy weekend boaters and aren't particularly suited for long-term cruising. Consequently, we haven't seen too many down here. When we see them in general, we don't assume a particularly high level of seamanship on the part of the owners. Our new friend,

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<sup>87</sup> A public service, cartoon dog in Sherlock Holmes garb that is used in the U.S. to teach children about crime prevention. His motto is "Help take a bite out of crime."

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Howard, from *Spartina* had been a boat dealer before retiring. He referred to them as "rug boats". I hadn't heard this term and asked him to explain. He said it's because everything inside is carpeted. This wasn't a complement. Carpeting is wholly ill-suited to life in a humid salt-water filled environment and the term implies a surfeit of style over substance. The first one made 3 attempts to anchor next to us, dragging noticeably each time even though they had good ground tackle. We were both on deck keeping an eye on them in case we needed to fend off. I finally called over in as calm and friendly a voice as I could muster and asked whether they had been to Allen's Cay before. They said no. So, I explained how the bottom was laid out, how you could spot the good sand areas, and how the currents affected the boats. I finished by casually mentioning how many feet of chain both we and the trawler behind us had deployed and that there was a possibility of a squall this evening with winds shifting from the West to North. They pulled up a bit, got a good set, and swung in their dink to thank me genuinely for the information. The second one had similar problems. He anchored one place, looked at another, then anchored in a third, and still wasn't comfortable. The boat was owned by a 30-something year old couple with a one-year old baby. It turned out that they knew Howard and his wife and in the middle of our cocktails the guy swung by in his center-console dink (that had its own depth sounder) to ask for advice. As "the boys", Howard and I jumped in to help. (This is one of those gender things that is a bit tough on Gail, who's a more qualified mariner than half the men out here.) We surveyed the anchorage, choosing a spot with good sand, lots of room, and, coincidentally, well away from us. Then, we went back to their boat to help with the actual move. The boat was quiet impressive – new, 48 feet long, 15 feet wide, hydraulic everything, top of the line fully integrated electronics with dual displays – all the toys. They were from Dallas, Texas and keep the boat in Nassau over the winter, flying out to use it periodically. Having the money to buy expensive toys is not the same as having acquired the skills to use them well. He was over-reliant on Howard and me to pick his anchoring spot. I went up on the bow with his wife (who was "along for the ride"). When he dropped the hook, I had to shout back instructions on how to set it by backing down at low RPM and I wasn't sure he understood what we were doing either during or after we finished, since he would only briefly apply a burst of reverse. They were very pleasant and thankful – rich and minorly clueless. However, I couldn't shake the distaste that this guy would take his wife and baby on a small boat to an island in the middle of nowhere without knowing what he was doing. Being willfully oblivious to what you don't know and not trying to rectify it can be a quite dangerous failing on the water. All in all, however, it was quite a nice evening. In one of those small world / serendipity moments we discovered that Howard had sold his old boat (a Cape Dory 30 pilot-house sloop) to someone we had anchored next to in Florida. So, we had seen his old boat a few months before (and were to see it again later).

Upon returning to *Alisios* we spent the evening plotting way-points for the next leg of our journey and so ended our time in the Exumas.

### 2.14 Eleuthera, 12 April 2008

Mid way through our trip, we had both come to the realization, and stated it out loud, that within the context of a final destination, our path was largely determined by "whim and weather". This had proved itself a number of times, but nowhere more clearly than with our trip to Eleuthera. We were running out of time before our required June return to the Chesapeake and had long before given up any plans of really seeing this 100-mile long island. We intended to round the top of the Exumas and cross to Spanish Wells just off the northern tip. We'd spend a day here,



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be able to say we'd touched Eleuthera<sup>88</sup>, and stage for a crossing to the Abacos (which is an all-day passage that must be timed to the tides). The weather, however, failed to cooperate. (Note the echo.) Our planned staging anchorage by Ship Channel Cay in the Exumas for the crossing to Spanish Wells had proven untenable, inserting a day or more into our schedule. Furthermore, another set of ocean swells threatened to pin us in Spanish Wells for several more days, if and when we got there. With this in the back of our minds, Gail suggested we take Allen's Cay Cut to the ocean and cross to Rock Sound in southern Eleuthera instead. This avoided the need to stage further north, accomplished our crossing before the swells, and put us in the lee of Eleuthera while they developed then dissipated, allowing us to work our way up the coast and see new places. We made up our minds that afternoon, and after returning from cocktails, spent the first hour of the evening plotting our course and setting waypoints. In this way we went from our plan of barely clipping the north end of Eleuthera to arriving in the south and navigating most of its western coast.

On Tuesday 08 April we listened to Chris Parker's 06:30 forecast (which we only partially received due to poor propagation) then pulled anchor and left Allen's Cay into Exuma Sound / the Atlantic Ocean to the east. We had mild wind and motored most of the way. This was actually a good thing in a way. Although we had a dearth of good wind in the beginning of our trip, we had been doing a lot of sailing lately. We'd spent over three months anchoring in various locations and only had the engine for charging the batteries. This was usually done in 1 – 1.5 hour bursts, so we never reached a full charge. The 8 hour trip, some of it motor-sailing, gave us a good long slow charge bringing the bank up to 100% again. In retrospect, I wish we had outfitted *Alisios* with a small solar panel. But hind-sight is 20/20 and I knew too little about the workings of solar panels at the time. Luckily, we use very few amps per day. With no refrigeration or other power-hungry appliances aboard, the state of our batteries never became an issue we had to worry much about. At 15:10 we dropped our anchor in the harbor (24° 52.080' N, 76° 50.273' W) next to a British-flagged wooden gaff-rigged ketch from Ilfracombe named *Meander* that we'd also anchored next to in Long Island. We had a couple tasks to accomplish – first and foremost was going to immigration since we were now illegal aliens. Second was getting our spare propane tank filled. So, we headed into shore at 16:00.

We must have steered off course and ended up in a different country – Everyone in Rock Sound waves, is exceptionally friendly, and there is an industrious (mostly employed) air to the place. We arrived at the small Customs Office at about 16:15 (dangerously close to closing time) and they had to call the immigration officer and ask her to drive over from the airport. She arrived in less than 15 minutes, renewed our visas, which were 9 days expired, without hassle, then offered to drive us and our propane tank to the hardware store on the outskirts of town. (Now what country has immigration officers who offer you a lift?) We arrived at the hardware store ten minutes before closing. They rushed to fill our tank, which involved a drive to the propane depot. (We expected to be asked to leave it overnight.) On his own initiative, the guy asked us where our dinghy was, offering to drop it off on the dock so we wouldn't have to carry it back. We picked up a few groceries at the real supermarket with semi-reasonable prices in a daze, walked back to the dock, and there it was full and waiting for us. Wow! What a contrast to most of the Bahamas we've come to know so far. In the course of an hour and a half, we had finished our "must do" tasks and now had all of the next day to play. So, we pulled our folding seats out onto the foredeck and relaxed with a glass of rum, chatting and enjoying the sunset hour while the water gently lapped against the hull.

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<sup>88</sup> Not everyone considers Spanish Wells part of Eleuthera

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Wednesday we walked the small town chatting with a number of people, picking up a loaf of bread from the bakery, and failing to find a working pay phone or affordable internet access. We walked to an interesting inland blue hole that has been turned into a little park. The hole is seawater fed. However, I think it is through a lattice of stone. There are numerous fish in it. But they appear to be descendents of stock placed there years ago. This is also the main swimming hole for the people, though we were told by an older resident that the current generation doesn't use it the way past ones did. There is a nice wall and set of stone steps going down to the water. Atop these stood a large tamarind tree with ripe fruit. So, we shook the branches till a few fell and sucked on the sour-sweet seeds while watching the fish. What a scenic spot. The town has a restaurant called "Sammy's Place" that is well known locally, but tucked back a bit. We wandered quite a bit before finding it and even at 14:00 it was packed. Almost everyone there were Bahamians and they were doing a booming take-out business in addition to the seated customers. Both of these we took as a good signs. We ate fried fish and conch and finished off by splitting a bowl of chocolate ice cream – only our second taste of ice cream since leaving home 5.5 months ago. The Bahamas Electric Corporation was using their back room to give a training seminar. From her seat, Gail was able to catch a glimpse of the PowerPoint presentation – all about proper procedures for triaging faults in high and low voltage lines. I commented that it would be great if she could pick up her linesman certification while cruising – It would certainly help with her perpetual "what do I do with my life when I grow up?" crisis. After some more exploration, we picked up gas for the dink and headed back to *Alisios*. Unfortunately we had to continue on the next day, pulling anchor and moving north to Government Harbor about mid-island (25° 11.716 N, 76° 14.835 W).

Governor's Harbor has a nice basin that is well-shielded from all directions except west. However, the bottom is notoriously bad, nothing but marl, and every reference we read went out of its way to note this. We anchored in about 10 feet and watched our hook skip across the bottom as we backed down on it. So, we hauled and had another go in what looked like a small sand patch. We got a set that held and paid out a lot of chain. But, I really didn't want to look at it up close and when we did with the look-bucket, we saw that the anchor was laying half upside-down, exposed, and pretty tenuous. The forecast was for a quiet night and it ended up being one of those times we just crossed our fingers and kept an eye on things<sup>89</sup>. The small town had a fairly decent commercial bulkhead that was large enough for two island freighters to tie to at once. We walked over and watched a small tanker dock in front of a medium-sized bulk carrier as easily as if she were a motor yacht. I guess this was a good thing because no one came out to assist them with lines. After a fair amount of exploring we passed by the seawall again in time to see three local fishermen in a skiff return with their catch<sup>90</sup>. They dumped about 2 dozen snappers, groupers, and hogfish onto a cleaning table at the water's edge and got to work. We bought a medium-sized hogfish for \$7.00 which they filleted for us. Our timing was fortuitous because the chef from a local restaurant arrived just after we did and all but cleaned them out. After tossing our fish into the dink, we walked to the first decent library we've seen in the Bahamas. It was in a charming, renovated old building that was painted pink (as many

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<sup>89</sup> We later learned that our friends on *Wy'East* had the most miserable time of their cruising lives in this same spot, dragging all over the harbor in a gale. (Both they and the boat came out OK.)

<sup>90</sup> The Bahamians travel relatively long distances in small skiffs because areas close to the settlements have been fished out. When they get to their chosen fishing ground, a couple lines are tossed over the side and one or two men jump in wearing mask, fins, snorkel and a light wetsuit, carrying a Hawaiian sling (a spear that is fired by a sling-shot like contraption - spear guns are illegal in the Bahamas). When they see a fish swimming below, they let go of the line and dive straight down on it, firing as soon as they're in range. The ones who go out regularly are extremely skilled.

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government buildings are). They had a great selection of books and a nice computer space upstairs that was available at no charge to the local school kids. We checked our email and proved the internet's usefulness in another way – If left to our own devices, the fish would probably have been either baked or sautéed in a little butter, olive oil and lemon juice with some parsley and dill (not all that bad, but unexciting). However, without saying anything to me, Gail sat down at a free terminal, looked up hogfish recipes on the web, and copied down a much superior alternative. While there we bumped into three brothers, age 20 – 21 (the twenty year olds were twins) who were cruising aboard a 1980 Tartan 35 named *Respite*. We had seen them about and anchored near their boat a few times. We introduced ourselves and ended up inviting them over to *Alisios* for a couple beers, which we all picked up en-route. The boat belonged to their 72-year old grandmother who had recently bought it and intended to winter aboard it in the Abacos starting next year. They intended to deliver it and she would fly down. Meanwhile, they had volunteered to take a semester off to sail down this winter on a reconnaissance trip, work out the kinks, and check out the various marinas for her. We laughed and commented "Well – her planning on wintering in the Abacos certainly explains why we kept on seeing you in the Exumas ;-)". What a great experience for them. After they left, Gail prepared a wonderful hogfish fillet dinner in a posh restaurant-worthy cream sauce that included sun-dried tomatoes, artichoke hearts, and garlic. Yum!

**Hogfish in Artichoke & Garlic Cream Sauce With Sun-dried Tomatoes** – Approximately 2 lbs. hogfish fillets (or any other mild, white fish), 1/3 – 1/2 cup sundried tomatoes, 1 cup artichoke hearts, 4 – 5 cloves garlic (minced), 1 Tbsp. lemon pepper, butter, 1/2 cup heavy cream (we substituted evaporated milk): Melt a glop of butter in a pan and sauté the fish (about 2 minutes each side). In a saucepan, melt another glop of butter. Add artichoke, sun-dried tomatoes, and spices. Sauté 3 minutes then add the cream. Reduce by about half. Stir and serve over the fish.

With the pressure of time still hanging over us, we pulled anchor again the following morning, continuing north through Current Cut to Egg Island in order to stage for our crossing to the Abacos. The cut lives up to its name and the current gets up to 5 knots. We therefore, had to plan our 30-mile trip so that we arrived at slack tide, preferably slack transitioning to ebb. En-route we were joined by about 5 Atlantic bottle-nosed dolphins that stayed with us, zigzagging periodically across our bow for about 20 minutes – quite a long time as far as our dolphin encounters go. (We haven't seen too many since leaving U.S. waters.) We arrived at current cut about half an hour after high tide, dropped the sails, turned on the engine, and rode a 2 knot favorable current through it. The boat 15 minutes behind us had almost a 3 knot current. Although the cut was narrow, the water was calm and deep and we were quickly and safely out the other end. Pulling our sails back up, we completed our journey in southeasterly winds to the western side of Egg Island, where we anchored next to two other boats (25° 29.566' N, 76° 53.282' W). Egg Island is only a bit over half a mile long. But, it did a tolerable job of blocking the wind.

The crossing from Egg Island to the Abacos is 50 nautical miles across open ocean. There is a sand bar across the entrance to Little Harbor in the Abacos that mandates a near high-tide arrival. Consequently, we woke at 05:00, started the coffee, and made a 05:30 departure in complete darkness. We were surprised to see the glow of Nassau's lights on the western horizon. City lights have not heretofore been part of our Bahamas experience. As 06:00 approached, the sun slowly started making its presence known in the eastern sky, producing a pallet of colors and slowly painting over darkness' shroud – first in dark, dusky blue-grays that,

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with time, faded into lighter blues followed by a pale orange that bled upwards until the fiery orb itself appeared above the clouded horizon. Not to be outdone by its airy dome, Poseidon's realm transitioned from an ink black void to a shimmering, translucent, cobalt blue sea. So ended our brief time in Eleuthera – *Alisios* with both sails deployed, cutting across a giant undulating sapphire 2,000 – 15,000 feet deep.

### 2.15 The Abacos, 01 May 2008

The crossing from Eleuthera to the Abacos was straightforward apart from another, minor equipment failure – The winds died down to 7 – 9 knots as the day progressed and we ended up having to motor-sail in order to make our cut on time. With the motor on, we noticed that the bilge pump was cycling more than it should. We pulled the floor plate up and saw a puddle of clear water. I tasted it and was puzzled to find that it was brackish. A little water in the bilge is normal, though *Alisios*' is generally pretty dry. We get a bit of rain water down the mast, so any water there is usually fresh. Large amounts of water indicate either the entry of seawater or a leak in the fresh water system, both of which are bad. Brackish water is odd as it indicates a combination of sources. We both spent several hours observing and pondering the situation. Gail discovered that our propeller shaft's "dripless shaft seal" had ceased to be dripless. It was letting in a trickle of water when the engine was running, which accounted for the salt taste. The rate of the drip seemed to be tolerable (i.e. what a normal stuffing box would generate), so could just be monitored. I, in turn, discovered a leak in a fresh water hose under our cockpit. We have a 20 psi "accumulator tank" that, in conjunction with the pump, provides pressurized water of similar strength to a household faucet. There was a leak in the hose that links the tank to the pump and whenever the water breaker was turned on it was sending off a high pressure stream. This had to be dealt with ASAP as we couldn't use the pressurized water until it was fixed. I believe it had been leaking for several days. We hadn't discovered it earlier because we usually turn off the water system when we're not using it. Luckily, I had been warned that this 4 inch piece of hose was a potential problem spot and had brought a pre-cut replacement piece just in case. So, after picking up a mooring in Little Harbor (26° 19.591' N, 76° 59.980' W), we allowed the engine to cool while we went ashore for a couple beers. Then, we emptied the cockpit locker and I spent some quality time sandwiched in-between the batteries and the cockpit floor by the still quite warm engine sweating profusely while replacing the hose. I believe we lost between 5 and 10 gallons over the past few days – bad, but by no means catastrophic.

Little Harbor is a charming place with only one attraction. In the 1950s an American sculptor named Randolph Johnston settled here and founded an art colony where he produced bronzes and his wife ceramics. Their son Peter carried on the family business and, in addition to the gallery and foundry, added Pete's Pub, a beach bar which has become the local watering hole for the ex-patriots, Bahamians, vacationers, and transient cruisers. As Little Harbor is little, they've also installed moorings. Payment is pretty much on the honor system – report to the bar and tell them you grabbed one. In addition to several Kaliks Saturday and Sunday, we had the best fish lunch we've had since arriving in the Bahamas – freshly caught yellow fin tuna coated in a ginger-garlic paste, pan-seared rare, and served in a bun with pineapple walnut coleslaw and rice on the side. After lunch we took a walk to both the beach and an old abandoned lighthouse (no evidence of the lantern remaining), then returned to watch another Caliber, *Sol Purpose* enter the harbor. We invited Dana and Sandy over to *Alisios* for sundowners and had a delightful evening that lasted well past sunset.

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High tide Monday wasn't until 16:30 and we didn't want to risk attempting the bar before 14:00. So, we spent the morning with our U.S. charts studying and plotting out all the major Atlantic Ocean inlets from Fernandino Beach, Florida to Beaufort, North Carolina. This was homework that needed to be completed before attempting our ocean crossing back to the States. I think we were actually aground at low tide. But it was just barely, so I'm not 100% sure. The late departure from Little Harbor meant a late afternoon arrival at Hope Town – somewhat unfortunate. But, as there was nothing we could do about it, we didn't sweat it.

Upon entering the Abacos, we returned to the modern world as it were. There are more of the comforts of home and one goes through money much faster than in the Exumas. Little Harbor is on the outside fringes and was a graceful entry point. However, once we worked our way north to the Hope Town and Marsh Harbor area, there was no disputing the fact that we were back in western style civilization. Hope Town is a beautiful, quaint vacation spot that is completely conscious of its quaintness. It has one of the only two lighthouses in the world that is still equipped with its turn of the 19th – 20th century, manually operated, kerosene-fueled lamp. The lighthouse keeper is the 4th generation of his family that has held the position and he hopes his son will be the 5th. A little like St. Michaels back home, the town has almost completely turned itself over to rental cottage tourism, transitioning itself into not so much a living community as a fantasy ideal of a Bahamian harbor village. Almost every house is well kept, picturesque, painted in contrasting pastel colors, and decked out with nice gardens. They're all piled on top of each other with narrow lanes and roads that will only accommodate foot traffic and golf carts. There is no anchoring in the little, completely protected, harbor. You must grab a mooring ball at \$15.00 a night (a not uncommon theme in the Abacos). Every foot of the harbor is filled up with them and all but about two were occupied, so the boats were pretty stacked. There are two restaurants, two grocery stores, a liquor store, a couple small marinas, one fuel dock, and many tourist / craft shops. It's a pretty nice place to visit and spend some time doing nothing. With the help of another boat, we had reserved a mooring through Captain Jacks (one of the two restaurants). After a bumpy ride ahead of the impending frontal system, we arrived at 17:15 and picked it up (26° 32.299' N, 76° 57.536' W) in time to wander the town a bit before sunset. Something else of interest – In the Abacos we started hearing the Rice Krispies / crackling sound of shrimp under our hull at night again.

The next frontal system was really two back to back. Both fronts passed overnight as they always seem to. The first night the winds shifted to NW, picked up to 25 – 30 knots, and the temperature dropped to 71 degrees Fahrenheit (21.7 Celsius) during the day (brrrrr!). The next night the winds picked up some more to a steady 25 with gusts of 35 – 40 and we were glad to be in such a protected harbor. (According to NOAA the seas in the open Atlantic were 16 – 24 feet.) We stayed in Hope Town for 3 nights until things settled down, walking town, checking out the lighthouse, going out for lunch a couple times, doing laundry, and further discussing our return journey. On the morning of Thursday 17 April we dropped our mooring as soon as the weather forecast was complete, swung by the fuel dock to top up diesel and water, then crossed the Sea of Abaco to Marsh Harbor.

The Sea of Abaco is a grand name for the bay / sound that separates Great Abaco Island from a series of barrier cays. On the other side of the cays is the Atlantic Ocean to the north and east. The Gulf Stream is to the west. Although the winds had subsided to about 15 knots, there were still clearly visible rages at the ocean cuts. A big sport-fisher with a high bow and powerful engines might have made it through them, but no sailboats would be heading out into the Atlantic this day.

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Marsh Harbor is the third largest city in the Bahamas after Nassau and Freeport. But, third is often well behind first and second and such is the case. It has a well protected harbor with good holding and room for about 100 small boats to anchor. There are several good-sized marinas and both the Moorings and SunSail Charters have a base here. Like Georgetown, there is a well developed cruiser's net that broadcasts every morning at 08:15 – VHF channel 68. Unlike Georgetown, the net here provides a first-rate weather forecast<sup>91</sup>. Marsh Harbor is quite modern in the services provided. There are skilled mechanics and electricians, a machinist, good marine supplies, numerous hardware and grocery stores that approach U.S. quality, and a number of good restaurants. Unfortunately, it has no ambiance. There is little in the way of a town center – mostly stores in cement strip malls spread out along a dusty road. It's a good place to visit for repairs, water, provisions, or picking up guests. But it's not a charming place to hang out.

As everyone had been cooped for the last few days because of the blow, a number of boats were leaving as we arrived and we were able to find a decent spot, right next to a Caliber 40 named *Makai* (26° 32.815' N, 77° 03.430' W). We had met Ed and Eva aboard this *Makai* (not to be confused with our friends Fred and Cathy mentioned earlier who have a 42 foot Leopard catamaran, also named *Makai*) the year before at a Caliber Cruising Club picnic in Quiet Waters State park by Annapolis, Maryland. The evening following the picnic, there were only two Calibers left in the anchorage. I had had the grand idea of inviting both couples over to *Alisios* for dinner without pausing to think that we only had a week's provisioning for two on board and couldn't possibly accommodate a coherent meal for six. I remember Gail looking at me as I returned announcing what I'd done saying: "Couldn't you have just said cocktails?". We ended up scraping together a very unimpressive jambalaya-like, one-bowl glop made from the couple rice dishes we had on board + a couple cans of clams. Nobody asked for seconds, which was good because there weren't any. They remembered us and were still nice enough to swing by on their way to shore to say hi.

We motored over to the public dinghy dock in *Moondink*, dropped off a week's worth of trash (2 small bags), and immediately headed to the Moorings at Conch Inn Marina to pick up our spare parts. To our great joy, relief, and minor surprise, the package was waiting there for us as promised, contained all the correct parts as well as a number of additional spares, and there were no issues with customs. (We hoped we weren't charged by weight, because they included an unneeded solid chromed brass head piece that must have weighed two pounds.) From there we swung by "Snappas" for lunch then made a couple phone calls and walked the highway and streets checking out the main town. Upon returning to the boat just before sunset, I promptly repaired the windlass.

Friday morning we pulled anchor and crossed over to Man-O-War Cay, a 6.5 mile sail to the north. Man-O-War is a ribbon cay about two miles long. A small island named Dickies Cay lies just off its western shore creating a narrow, small, protected harbor / bay with an extremely narrow main entrance channel. The main town sits mid-island, fronting onto this harbor. We picked up a mooring that seemed perilously close to its neighbors (26° 35.665' N, 77° 00.427' W). However, the winds were light and we only intended to stay for a day. Man-O-War is an industrious place that still displays a lot of its work-boat harbor heritage. It reminded us a bit of Smith Island on the Chesapeake. There are about 350 residents and examination of memorial plaques and the like revealed the overwhelming preponderance of only three last names –

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<sup>91</sup> [www.barometerbob.com](http://www.barometerbob.com)

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Albury, Sands, and Sweetings. One can easily infer that almost everyone is related at some level. Like Smith, the island is dry (no alcohol sold) and the primary vehicles are golf carts. However, unlike Smith, Man-O-War is neat, fairly prosperous, and is not losing residents. Their proximity to Marsh Harbor and Hope Town facilitates a sustainable level of commerce, employment, and tourism and they seem to be doing a good job of balancing the lot. There's a small boat builder, Albury Brothers, that manufactures a dozen or so sturdy fiberglass runabouts a year. Their operation is completely open and we wandered in and looked at the 3 boats in progress. (It was not un-like Caliber's factory, though on a much much simpler level.) In addition to the boat builder, one of the main intra-cay ferries is based there (also an Albury enterprise) and there's a good sized, two track, fully operating marine railway<sup>92</sup>. Down the road, the old sail shop has changed to the manufacture of well-built canvas bags and does a good tourist business. There are a couple decent grocery stores, a school, one restaurant called the Hibiscus Cafe, several tourist shops and a couple churches. The island appeared to be very unified in its Christianity and its culture had strong vestiges of 1950s middle-America. We walked town a bit and had lunch at the Hibiscus Cafe. The manager was a young local man who was very obviously gay. We chatted with him a bit after our lunch. (Interestingly, a gay Abacoian accent sounds quite southern.) He noted, somewhat sadly, that 'Man-O-War was a nice place to live if you fit in. Unfortunately he didn't fit in very well.'

We continued exploring the island in the afternoon, walking the main road to its southern end. The houses were well kept and several had whimsical gardens or roof-mounted decks. After leaving town, the little well-tended cement road transitioned to a reasonably well graded dirt road lined with lush woods-like growth that hid the houses from view. Every so often, well kept, curving foot paths disappeared into the woods. Most of these had small signs saying "Private" in order to keep wandering foreigners like us from cluelessly and suddenly emerging un-invited onto people's porches. Many also had a brass bell on a post for invited guests to announce their arrival. We hadn't seen such a nice neighborhood anywhere in the Bahamas, though we guess that this was somewhat of a high rent district and scattered amongst some of these properties were houses that cost a few million dollars (location, location, location).

Saturday we were off again, this time to Great Guana Cay, 8 miles to the north. While significantly larger than Man-O-War, Great Guana is less settled. The economy seems lopsidedly reliant on tourists and vacation homes. It's a popular Abaco cruising destination with several good anchorages and a handful of very well known bars. The most famous of these is Nippers where the Barefoot Man often plays. We knew of the Barefoot Man from our Grand Cayman days. He's a blonde white guy, originally (and probably still) from America, who strums a guitar and sings Caribbean ballads. He had been a staple at the Holiday Inn in Cayman in the 1980s. We saw him when we honeymooned there in 1988 and later when we worked on the island. I'm guessing he's about 60 now. He had built a strong niche in Cayman and I remember respecting how effectively he had integrated himself into the tourist market. His CDs and a coffee table book of his island photographs were available in EVERY store on the island and large percentages of visitors ended up going home with at least a CD, ourselves included. We

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<sup>92</sup> Marine railways are used to haul and launch boats. They consist of tracks going down ramps into the water. Carriages with side bracing are lowered down the tracks by a steel cable, The boat is loaded into the carriage and the supports adjusted, then the whole lot is hauled back up the tracks and on shore so work can be performed on the boat. Most of the marine railways in the U.S. have been replaced by Travel Lifts (mobile cranes) and when one does see one, they're usually overgrown or in disrepair. They're somewhat of a throwback to a quaint and simpler past. We always enjoy finding them. The marine railway in Man-O-War was a particularly good one in that there were not just two tracks, but also two levels of winches so the boats could be hauled into a yard across the street and everything was in active working order.

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had figured that that was where it ended. However, it appears that he's taken seriously as an intra-island Caribbean musician, particularly in the Bahamas. We've heard his music often, including on general radio stations. As in Cayman, his CDs are for sale everywhere in the Abacos only there are a lot more of them now. We were told that he had been married to a Green Turtle Cay girl and has a Bahamian daughter. We were also told that when he plays at Nippers, which is his regular Abacos venue, there can be 2,000 people in attendance. He's second only to Jimmy Buffet down here (even though it's a very very distant second) – Who would have thunk? Anyway, enough of that segue. We anchored in Fisher's Bay (26° 40.057' N, 77° 07.198' W) and took the dink to shore, tying off to a narrow rickety dock that towered a full 20 feet over the barely covered sand flats at low tide. The 50 yard walk to shore was not for the mildly acrophobic. Grabbers is right on the beach. (Snappas, Nippers, Grabbers – As you can see, there's a trend in bar names in the Abacos). We checked out their menu, then looped the very small harbor town before walking up a sand road to Nippers. The facility consists of a large set of multi-level decks, adjacent bungalows, and a couple of swimming pools atop a bluff overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. Much of it is painted in pastel colors (some of it a bit over-done). This is one of those "must stop at" bars in the Caribbean that is both talked about and sung about ("When They Cut You Off At Nippers – Man You're Really Drunk!"). We soon bumped into half a dozen other cruisers we knew and our short afternoon outing ended up lasting till well after dark and included the abduction (or rescue, depending on your point of view) of a small palm tree and a drunken golf cart ride by our new friends. A part of the island bar scene includes 50 – 60 year old cruisers re-living their college party days. I like to think of it as "adults behaving badly".

Great Guana is a good place to spend some time doing nothing. So, that's exactly what we did. The weather was sunny and calm and the anchorage good. We hung out Sunday, I experimented with a whole wheat honey oat bread recipe in the morning, we walked the beach and checked out a pig roast at Nippers in the afternoon before returning to Grabbers for a more quiet lunch / dinner, then spent the early evening as part of a good-sized dinghy raft-up in Fisher's Bay watching the full moon which lit up the anchorage as we all drifted under the stars.

Monday we sailed over to Treasure Cay off Great Abaco Island. This spot is famous for having one of the top 10 best beaches in the Caribbean (whatever that means). Interestingly, Treasure Cay is not really a cay. It's only a peninsula off Great Abaco, the inside of which is an extremely protected well-dredged, little harbor which is being actively developed. There's a first-rate marina and resort that actually charges you \$10 to anchor in this basin which does not appear to be theirs. It's normal to pay for a mooring. But, being charged to anchor is a new one for us. It's really a fee to use their facilities and it seems to be enforced by honor system. They're charging for the right to tie one's dink off to their docks, use their pool, showers, and walk across their grounds to the 3 mile powder sand beach (which really was beautiful), all of which we did. They also provide free Wi-Fi internet access and the signal was strong enough to be used inside *Alisios'* cabin while at anchor. Schlepping the laptop to shore and hunting for cafe's and bars with Wi-Fi hotspots gets a bit old. So, all in all, we figured it was worth it and we decided to spend a couple of days here (26° 40.233' N, 77° 16.986' W). Part of this decision was to enjoy the beach. One gets sick of constantly moving and we also had to deal with a water problem.

The last 50 gallons we had bought from the Lighthouse Marina in Hope Town turned out to be pretty nasty stuff. It had a chalky strange aftertaste that wasn't quite right even though they had said it was trucked in and wasn't cistern water. We're not overly picky about our water and have



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a good filter for drinking water. Our main care is that when we're hot and dehydrated, we can slug down a pint and be refreshed. However, we found it hard to choke down more than a glass of this stuff, even if we made ice tea or lemonade. It definitely wasn't right. We finally faced reality, switched over to our second tank, which had been filled a while ago from a different supply, and decided to cut our losses. After living aboard this long it's hard for us to willfully waste water and it killed us having this large supply we couldn't easily use. We filled the sun shower, gave the cabin a good wash down, washed dishes rinsing liberally, washed out the cockpit, then finally reconciled ourselves to pumping what remained overboard (almost 30 gallons). To add insult to injury, Treasure Cay charged 80 cents a gallon for R/O drinking water – by far the most we've seen or paid in the Bahamas. One could say we paid \$1.05 a gallon if you consider the 25 cents charged for the stuff we pumped overboard. We don't like having no backup tank so bought 25 gallons for \$20 and still had to jerry jug it back to *Alisios*<sup>93</sup>.

The weather forecast Tuesday 22 April foretold of a decent 4 – 5 day weather window on the horizon for a long northward crossing back to the U.S. So, we started planning our days with a possible Saturday 26 April departure in mind. Wednesday 23 April we pulled anchor, re-crossed the Sea of Abaco, and looped Whale Cay on the ocean side in order to avoid a bar and get to Green Turtle Cay. (Reading this journal, one might not think that we ever intentionally avoid a bar. But, this one was of the sand type and too shallow to safely cross on the Banks side.) Once back inside, the Banks are clear from Green Turtle to our Gulf Stream departure point near Great Sale Cay, about 50 miles to the west. New Plymouth on Green Turtle Cay would be the last settlement we'd land at before leaving for the U.S. It occupies a peninsula between the Sea of Abaco and a small harbor that for some reason is called Settlement Creek. The settlement was well ordered. Green Turtle has a population of about 450, dates back to Loyalist times, and many of the existing buildings are from the mid-1800s. A historical survey was done in conjunction with an American university and the buildings are cataloged in a free walking tour brochure which we followed. Most have been well maintained. In addition to Settlement Creek, there are two well protected, small boat harbors. The southern one, Black Sound, backed up to the island side of Settlement Creek and New Plymouth. The northern one, White Sound, has several upscale marinas, but it's quite a hike to town and most people anchoring there end up renting a golf cart or don't go to town. We pulled into Black Sound just before noon and grabbed the only mooring ball left – deep in at the southern-most end of the harbor (26° 45.541 N, 77° 19.381 W), then spent the afternoon exploring town by foot.

Each day after our original forecast we watched our supposed weather window close bit by bit. We can't cross the Gulf Stream if the winds have any northerly component because the conflict between the winds and the current kicks up large seas. One thing we learned from our crossing over was that for a boat like *Alisios* the seas state is as important, if not more so, than the wind. We can not sail head on into even moderately large waves. They stop us in our tracks. The north-easterlies, which were supposed to clock Thursday, continued with force through Friday evening before shifting east. The cold front that had been forecast for the following Wednesday developed faster than originally expected and the prediction was updated to forecast a Monday arrival. In this way, our nice 4 – 5 day, calm sea window failed to materialize, closing to an only so-so 2 day window with dubious seas. This situation is interesting psychologically. Once we committed to going, we were ready to go, me in particular. The Bahamian cays had started to blur. I found the Abacos too touristy after the extremely laid back Exumas and was ready for a

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<sup>93</sup> In retrospect, we should have filled our water tanks at the Conch Inn and Marina in Marsh Harbor. This is the home marina for the Moorings and SunSail charter operations and has good, reasonably priced R/O water. There are other places with R/O in the Abacos. But, one has to plan ahead since cistern water is prevalent.

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change. We wanted to will the little window into being something it wasn't and believe we had time to at least sail the 300 miles to Fernandina Beach, Florida (with no buffer). This willful viewing of forecasts through rose-colored glasses caused us trouble when we left Florida on our way over and no matter how much one wants to believe, only a fool fails to learn from his/her past mistakes. So, after plotting some more southerly landings (Port Canaveral and Daytona), and vacillating a bit, we finally decided it would be prudent to let this window pass and wait for a better one. Thursday we moved a couple miles north to White Sound and dropped our anchor in the center of the basin between two posh marina / resorts to wait a bit (26° 46.720' N, 77° 20.236' W).

At about 02:50 Saturday we woke to the sound of something we hadn't heard in a while – a boat dragging in the anchorage. This was all the more exciting because it wasn't your normal cruiser. It was a mega-yacht (the only one that had chosen to anchor out rather than pulling into the Ritzy resort-marina). Luckily, the small trawler anchored next to her was on the ball. They sounded the 5-blast danger signal on their horn over and over which the mega-yacht ignored. I finally pulled out our spotlight and shined it over. This caused us a smile because immediately afterwards we heard the woman on the trawler shout "Tony – Grab the spot". A boatful of overly rich vacationers who have probably been drinking may ignore a horn in their sleep. But, nobody ignores a horn combined with a 1 – 2 million candle-power spotlight shining through their ports (unless they're stone stupid). From what we could discover the next day, the yacht *Nobility* was both recently purchased and owner-operated. One of their engines had broken down and they anchored out, rather than risk maneuvering into the marina with the other 80 – 130 foot yachts. These boats are heavy, have high bows, and need to deploy a fair amount of scope. This is difficult to do when anchoring in tight harbors and it's doubtful that they had scoped sufficiently. Anyway, their anchor pulled loose and, after narrowly missing the trawler, they drifted down on a sailboat that was had been left unattended. Their one good engine / propeller had gotten over the sailboat's anchor line and (after they finally woke up) they were afraid to try to motor out least they foul their propeller. So, after initially holding themselves steady against the sailboat, they spent some time trying to push it off with their [separate power-boat] tender while using their bow thrusters to try to push their own boat off. It was not a particularly organized or efficiently performed maneuver, but eventually it had the desired results. Interestingly the anchor from the much smaller sailboat held both of them until this was accomplished. Re-anchoring in the dark in a strange harbor is never fun. I imagine it is even less fun with an 80 foot yacht that you're not completely familiar with. Luckily for us, they were a few boats and a couple hundred meters away. Everything finally settled down at about 03:30. They deployed plenty of scope when they re-anchored and we went back below and attempted to fall back to sleep. This sort of thing had been a rarity while we were deep in the Exumas. Almost every boat we saw then was piloted by a live-aboard cruiser who had been out for months, had good ground tackle, and was well practiced in its use. Once we got back to the more northern Bahamas, the long-term cruisers dispersed and we encountered many less well equipped boats that had only recently hopped over from Florida for a several week vacation. In addition to these short-timers, there are a number of bare-boat charters<sup>94</sup> which are often piloted by people with only a tenuous grasp of seamanship. Thankfully, they're well logoed and you can easily spot them. The mega-yachts are a breed different from any of the other cruisers. They're usually, but not always, run by professional captains, often with young crews and keep to themselves. (*Nobility* was a bit on the small side, which may account for it being owner-operated.) The

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<sup>94</sup> Fully equipped cruising sailboats that are rented on a weekly basis by vacationers. These charter boats are sold on a time share basis, just like condos in resort areas, by charter organizations to owner investors who are allowed to use their boat a week or so each year. The rest of the time it is rented out.

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captains are generally very down to earth and genial. It's 50/50 with the owners (if one ever sees them). The young crew, who are for all intents and purposes under-paid errand-boys, are often quite high on themselves and snobbish. We find this somewhat amusing.

Our next weather window wasn't forecasted to arrive until Thursday. So, we remained in White Sound, Green Turtle Cay for a few days whiling the time away and periodically gate-crashing either the Bluff House or Green Turtle Marina resorts. Both resorts were near empty and in spite of the "guests only" signs they seemed happy to have someone come in and spend money. While walking the beach Thursday we had met a couple who had just arrived at the Bluff House that day. We ended up hooking up with them several times, having dinner on shore one day, touring the island with them in their rented 4WD golf cart another, then inviting them over to *Alisios* for cocktails. The few meetings that we've had with vacationing land-lubbers is fun for us because, at least for the ones we've met, the cruiser lifestyle is something quite foreign. We very much enjoyed showing Jarkko<sup>95</sup> and Ann around *Alisios* explaining how things worked, how we cooked, slept, showered, etc., then enjoying the sunset. They were intrigued. But, we could also see that they couldn't conceive living on such a small platform with this degree of simplicity for so many months. Unfortunately, they were only down on a 3-day mini-vacation and left not long after we met them. With luck, we'll keep in touch. Meanwhile, the three young brothers aboard *Respite*, whom we'd seen in the Exumas and finally met in Eleuthera, limped into the harbor. Their 28-year old diesel engine had died. They were now almost completely dependent on wind, though they had managed to mount their 5-hp dink outboard onto the swim ladder to provide auxiliary power when navigating harbor channels and coming into marinas (quite a nicely executed jury-rig). They were in a bit of flux trying to figure out what to do – whether to leave it in Marsh Harbor and fly home or cross over to Fort Pierce, Florida, find a yard and put the boat on the hard there for some repairs. (They eventually decided on Florida.)

During these days *Alisios* picked up a temporary passenger. We're used to hosting the occasional remora or barracuda under our hull. However, this one was different – Sunday morning Gail went topside to brush out her hair and cried down to me that we had something snake-like coiled around one of the tubes of our swim ladder (which we had forgotten to raise). I came up and we studied a strange brown shape about 5 inches long from different angles before it dawned on us that it was a seahorse. We haven't seen too many of these so it excited us. I guess he thought of our ladder as a strange silver mangrove root. We became somewhat attached to him over the next couple days while he hung out in his rather exposed position. Mid-Monday morning he finally disappeared.

By Sunday morning, before our first window (the one we chose not to take) had closed, the next one appeared on the forecast for the following Thursday / Friday. Each morning we eagerly recorded and monitored the weather from both Chris Parker and the Abaco cruiser's net watching to see whether it truly developed or slowly closed as the days came nearer and trying to decide which forecast to believe if they differed. The Green Turtle Cay Marina had good R/O water at 25 cents a gallon. So, we topped off our tanks. A mild front passed Tuesday bringing with it light occasional rain and clocking winds. Wednesday morning we pulled anchor and left White Sound for Allan's Pensacola Cay about 25 miles to the north-west. The winds immediately after a cold front are always northerly and this uninhabited cay offered both beauty and good protection. We had a great close-haul sail all the way up with our port rail buried in the sea most of the way. We anchored next to a boat we had met a few months ago in the Exumas

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<sup>95</sup> The name is Finnish.

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(26° 59.278' N, 77° 41.144' W). Al and Lynn from *Renaissance* (one of a couple boats we know with that name) were on their way to shore in their dink and swung by to say hi. While we were chatting with them we noticed that there was actually seaweed on the deck wrapped around the base of the shrouds. Now how cool is that?

Allan's Pensacola Cay was much more like the Exuma cays we had grown to love. The water was much clearer than the rest of the Abacos had been<sup>96</sup>. It was very nice to leave civilization again. After ensuring that *Alisios* was well anchored, we took *Moondink* on our last trip to a Bahamian shore during this journey. We pulled her up on a little beach at the head of a trail to the ocean side of the island. This we walked, having to duck under several low-hanging poison wood branches which some earlier cruiser had been nice enough to label with a small plaque<sup>97</sup>. The ocean side was an interesting mix of iron-shore and sand with huge amounts of washed up seaweed overtop. Prior cruisers had collected years worth of jetsam and hung the more interesting pieces on the trees lining the shore along with their names, creating a kind-of shrine not unlike Boo Boo Hill in Warderick Wells. We walked the shore all the way to the point, but did not leave our name. This wasn't out of any moral consideration. We just figured that we hadn't done it during the last 4 months, so why do it on our last day. There were supposed to be the hurricane-destroyed remains of a U.S. missile silo / base nearby. But, we weren't able to find it. Upon returning to *Moondink* we encountered a very pretty silicone blonde in her young 20s hastily pulling back on her bikini top. She had been sunbathing next to *Moondink* and as she fumbled with the straps she looked up defensively saying "I didn't touch your dinghy!" My first thought was: "You must not be a long-term cruiser" because it would never occur to us that another boater would bother our dink. It just isn't done. My second thought was: "We need to walk more quietly". It turned out that she had come over from Fort Lauderdale with her mom, dad, and brother and were on the small sailboat that anchored next to us. She seemed quite nice and her presence gave us some good-natured fun – After returning to *Alisios*, I joked to Gail that: "I didn't know that a silicone blonde was an available option on sailboats – I thought they only came with sport cruisers and cigarette boats". (An old joke and sexist, but generally true). Actually, we both found it sad that someone so young and naturally pretty had felt the need to have a boob job AND that it appeared her parents had probably paid for it. We've, of course, seen a bit of silicone down here (though not like in Miami). However, it's my opinion that a woman's breasts shouldn't look like water balloons ready to explode when supported in a bikini top. What's wrong with natural lines? Apart from being self-mutilation, it's just comical. One gets the urge to stick a pin in them to see if they'll pop and all the while you're supposed to pretend that you're not looking. Anyway – enough on breasts, real or fake.

Upon returning to *Alisios* I donned mask, fins and snorkel and scrubbed most of the slime off *Moondink*'s bottom. Unfortunately, *Alisios*' hull was beyond any quick brushing. She will definitely be ready for her haul-out this winter. While in the water, I checked the cutlass bearing again, re-tightening all its set screws, and scrubbed the depth and speed transducers for good measure. Then we pulled *Moondink* up on deck, setup the jack lines, and prepared everything for an off-shore passage. Al and Lynn came over for sundowners at 17:45. After they left, we went to bed early in preparation for an early morning start.

The distance from Allan's Pensacola to Matanilla Shoals where the Bahama Banks meet the Atlantic Ocean near the Gulf Stream, is just over 80 nautical miles. The Gulf Stream was

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<sup>96</sup> Compared to the Exumas, the water in the Abacos is green and a little murky – more like that of Florida than the Central and Southern Bahamas. It was also noticeably colder.

<sup>97</sup> Poison wood is a small tree that is a member of the sumac family and causes a rash similar to poison ivy.

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forecast to lie down starting Thursday afternoon and our plan was to pull anchor at 06:30, sail throughout the day, and hit open ocean in the early evening. This we did, having a great broad reach all the way across the Banks during which we bounced between speeds of 5.2 and 7.2 knots (quite good, though both we and Moana (our auto-pilot) had a hard time with the gusts and following seas). I baked a loaf of bread so we'd have easy food if / when things got rolly in the ocean. (Thank god for gimbaled ovens.) The trip was not without Murphy's presence – We failed to properly receive Chris Parker's weather forecast either at 06:30 or 08:00, only catching portions. 09:30's broadcast came in clear enough. But, no one asked about crossing conditions (as they had during the earlier broadcasts) so none were given. Meanwhile, we had exceeded the range of the Abaco cruiser's net based in Marsh Harbor. The result was that we left with only a partial forecast. However, we could tell from the VHF that a number of boats were taking this same window, and knew that one of them had spoken to Chris at 06:30. Furthermore, we were coming into range of the U.S. NOAA / NWS broadcasts (which we don't trust as much). We had pre-planned numerous early bail-out options along the eastern U.S. coast. So, as we sailed across the Banks our main worries were that the seas would be a bit larger and more uncomfortable than we'd hoped and that the window might not stay open long enough to get to Charleston, South Carolina. However, only time could answer the latter. It was time to just do it. At 20:23 on Thursday 01 May 2008 we passed the Matanilla Shoals waypoint and officially left the Bahamas.

## Significant Deviation



*Alisios* flying the yellow “quarantine” flag upon arrival in Bimini



The water at Bimini was so clear it was like *Alisios* was floating in a swimming pool



Police barracks and boat burned by a mob after a police officer shot and killed a man, Bimini



Matthew with the 5-foot wahoo he caught on *Shack Money* (the only fish he caught the whole trip)



Matthew courting sympathy after dislocating his right thumb at Allan’s Cay, Exumas



Rock iguanas off Allan’s Cay, Exumas



## Significant Deviation



Gail cleaning conch off *Alisios'* stern platform  
(We quickly learned to do this ashore)



Exploring the shallow, tidal, mangrove-lined creeks  
of Shroud Cay in *Moondink*



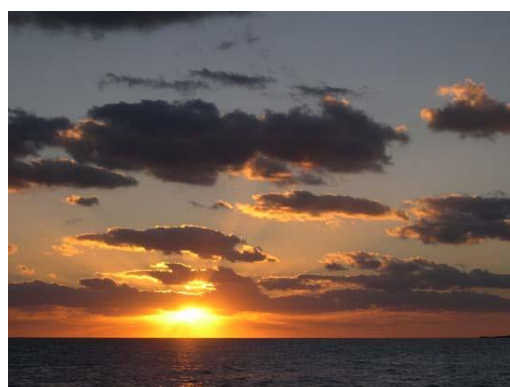
The north anchorage of the Exumas Land and Sea  
Park at Warderick Wells Cay



Gail feeding bananaquits sugar from her palm



Matthew on the ocean side of Warderick Wells Cay



Sunset off Big Major's Spot – Scenes like this were  
pretty much a daily occurrence

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The anchorage at Black Point Settlement, Big Guana Cay, Exumas



Volleyball Beach ("Tarpit Harbor") across from Georgetown, Great Exuma



The famous "Chat-N-Chill" at Volleyball Beach – Cheap burgers, cold beer, and rude service



The dinghy dock in Georgetown, Great Exuma



Exuma Market, Georgetown – Our first real supermarket in over a month



J&K Computers, Georgetown – This is where we went with our laptop to get Internet access



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A “state of mind” photo by Gail



*Alisios* riding out a frontal passage off Volleyball Beach – Note how close the other boats are



Matthew and Gail at the Thompson Bay Club, Long Island



Another attempt to patch *Moondink*'s high-pressure air floor – We fought with this the entire trip



The Two Palms anchorage, Flamingo Cay, in the Jumentos / Ragged Islands



Looking across the ironshore from Water Cay to Little Water Cay, the Jumentos / Ragged Islands

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Various sea beans – mostly hearts, a few hamburgers, + some junk seeds



Gail, lounged out on the settee



Red Shanks anchorage, Grand Exuma – Only 5 miles from Georgetown and a different world.



The Russell Loyalist farm ruins (1785), Hawksbill Cay, Exumas



Looking down on *Moondink* from the Russell ruins trail on Hawksbill Cay, Exumas



The wreck of one of Carlos Lehder's old drug-running planes, Norman's Cay, Exumas



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The blue hole in Rock Sound, Eleuthera



Pete's Pub, Little Harbor, Great Abaco



Matthew researching and plotting the U.S. Atlantic coastal inlets



Hope Town, Elbow Cay, the Abacos  
(viewed from the top of the lighthouse)



A seahorse that took up temporary residence on  
our swim ladder



Matthew repairing the batten slide while underway



# Section 3

## The Return Home



### 3.1 The Passage Back to the U.S.A., 04 May 2008

There are many varied aspects to a multi-day, multi-night, short-handed, small boat passage that are foreign to someone who hasn't made one or is unfamiliar with cruising. They include pre-trip planning, figuring out which route to take, monitoring weather, and figuring out when it's best to leave – much of which I've discussed above. There's also the question of whether to go with other boats and what safety precautions to take. Once you're out in the open ocean, there is the peace and solitude of being the only living creatures bobbing on a vast empty sea, which is a beautiful feeling that can't be overstated. However, there are also various degrees of seasickness that come from riding a bucking platform for days on end. The degree to which this hits, if at all, is dependent on your personal chemistry of the moment and the conditions you end up meeting. Finally, there is the need to deal with extreme fatigue, watches, food preparation, and occasional squalls. When all is over there is, hopefully, a sense of accomplishment that comes from the successful completion of a goal and having gained another increment of knowledge and skill.

When we first got into cruising the idea of "blue water" passages was very romantic and we had rosy dreams of crossing oceans spending solitary days and weeks in gentle rolling seas. Now that 10+ years have passed and we've had experience with a number of multi-day / multi-night coastal hops and smaller crossings (by far the most common type of blue water passage), these rosy dreams have been tempered with a fair amount of pragmatism. We still look forward to passages. But, there's no getting around the fact that in anything but the most benign conditions they mean getting tossed around in a small boat for long periods of time. Sometimes the tossing is quite extreme. Romance is therefore balanced by a certain amount of nausea and discomfort that comes with the ride. However, unlike an amusement park attraction, there is no getting off "the ride" when you've had enough. We both fare pretty well with *mal de mer*. Seasickness is a funny thing – There's a tendency to say that if you didn't actually throw up you didn't get seasick. In our past off-shore passages we haven't thrown up. However, on occasion we have gotten sluggish, lost our appetite and thirst, gotten headaches, and generally felt like crap. These feelings of discomfort can ebb and flow just like the water you're on. But, they're part of the experience. Throughout our ICW and Bahamas cruise we'd been pretty lucky and had rarely felt even minor discomfort. But, before this crossing, our trips had only included day hops and a couple 1-nighters. Our return entailed a planned 3 – 4 day open ocean crossing where we knew there would be larger seas and less predictable weather conditions. I'd be lying if I said it was a comfortable ride all the way. But, it was enjoyable overall.

We had pulled anchor Thursday morning 01 May at 06:30 and had a good broad reach across the Banks. The wind was brisk and we had a 3-foot chop. When one is running in seas, there is a tendency for the boat to "yaw" – the stern swings back and forth sideways as you surf down the waves and at the same time the mast acts as a giant inverted pendulum simultaneously adding an exaggerated rolling motion. Moving about involves a lot of crouching and holding onto things. You use muscles that aren't used to being used. Just sitting down can involve bracing yourself in your seat with your legs or an arm hooked around something. Your stomach muscles clench with each and every roll as you steady yourself. It's tiring. We made a better time than we hoped and finished crossing the Banks just after sunset.

During the first half of the day we saw a couple sailboats on a similar path and heard many more on the VHF. These boats, particularly the latter, were well ahead of us, since we had

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chosen to depart from Allan's Pensacola Cay which is 35 nautical miles to the east of the more common staging point at Great Sale Cay. A number of these were "buddy-boating" in fore-planned convoys. This can be both good and bad. The primary benefit of buddy-boating is having someone nearby should problems arise. Having friends within VHF range also provides a certain amount of comfort and companionship. However, as the saying goes: "There may be strings attached". These groups are often formed last minute and the boats in them may not know each other very well – What is the background and skill level of the people you're travelling with? When you agree to travel with others, there is a tendency to end up following someone else's lead, rather than doing the work to plot your courses and fully evaluating the various options yourself. A herd mentality can form which sometimes ends up in people leaving in conditions they might have passed on if they were on their own. Finally, if the boats themselves are mismatched in terms of size and speed, it's hard to stay together. Someone always feels like they are slowing the others down or is being slowed down by others. For these reasons we have avoided formal hook-ups with other boats. We are very picky. We've spent a lot of years honing our skills through practice and study and learning to trust and rely on each other and we want to be free to change our plans on the fly. Having said that, we seek out and listen to most of the advice we can find (with a grain of salt) and are happy to travel in a loose wave of boats assuming there is no commitment to stay with the herd and we do have one or two friends that we would gladly buddy with.

As we left the Banks, the seas increased in size to the forecasted 4 – 5 feet and we changed course to more of a beam reach (wind from the [starboard] side). Usually when one leaves shallow water, the waves transition from a chop to a more rhythmic rolling. However, the genesis of the waves we encountered was a combination of both the easterly wind and a north-easterly Atlantic swell so they were somewhat turbulent and we were tossed about quite a bit even though the yawing subsided. (For those who remember our complaining about 5 foot seas on our crossing from the U.S. to Bimini – They're only an issue if they're on our nose. Sailing straight into sizable waves halts our forward progress. However, they have little effect on our speed when we're sailing with them or at an angle to them. On this passage we were sailing with them.) As we listened to the VHF, we heard a number of the other boats ahead complaining to their flotilla mates about the rolling conditions and noting how many crew were down with seasickness. We felt particularly sorry for a couple who had an 8-year old boy on board. It sounded like both dad and the boy were down. Mom was at the helm and doing only so-so. How do you explain to a child who's miserable and throwing up that there are still 2 more days to go? (Rather than joining a multi-day convoy to Charleston, South Carolina, maybe they should have planned a shorter crossing to Florida and made day-hops up the coast.) Although the conditions were as rough or more than our prior passages, we were able to eat and drink and felt OK. The water itself definitely helped – This part of the Atlantic is a very clear blue and lacks any odor. This is in marked contrast to the Atlantic waters further north. The murky green seas from Maryland to New York smell strongly of the fish, salt, and seaweed which can be unpleasant on a small rolling boat. However, "OK" shouldn't imply that we felt 100%. I'd say that both of us we were at about 75% this first evening of our post-Bahama Banks passage. Once we hit the open ocean we decided to pop a couple Stugeron as a prophylactic. This is an over-the-counter motion sickness medication that has a near-cult following amongst cruisers, partly because it isn't sold in the States. Like all of these meds, you're supposed to take it two hours before departure. We started ours about 16 hours after – Oh well . . . We weren't badly off and stopped taking it after a day and a half, by which time we had pretty much fully gained our open water sea legs. (I'm not sure it works any better or worse than the U.S. equivalent Dramamine,



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derivatives. However, I can't say it doesn't. So, Stugeron can keep its pedestal as far as I'm concerned.)

It was a bit cloudy and we were only a couple days shy of the new moon (only a slight sliver of a crescent), so the nights were quite dark. At 20:00 we switched from casual watches to formal three hour shifts. We've found that this works best for us. Two hours is too short as the off-watch person doesn't get any rest and four is too long as the on-watch person has a hard time staying awake the final hour<sup>98</sup>. One falls into a routine – clipping off<sup>99</sup> whenever going topsides, making 360 degree visual sweeps of the horizon every 5 minutes or so (you can't see shapes, what you're looking for is the lights of other boats / ships that might be near by), checking the radar, and trying hard to keep awake and alert. The first shift is easier than the second in this regard. All the while, the boat is bucking, rolling, and rushing forward while you brace yourself with outstretched legs or hands. We only saw a couple ships (which we think were U.S. Navy warships) and no small boats the first night out. The dark night really highlighted the bioluminescence in the water and we had a great light show. Bioluminescence is the result of plankton-sized animals that generate a phosphorescent light when the sea is agitated. We saw two major manifestations of it – One was in the foam generated by *Alisios'* bow as she cut through the water and also the crests of the breaking seas around us. This was powdery white dusting of light, like gazing at the Milky Way on a clear night in the country, and was highlighted by the reflection of our running lights. The second type was manifest in bright, comparatively large, greenish sparks that were interspersed amongst the first. These were like embers thrown off in the smoke of a roaring campfire. We logged position, time, course, and speed between each shift then the off-watch person would collapse into the v-berth bunk, wedging their body between the cushion and the down-hill inside of the hull. This was an interesting experience in and of itself. The fiberglass of the hull flexes and you can clearly feel and hear both the rush of the water across the bow and the pounding of the waves. One notes this sensation, then falls asleep very quickly in spite of the tossing and pounding.

The waves became more rhythmic as we entered the edge of the Gulf Stream on the second day. They remained at 4 – 5 feet in the morning, settled down to about 3 feet mid-day, then increased again in the afternoon. By now there was more roll to the seas, but much less confusion and we started to feel close to 100%. When we entered Gulf Stream properly our speed increased from 6 knots to between 8.5 and 9.2 knots and remained there pretty constantly for a day and a half. The highest speed we saw was 9.7. Periodically, groups of small flying fish would leap from the surface of the waves and skim above the water for a hundred meters before diving in again. As before, we were pretty much completely alone, with one notable exception – At 15:38 we were circled by a Navy helicopter. The Coast Guard and the Navy periodically do this and the experience is a little disconcerting the first time around. The helicopter was light gray, of the type used for search and recovery, and had few visible markings. We knew it was the U.S. Navy because the Coast Guard helicopters of the same type are bright orange with a highly visible diagonal stripe. He made several low and slow circles around us, obviously checking us out from all angles and maybe (probably) photographing us. He made no attempt to call us, though at the third pass I was strongly tempted to hail him on the VHF and just say: "If you're interested, this is who we are, where we're coming from, and where we're going". I avoided this temptation as I'm sorry to say that the post-911 Coast Guard and military aren't overly amicable when you meet them on the water. The Coasties that we see all tend to be 20-something year olds with an overly inflated vision of defending their country from

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<sup>98</sup> This is assuming one person watches. If one has company, a four hour watch works quite well.

<sup>99</sup> Tethering the harness you're wearing to the jacklines running along the floor of the cockpit

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an unknown evil and the feeling of authority that comes with it. In part because of their youth, they don't seem to be able to see themselves from the recreational mariner's point of view very well. They rarely return a wave or even smile at you now. I'm sorry about this, both because I don't remember it being like this pre-911 and because in their role of aiding mariners they perform an invaluable service for which we're greatly appreciative. It's an amazing comfort just knowing that if you have a true emergency in U.S. waters or near U.S. waters, there is a large, fairly efficient organization that will go to extreme lengths to bail you out. I guess this is just a manifestation of the current world. The Navy is a bit better to deal with (when they respond to a hail). But, I figured I'd just let them do their job and not attempt to chat. About half an hour after the helicopter departed, we saw a BIG ship emerge from the horizon off our port beam. It was obviously an aircraft carrier and explained the helicopter – The Navy is very sensitive about their big warships and don't want any recreational or commercial vessels coming near them. I guess they felt that our slow, little sailboat didn't pose much of a potential danger because we weren't hailed or asked to change course. Later we saw the same helicopter re-appear and land on its deck, then the ship disappeared again into the horizon.

The second night the seas were a bit calmer (3 – 4 feet) and we were getting more adjusted to our watch schedules / irregular sleeping patterns. Still, we only saw a couple ships all night. These were commercial, rather than Navy – tankers and freighters. By the time of our morning watch change we were directly east of the Florida – Georgia border, about 50 miles off the coast, and making good time as we sailed northward.

Our third day the seas fluctuated from 5 feet or so in the morning, with an occasional swell of 8 – 9 feet, to a calmer 3 – 4 feet. These were rolling swells and the big ones were interesting, particularly if we hit them "just right". At one point *Alisios* climbed the top of one of these and hovered at the tip. From the cockpit I looked over the bow at this huge precipice hanging below us. However, just like a surfer who paddles his board out to a big wave, hitting the crest, but not quite making it in time to ride it down, the wave rolled beneath us and rather than racing down the front, we were gently lowered into the following trough to be lifted again by the one behind. We were now parallel to the coast of South Carolina and by the afternoon were in range of Charleston (though still quite a ways offshore). Suddenly we started seeing lots of small fishing boats – both ocean sport-fishers and more moderate, multi-purpose powerboats. It took a minute before it occurred to us that it was a beautiful sunny Saturday and what we were seeing was the normal horde of weekend boats out fishing for dolphin (mahi mahi, not *Flipper*), tuna, wahoo, king mackerel and the like. As the winds lightened we began to motor-sail in order to keep up our speed since we needed to reach North Carolina by Sunday afternoon ahead of the next cycle of frontal-related weather. Unfortunately, as we left the Gulf Stream our speed dropped back to a more normal 6 knots. This is actually pretty good and normally we'd be quite happy with anything over 5. But, when you've become used to 8.7, it's a disappointment. We were joined by a number of dolphin (of the *Flipper* type) that were smaller than the ones we're used to, but came right next to the hull, swimming in our surf, darting beneath our bow, and looping back. These were most probably Atlantic spotted dolphin. We almost felt like we could touch them and they stayed with us quite a while, then returned every few hours.

Our leaky [propeller] shaft seal also became quite an annoyance. I've come to realize that this is a result of my adding the second zinc to prevent the cutlass bearing from having any opportunity to slip out again – The "dripless shaft seal" is flushed by water pumped from the raw water intake and this water has to exit somewhere. The somewhere is through the cutlass bearing. When I mostly blocked the aft end of the cutlass bearing with the zinc, I added a lot of pressure

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to the shaft seal on the other side causing its premature failure. It only leaked a trickle when the engine was running and the bilge pump kept up with it fine. (In other words: "It was safe".) However, the continual cycling of the bilge pump got on our nerves when we were down below. I could have adjusted the pressure switch so it didn't cycle so often. But, I decided not to mess with it while we were offshore on the remote chance that I took a minor annoyance and turned it into a significant problem. The fix will be straightforward when the boat is hauled. However, the shaft seal is somewhat inaccessible and replacing it will involve hanging upside down on the engine while various parts dig into my gut and I try not to break anything with my weight. Oh well – such things are part of boat ownership.

Our third night was more exciting. We knew from listening in on Chris Parker that a series of squalls with winds up to 30 knots were forecast for off the Carolina coast Saturday evening. This was an example of where a personal, passage-specific, forecast for boaters was more valuable than the basic NOAA / NWS loop. We knew that the squalls were something to be aware of and treat with caution, but weren't supposed to be extreme. Well, here we were . . . As evening approached the skies became quite gray and cloudy and when night fell it was ink-black. During Gail's first watch she couldn't even tell where the water met the sky. My 23:00 watch proved more eventful – As it progressed, I began to see the sky to the east light up with flashes. The lightning was obscured by clouds so it was like a distant camera flash. The flashes became more frequent as Saturday gave way to Sunday, but the thunder was still inaudible. During this time our dolphins returned. This was our first night time dolphin encounter (at least that we were aware of). At first I was just conscious of large shapes darting beneath the foam of our bow wake. Then I noticed that as they approached the boat from our aft port quarter their dorsal fins created their own path of bioluminescence through the water, not unlike a wave crest. When I saw a small wave crest that ran faster than the seas (a seemingly un-natural occurrence), I knew a dolphin was racing up on us and could watch its outline in both its own bioluminescence halo and the glow of our running lights as it passed along side. As they darted by under water, they looked quite silvery. Once or twice, I saw a fin break the surface as they grabbed a gulp of air. By the time I woke Gail for her second watch, the squall flashes were frequent and close. "Sorry honey – have fun!"

I've got to say that I have one of the most amazing wives in the world! (I believe many of our close friends will back me up on that.) Gail donned her light foul weather gear<sup>100</sup>, clipped in, and stayed up throughout the majority of the squalls while I slept down below. She called me up once to help drop the mainsail – It's interesting how in these situations one can go from a dead sleep to instant action. I was up, dressed, harnessed, clipped in, and had the sail down in about 5 minutes. Once everything was settled, I was undressed, and back asleep almost equally as fast, leaving Gail to deal with the rains, the winds, and the seas. By now the lighting bolts were no longer hidden and their jagged cracks stood out in front of the cloud reflected flashes. It was literally awesome. We actually wrapped our handheld GPS and handheld VHF receiver in foil and placed them in the oven in the unlikely case that one hit us<sup>101</sup>. The squalls were numerous individual storm cells moving in a clockwise, west-to-north-to-east arc. Periodically their paths and *Alisios'* intersected and we came under brief, very strong, rain showers. This was actually good – during the past few days our decks had accumulated quite a lot of salt. The ocean spray hits everything, dries and small crystals form. These are repeatedly added to and everything

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<sup>100</sup> Rain suit

<sup>101</sup> The magnetic field from a lightning hit can blow out every bit of electronics on board a small boat. Wrapping individual items in foil and storing them in a metal box (like an oven) is supposed to protect them. We have an electrical engineer friend who actually tested this out in a lab and verified that it works.

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ends up being coated with a layer of slightly moist (It feels oily) halite the size of rough-ground table salt (not the fine-grained, Morton, processed kind). Everything you touch on the deck transfers a visible layer of salt to you. The rain washed all of this off as effectively as if we'd spent an hour methodically rinsing the boat down with a hose. The storm cells were also clearly visible on radar. This was both good and bad because while we could see them coming, any ships that happened to be under them were hidden. Luckily there weren't any ships near us as the squalls passed. Using the radar, Gail (and later I) was able to see exactly when the cells would hit us and dodge the main body of the biggest one. Our watch change came up in the middle of this and she decided to let me sleep in an extra half hour until most of the mess passed. (Let all other male cruisers eat their heart out ;-). As forecast, these squalls were more show than force. The temperature cooled markedly. However, the winds only rose to about 20 knots as they clocked from the southwest to the north. As they passed, the winds shifted back to the southwest, but remained at about 12 – 17 knots (perfect sailing winds). So, during my watch, I raised the main again with one reef in it, then let out a full Genoa, and had us going at almost 7 knots again. I returned Gail's favor by letting her sleep in a bit and when she woke we were only about 25 miles off our Cape Fear, North Carolina waypoint.

Cape Fear lies just below Frying Pan Shoals which jut out 30 miles into the Atlantic, helping to give North Carolina its reputation as the "graveyard of the Atlantic". We avoided the shoals since we were arriving from the south and only had to deal with the current of the Cape Fear River itself. This proved significant and we couldn't have timed our arrival more poorly tide-wise if we had tried. Although the day was now sunny and the seas relatively calm (2 – 3 foot swell), we arrived within 10 minutes of maximum ebb flow and entered the inlet head-on into almost a 4 knot current. We do about 5.7 knots under normal power. We were reduced to about 2 within the river channel and basically clawed our way in. Putting out the Genoa helped, but still gave us only 3 knots. We had decided to pick up a transient slip in Southport, near the mouth of the river (about 25 nautical miles south of Wilmington). This was both supposed to be a pretty little town and was also where good friends of ours were in the process of retiring to and might even be when we arrived. Consequently, Don and Marsha were the first people we called when arriving in the U.S. (Sorry mom and dad.) Unfortunately, they weren't down. Eventually we made it the few miles up the river and tied up to the floating dock of the Southport Marina at 13:30 Sunday 04 May (33° 55.040 N, 78° 01.718 W), happy to be back in the U.S., but also happy to realize that had the weather window remained open, we could have easily and equally happily stayed out a few more days. Our passage had taken us 3 1/2 days and 3 nights.

### 3.2 *Another Spring* by Kenneth Rexroth (1905 – 1982)

*The seasons revolve and the years change  
With no assistance or supervision.  
The moon, without taking thought,  
Moves its cycle, full, crescent, and full.*

*The white moon enters the heart of the river;  
The air is drugged with azalea blossoms;  
Deep in the night a pine cone falls;  
Our campfire dies out in the empty mountains.*

*The sharp stars flicker in the tremulous branches;  
The lake is black, bottomless in the crystalline night;*

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*High in the sky the Northern Crown  
Is cut in half by the dim summit of a snow peak.*

*O heart, heart so singularly  
Intransigent and corruptible,  
Here we lie entranced by the starlit water,  
And moments that should last forever*

*Slide unconsciously by us like water.*

### 3.3 Southport, NC, To Oriental, NC, 11 May 2008

Even with 20/20 hindsight, I don't think we could have picked a better place than Southport, North Carolina to return to the U.S. from the Abacos. The length of the Intracoastal Waterway from Norfolk, Virginia to Fort Pierce, Florida (a close and popular entry point) is 965 miles. The length of the ICW from Norfolk to Southport, on the other hand, is only 310 miles. By spending a few days riding the Gulf Stream coming north off the Atlantic coast we cut out 655 miles of motoring AND avoided the majority of the drawbridges. Compared to our trip down, the return was looking like a cake-walk time-wise. Cape Fear is not a common point of entry when returning to the U.S. from the Bahamas because there are easier inlets if the weather is rough<sup>102</sup>. Although the river has a strong current, it was manageable. The inlet is wide. Access to the ICW is almost immediate. There are good marinas. And, Southport is a very pretty, economically robust, and very walkable small southern town. To tell the truth, we were glad to have it largely to ourselves and not be one of 20+ boats arriving at once.

As soon as we had tied up, we had to clear Customs and Immigration. Almost everyone we had spoken to about this had made it sound like somewhat of a bureaucratic nightmare. We had heard horror stories about being asked to report in person at offices miles away and having to rent cars or spend large sums on taxis. Our experience couldn't have been nicer. We had gone on-line to the Custom and Border Protection website, registered *Alisios* and obtained a 2008 CBP decal before leaving last October (as one is supposed to). We hoisted our yellow quarantine flag upon entering U.S. territorial waters and pulled into dock with it flying. There is a toll-free 800 number one is to call immediately upon entry. We called it, explained where we were, and they arranged for a customs officer from Wilmington to drive out and meet us at our boat (on a Sunday afternoon!). We set about neatening things up. He arrived. We chatted about our trip out of general excitement and invited him aboard. After shooting the breeze a bit, he / we filled out a single form with information such as our hull ID number, vessel documentation number, and last port of entry. He asked us if we had any agricultural products or fresh fruit or vegetables on board, but did not ask about alcohol. We picked up 2 oranges, a grapefruit, and an apple from the bin behind him and said: "This is what we've got", noting that they had probably been shipped to the Bahamas from the U.S. He smiled and asked if we thought we could eat them within the next week. We replied that if we didn't, they'd have to go in the dumpster. He stamped our passports and that was that. Once he left, we eagerly packed up our shower kits and some clean clothes and finally set foot on shore. (The marina had floating docks. So, we really hadn't touched the U.S. shore until after we cleared customs. This wasn't by design. It just worked out that way.) The showers that followed felt great.

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<sup>102</sup> Most boats who enter in the Carolinas do so in either Charleston, SC or Beaufort, NC.

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By the time we got to the Abacos, Both Gail and I were ready to be back in the States again (me a bit more so than Gail). We were like a horse on a trail who picks up his pace when he recognizes the path home and knows his stall is at the end. We had even said to each other that we doubted we'd want to stop much in the Chesapeake on the way back up. Once we tied off in Southport, the rush we were in disappeared. We called my parents and Gail's dad to let them know we were safe and OK, then didn't feel the urge to speak to anyone. It took us days to get around to calling our siblings and some of our good friends. There were other friends we meant to call, but never did. After 6 months of peace, the telephone had little appeal. We decided to spend three days at dock and talked about being sure to stop and "smell the roses" on our northward trek up the ICW. We had dates we planned to be back at home and back to work by and knew that everything was rapidly coming to a close. The Southport marina we had chosen was in the process of undergoing a multi-million dollar renewal. They had new, beautiful floating docks and the staff was extremely friendly, attentive, and competent. Its location was perfect – just a couple blocks / a few minute walk from the main town center. We checked the small fish house restaurants by the water, had a beer at one and dinner at the other, and had no trouble falling asleep when we returned to *Alisios*.

The next morning was spent puttering and working. Gail took a couple loads of laundry up and I sat down with the laptop to write up the preceding section. Time flew by. I had moved to a little table in the dock house where I had plugged in and could watch the world go by while chatting a bit with the marina staff in between paragraphs when I looked at the clock in the lower corner and thought: "Oh my god, it's after noon!" I looked up at the dockmaster and commented that "a wise married man would be found scrubbing the boat when his wife returned from a couple hours of laundry and not be caught playing on the computer." So, I closed up, returned to *Alisios*, arranged the cockpit cushions on the dock to rinse them off, and had been hosing them and the topsides less than ten minutes when Gail returned with a big smile saying: "Oh – you're giving everything a bath. Thanks." What a joy to have as much good, fresh water as you want and not have to pay for it! However, it ended up being an expensive wash – In the islands, I had used our deck brush to scrub the bottom of the hull. Now I didn't want to use it on the deck for fear of getting bottom paint on the gelcoat. The marina lent me (at no charge) a really nice Shurehold brush. This is a modular affair with a telescoping stainless steel handle to which one can mount all sorts of optional attachments – 4 types of brushes, boat hook ends, screw-pole ends, chamois ends, etc. etc. They are expensive and like a razor, it's "the blades" that cost you. There wasn't a chance in hell I would have ever bought one if I hadn't used it first. It was great! I later told Gail about my comment to the dockmaster and we both had a laugh. But, I refused to tell her how much I paid for the brush. (I didn't buy all the optional attachments.)

The next couple days were relaxing and nice. We walked all over the town, chatted with people, ate dinner out, and generally just off-gassed. Tuesday we walked 2.5 miles to the ferry dock and crossed over to Fort Fisher. It's an earthworks fort that played an important role in the Civil War and there isn't much left of it. But, there is a great mid-sized state-run aquarium next to it that was the real object of our trip and which we enjoyed. We even managed to hitch a ride back to Southport with one of the aquarium employees. However, all good things must come to an end and transient slips do come with a cost, which in this case was \$1.75 a foot for *Alisios*' 35 feet. So, we checked the tide tables and on Wednesday morning we swung around to the fuel dock, topped off our diesel (16.866 gallons for \$73.51) then headed north across the Cape Fear River and up the ICW with a favorable current.

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The trip back up the ICW lacked the plethora of cruising boats we encountered on the ride down. For much of our journey through North Carolina we were the only boat in sight. Occasionally we'd be passed by a trawler, a handful of boats would queue up at the few drawbridges, and we'd see a couple other boats when anchoring. But, all in all, the northward portion of the migration is light and spread out. The landscape of the southern North Carolina ICW is bordered by flat marshlands that give way to small marsh islets then finally, larger Atlantic barrier islands. As we passed ocean beach areas we noted how every acre of ocean-front property is built upon – miles and miles of houses and condos in what just 20 years ago would have been the middle of nowhere. For us, this was a view in the distance. The ICW in this area is for the most part a channel carved through shallow marsh sounds. While there are a fair number of marinas with access to summer vacation townships, there aren't many scenic spots with enough depth to pull off and anchor in. We were back to driving 50 or so miles a day, most of it fairly straight, and pulling off into little, developed basins or the edges of channels to anchor for the night. With the wind behind us, we were often able to pull out the Genoa to give us a half knot to one knot boost and help with fuel consumption.

Wednesday we made it as far as Sloop Point, anchoring in Topsail Sound (34° 24.257 N, 77° 35.446 W, ICW mile marker 263.8) – quite an impressive name for our spot between the channel and the nearby marsh grass islet. We spent the early evening nestled amongst crab pot floats discussing our timetable, whether to take the Great Dismal Swamp Canal or main Albermarle and Chesapeake route when we hit the point where they split, listening to weather reports, and mapping out possible anchorages for the next few days. For the past several months we had pretty much decided that we'd take the Albermarle and Chesapeake Canal over the Dismal Swamp Canal, mainly to be able to say that we'd seen and travelled both. However, as soon as we were back on the ICW itself, the Dismal Swamp quickly began to look pretty good. It offered beautiful scenery, nice anchorages, and friends who would love to see us vs. a highly travelled channel through beach developments. The choice to make was pretty obvious.

As we moved up North Carolina the tides became much less extreme. However, the currents were strange. We'd find ourselves fighting a 1.5-knot head current for 4 miles trying to make a drawbridge that opened only on the hour. When we'd get there 10 minutes before opening, we'd suddenly find ourselves with a 2-knot current behind us being swept towards the still-closed bridge. This was understandable the first time it happened as there was a small inlet by the bridge. But, for the life of me I couldn't figure out why it also occurred at a second bridge that had no nearby inlets. Weather turned out to be more of a factor for this Spring journey north than last Autumn's journey south. We had numerous sunny days, but interspersed with these were days with winds of 25 – 35 knots and sudden showers. These are unpleasant when motoring up the ICW and potentially dangerous when anchoring or crossing larger bodies of water like sounds. We did our best to time our way around them and one doesn't cross the major sounds in them, period. While it was nice in the sun, the winds were chilly. Still, we avoided putting on long pants or sweats for as long as we could as that felt like a real admission that our cruise was over.

Thursday we passed Camp LeJeune (helicopters and a little live firing) and most of Bogue Sound, anchoring in Spooner's Creek (34° 43.667 N, 76° 48.365 W, ICW mile 210.5). This may have been a creek once. However, it's now a bulkhead-lined basin with a new condo complex at one end (where a marina had once been) and nice well-kept houses the rest of the way around. Each had its own dock and most had both a nice sport-fisher and a run-about tied up to them. It looked like a very nice place to live. We anchored in the center of the basin along with 3 trawlers

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that were travelling in a group. After midnight a forecasted cold front hit and I awoke to 20+ knot south-west winds howling through the rigging. They held us sideways to the basin entrance so we were rocked by the bit of swell that made it through. I got up numerous times to check that our anchor was holding well, since had it pulled, we would have dragged stern first into a boat at dock. I also threw a line over the dinghy since the winds were causing it to lift up and drop repeatedly (right over our bed). Tight anchorages aren't comfortable in these situations. However, we had gotten a good set and held well. The following day the winds increased and some thunderstorms passed. So, we stayed put, bobbing and swaying in the middle of all the nice docks and houses. When we finally left Saturday morning, the anchor was so embedded in the clay bottom that we had to motor it out. The chain came up covered in slimy, sulfur-odiferous mud that had to be hosed off foot by foot – yet another indication that we're back in near-home waters.

After Spooner's Creek we passed by Morehead City and Beaufort, NC. Neither provide much attraction from the ICW. However, we've heard that Beaufort is quite nice if you pull off and into the old town. This is a major inlet and commercial port. From here the ICW cuts a bit further inland and the scenery changes from a coastal / Outer Banks setting to one of tree-lined rivers and creeks. Adams Creek, in particular, is beautiful, reminding us of the Eastern shore of the Chesapeake. We, therefore, treated ourselves to a short day (about 25 miles) and pulled off at Cedar Creek (34° 56.016 N, 76° 38.604 W, ICW mile 187.5). During our trip down, we had noted that this looked like a pretty anchorage. However, we hadn't been able to get inside it due to the large number of boats already there. Upon arrival we had it to ourselves, though we were joined by two other sailboats later in the day. The cruising guide (but not the charts) noted a sunken sailboat near the entrance. We saw a growth-covered aluminum mast floating above what we presumed was the wreck, probably still attached by a shroud or two. It was marked by a small white buoy that did not stand out very well amongst the crab pot floats. We were both surprised that a mast would float and were sure to give it a wide margin both when we entered and departed.

On Sunday another front (that we had been tracking) rolled through. This was a biggie that generated regular Coast Guard warnings as it approached. With heavy rains and winds up to 40 knots only a couple hours away, we pulled into the town of Oriental with the intent of hanging out Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday as the nastiness passed. The one free public dock was taken, which didn't surprise us, so we took a transient slip at the Oriental Marina and Inn (35° 01.492 N, 76° 41.723 W, ICW mile 181.5).

### **3.4 Oriental, NC, To and Back Through The Great Dismal Swamp, 20 May 2008**

Oriental is well known as a sailing town and we would have stopped there regardless of the weather. The marina was all-inclusive, which meant that there was no additional charge for power, Wi-Fi, and cable TV. We don't have TV on board, but we enjoyed plugging in for the first time in over four months, particularly since our little pocket inverter had died the week before. (Gail is very fond of her electric toothbrush.) They even provided towels in the showers and had a free ice machine. In one of those "small world" moments, as we were tying up I looked at the guy on the boat next to us and thought: "I know you". He was a marine contractor from Annapolis named John who had spent weeks working on a 1969 Morgan next to us in Deale a couple years ago. He had taken his own 35' Pearson down to the islands and was returning north. After settling in we ended up having a beer and dinner with him as the storms hit.



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Sometime between Sunday morning and the afternoon our basic Gale Warning had been upgraded to include a Tornado Warning as well. We weren't very happy about this, but at least we were snug in a slip that was about as protected as one could hope for. As the afternoon progressed, the sky turned gray, ugly, and threatening. Gail and I are somewhat attuned to the pre-arrival signs of storm cells from our years sailing the Chesapeake. We were at the little outdoor Tiki Bar of the marina when I felt the wind suddenly shift and pick up. We immediately looked at each other with the same thought – "Better get inside!". We ran to the little restaurant next door with John. A few minutes later the sky opened up in a deluge of the big-drop rain. We had made sure the boat was tied down and closed up with the exception that we hadn't put in the companionway slats. At anchor they aren't generally necessary because the boat points into the wind and the companionway is protected by the dodger. As we sat down to dinner, we could see the bow of *Alisios* through the rain. All of a sudden the full force of the squall hit. The trees started thrashing and the rain came down sideways as the wind went nuts. The body of the squall blew itself out after about 20 – 30 minutes and the evening returned to normal high winds and thunder-showers. We didn't hang out at the restaurant too long after the lull, lest another burst follow the first and we get stuck there. There was a little water on the steps and counter. But, otherwise *Alisios* was fine. That evening killer tornados racked the U.S., including parts of North Carolina.

The town of Oriental is a bit different than we had imagined, mainly in that there really isn't a town in the conventional sense, at least not a town center. I believe Oriental was founded in 1899. There is a waterfront off the Neuse River, 2 small marinas, stores of the boating, outfitter, and crafty types, a handful of small restaurants, a coffee shop, and a small grocery and hardware store. But, they are dispersed along a mile or so of roads. Almost all of the main town grid is residential housing, including Main Street which is actually a small back road and not the main street of the town. A lot of sailors retire here, so there is a high percentage of transplants (only quasi-Southern). It's friendly, laid back, and we enjoyed our time there.

There is a well known marine chandlery a block from the marina named "The Inland Waterway Provision Company" (that does not sell provisions). They had a good selection of LED replacement bulbs and allowed me to purchase 3 different reading light bulbs with the agreement that I could test them, buy the ones I liked, and return the others (assuming I didn't mess up the packaging). We did so Sunday night and ended up buying two to replace some defective ones we started our trip with. Apart from this great testing, we whiled away the couple days by making the acquaintance of the folks aboard the 3 trawlers who had anchored by us in Spooner's Creek, walking the mile to the local grocery store, and performing some basic maintenance chores. Gail must have figured "pack mule" was part of my job description, because she decided to re-stock a bunch of our canned goods, then insisted on stopping by and leisurely checking out every card and craft shop we passed on the mile walk home (even though we were visiting friends with a car in just 4 days).

Our simple maintenance chore (change oil, oil filter, and fuel filter) ended up invoking the rule of threes big time. In case you've forgotten, the rule of threes says every project spawns three new projects. By the time I had finished, the oil and oil filter were changed, both fuel filters were changed (because I changed the wrong one first, wondering to myself: "Why does it look so clean?"), I had drained the water separator (on the correct filter), and changed the water pump belt, which necessitated slacking off the alternator, taking off the alternator belt, slacking off the water pump assembly, fighting to get both belts over the wheels, then re-tensioning everything. The old belt was so toasted that it had lost a quarter of its rubber and was nothing but a fabric

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strap in places. I'm amazed it still worked. Meanwhile, (after the oil change and before I started messing with the water pump), Gail noticed the engine wasn't "spitting". A marine engine doesn't have a radiator. It cools itself by pumping sea water ("raw water") past a heat exchanger and out the exhaust. So, an additional hour was spent triaging and fixing this new problem, during the course of which I disconnected and checked every hose leading to the engine, including the one from the thru-hull to the strainer, the one from the strainer to the raw water pump and, finally the one from the water pump into the engine. To test the hoses for blocks you disconnect them on one end, wedge your upper torso into the 8 inches between the hot engine and the side of the engine compartment, wrap your mouth around the end of the hose and blow into it. (Talk about bonding with your boat ;-). Well, I guess there was a couple years of carbon dust from the drive belts on the hoses because about 10 minutes later Gail looked at me and laughed out loud – I had a black ring around my lips. (She was actually very kind, because she really could have had a field day with me on this one.) After wiping off my lips, I (a) "had a cigarette" or (b) "changed the water pump's impeller". (The correct answer was "b".) The impeller actually looked fine, but there is no way of knowing that until you open up the pump and it was due for a change anyway. I tightened all the hoses, crossed my fingers, and everything worked again just as it should have. Upon kicking back triumphantly and attempting to rest on my laurels, I was perplexed to discover that Gail didn't understand that cleaning up the debris and putting all the tools away was a pink job. (In the end, it turned into a blue job – Who knew?)

With our immediate maintenance chores and unforeseen engine repair out of the way, we relaxed again and pulled out of Oriental first thing Wednesday morning. One thing storm systems do is bunch cruisers up. Everyone seeks a relative few sheltered harbors and marinas to wait them out. When the weather turns nice again, it's as if the flood gates of a dam have been opened – and so it was when we left Oriental. Instead of seeing only a handful of other boats throughout the day, we found ourselves in the middle of a north-bound pack of 15+, most of whom passed us. The pack feeling was highlighted because we were travelling the Neuse River up to and across a tip of Pamlico Sound, then across the Pamlico River. The waterway here is wide and we had miles of visibility in each direction – No wooded bends for other boats to hide behind. However, we also had calm seas which counts for a lot. After about 40 miles we pulled into Slade Creek and anchored (35° 28.463' N, 76° 31.947' W, ICW mile 140). This is an absolutely beautiful, wooded, undeveloped creek that winds back a couple miles. It is where we weathered Tropical Storm Noel on the way down. Pristine anchorages like this are extremely rare anywhere in the U.S. and this is one of the best we've been in. I guess everyone else was either on a tight schedule or sick of anchoring because we heard a ton of boats hailing the nearby Dowry Creek Marina on the VHF throughout the afternoon but had Slade Creek completely to ourselves.

Thursday we motor-sailed past Belhaven, up the Pungo River (I love that name), and through the 21 mile long Alligator – Pungo Canal. While in the canal we were slowly passed by a tug pushing a barge (among numerous other boats). The canal is fairly narrow and lined by the barely above water stumps of long dead cedar trees. These make you quite nervous about straying too close to the edge. Watching the flat plow front of the barge come up on us was like looking over your shoulder and seeing a bulldozer bearing down on you. I pulled *Alisios* over as best as I could and throttled down to let him pass, up-throttling as he was along side in order to regain some speed and steerage as his stern wake hit us. Of course, it didn't occur to me that it would have made a good photograph until he was ahead of us. We had planned to pull off the side of the lower Alligator River just above the canal entrance at the same spot where we had heard the wolves on the way down. However, another storm was forecast for Friday with Gale

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Warnings off the coast. So, we decided to make a long day of it and continued another 20 miles, past the Alligator River Swing Bridge, to just before Albermarle Sound and took a 4 mile detour into a long and winding river / creek which for some reason is named South Lake (Why ask why?). We anchored here at 35° 53.992' N, 75° 54.029' W, ICW mile 82. This offered the best protection around and turned out to be set in the middle of the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge, meaning again we had found a spot with no development – not so much as a duck blind. As far as we could tell, we were the only anchored boat in the miles of waterways that flow into this part of the Wildlife Refuge. It was lovely. We could definitely get used to this! However, there was a downside (apart from the impending storm) – During the ride up the Alligator we picked up dozens of biting flies (the same kind we have in parts of the Chesapeake). They remained moderately well behaved during the afternoon. But, after about 17:00 they started landing and chomping on us. We had an unpleasant time of it killing dozens of them while navigating the crab pots and shoals around the entrance. We'd kill a dozen and more would appear out of nowhere. Finally, after anchoring, we put the screens in, killed off the ones in the cabin and hid below decks. Luckily, there didn't seem to be many in the anchorage itself and by sunset they mostly stopped biting and disappeared.

Meteorology is an inexact science. We waited out the forecasted frontal system, safe at anchor, Friday. But, the weather never got particularly snotty and by 17:40 we found ourselves kicked back in our fold-out seats on the bow enjoying a sundowner, alone amongst the water and trees on a pretty, reasonably sunny, afternoon. We had some brief, heavy showers overnight. The wind picked up a bit and clocked to the north-west as they said it would, but didn't lie down as quickly as they said it would. We woke to a chilly morning, breezier than forecast, and were a bit apprehensive about crossing Albermarle Sound with the wind on our nose and a Small Craft Advisory in effect until 10:00. However, we had a date to keep with our friends and it didn't look particularly bad. It took us about an hour and a half to exit South Lake and motor to the mouth of the Alligator River. During this time we witnessed an interesting example of herd dynamics. One boat found the going too rough for his taste as he entered the Sound and decided to turn back to the Alligator River Marina from whence he had come. Another boat, that had left the marina behind him, but did not appear to be travelling with him, hailed him on the VHF and based on the first boat's report of the sea conditions, decided to turn back as well. Not long afterwards, a third boat (one we had met in Oriental) hailed the second and also decided to turn back. A fourth hailed the third and decided not to leave dock. We could see the first three boats a couple miles away. However, the winds were only 10 – 15 knots at the moment and were forecast to shift to the south-west and subside as the day progressed. Conditions on the river weren't bad and we just couldn't imagine them being that much worse in the sound itself. So, continued on to see for ourselves. When we got to the mouth of the river and turned into the channel between the green 7 and 5, we were head on into a relatively steep 3-foot chop that lifted our bow and dropped it with loud, jarring bangs several times. In addition to the steep chop there was a reasonably strong head current and the combined effect of the two dropped our speed from 4.8 knots to just over 3 – not good, but not horrible either. The conditions were unpleasant, but obviously temporary. Once we clawed our way past the green 5, we were able to turn at an angle into the waves. Things got noticeably better and our speed picked back up. Once we passed the green 1 and got into the Sound proper, the head current disappeared completely, the waves settled to a normal pattern of 2 to 3-footers. We were able to get enough of an angle into the wind to put out the Genoa and immediately we were motor-sailing along at 6.2 knots – a fine clip by anyone's measure. An hour and a half later, at 10:00 and half way across the Sound, the sun had come out and the waves had settled down further to only about a foot in height – really quite nice. We made great time crossing the sound and were the only boat in sight as we

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did so. The only thing unpleasant about the trip was avoiding the numerous crab pot floats. How interesting to watch so many boats psyche themselves out of a beautiful day's crossing. It really highlighted the need to evaluate conditions from multiple angles and use multiple sources of information rather than just follow someone else's lead. (And, in this case, that someone made no pretenses of leading. He bailed on his own and didn't try to convince or encourage anyone else one way or the other.)

Albermarle Sound is the fork in the road, as it were, where the ICW splits for a portion between an old and new route. Yogi Bera once said "When you come to a fork in the road, take it!". So, we did. By crossing north to the Pasquotank River, rather than heading northeast towards the Outer Banks, we officially placed ourselves on the Great Dismal Swamp Canal route. The crab pots became denser and denser as we entered the Pasquotank to the point where sailing up the river was like threading through a minefield. (To think we complained about those in the sound.) We passed the dirigible factory and a U.S. Coast Guard air base, then Elizabeth City. Our friends, Paul and Joyce, have a lovely water-front house about 5 nautical miles north of the Elizabeth City Bridge that we had visited on the way down, the day of their settlement. We were eager to see both them and it now that they had been settled in for half a year. We phoned them upon passing through the bridge to give them notice of our impending arrival and pulled up to their newly expanded dock an hour later (36° 20.041' N, 76° 13.141' W, ICW mile 45). The dock is large enough to hold 3 good-sized boats and *Alisios* had the honor of being the first one to tie up to it as they had not yet brought their Caliber 40, *Time*, down from the Chesapeake. Their house is a well-built, modern, brick *neuvo-colonial* with large glass windows looking straight out on the river. The land across from them can never be built on and it is a view to kill for. We spent a couple days with them enjoying great company, beautiful scenery, good food and wine, hot showers, and a real square bed. After almost 7 months aboard our 35-foot home, it felt odd having so much living space around us.

Sunday the four of us drove a bit of the Dismal Swamp, and went for a short hike at Merchant's Millpond State Park – a neat cedar swamp / lake. It's always interesting to get a land perspective of areas one is travelling by water. The two are often quite different. On the way back, we picked up groceries. That evening we drove to Coinjock, on the main ICW (Albermarle and Chesapeake Canal), for dinner. This allowed us to at least see a glimpse of the other route of the ICW. While there, we bumped into our friends Dave and Judy aboard their Caliber 33, *Largo*, who were also on their way back to the Bay – quite a nice surprise.

Keeping in mind the axiom that "guests, like fish, get old after 3 days", Gail and I pulled away from Paul and Joyce's dock Monday morning, executing a perfect "Wheeler" maneuver to regain each of our dock lines from their pilings. We continued north along the canal on Monday, anchoring just a short distance up the river behind Goat Island – 20 minutes and only 2 miles of travel, by far our shortest day. (36° 20.041' N, 76° 13.141' W, ICW mile 43)

Goat Island is a gorgeous anchorage that we had wanted to return to. However, our timing at this point was also controlled by the two locks of the canal which open 4 times daily – 08:30, 11:00, 13:30, and 15:30. The distance between them is 22 statute miles. Therefore, we needed to make the 11:00 opening of the South Mills Lock in order to have time to traverse the canal and clear the northern Deep Creek Lock on its last opening. The alternative would be to spend a night literally "locked" inside the canal. This isn't a bad thing. But, dockage is minimal – The Visitors Center and a couple bulk-heads at either end being the only places one can tie off. One

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can anchor in the canal itself. But, it doesn't offer much swing room. Goat Island was a much more bucolic alternative.

After spending a lazy day at Goat Island, we woke with the dawn Tuesday morning (which comes early this time of year) in order to make it to the South Mills lock by the 08:30 opening. Our hope and plan was to clear the entire canal by 14:00 in order to make the Gilmerton and Jordan lift bridges in Norfolk, Virginia before 15:30 because both remain closed from 15:30 to 17:30 for rush hour traffic. Once through them, we'd cross over from Norfolk to Hampton Roads and anchor by Mill Creek. We crossed from North Carolina into Virginia and everything went according to plan all day until we actually got to Norfolk. At this point, I should mention that the weather forecast we had printed the previous morning gave the following prediction for Tuesday: "SE winds 10 knots . . . becoming S 10 to 15 knots in the afternoon. Waves 2 feet. Showers likely." In other words, it was to be a pretty average Spring day with a chance of rain. That's what we expected and that's what we had experienced – very light to no winds starting out, a few brief showers, followed by hot, humid, and sunny, then some new clouds and a breeze as we passed through the final lock. We bid goodbye to the Great Dismal Swamp Canal with little thought apart from whether we would make it through the two bridges in time. We did, then noticed some thunderstorms in the distance. So, at 15:35 we decided to switch to the NOAA weather radio frequency and get an update. All of the normal broadcasts had been preempted by a Hazardous Storm Warning announcing a dangerous storm with winds of 50 mph and quarter-inch hail. At that time it was at North Hampton, only about 10 miles away, and heading straight towards us at 20 mph. The voice was in a loop, repeatedly warning people to seek shelter immediately in the basement or center of their homes, away from glass windows, etc. etc. We'd been listening to VHF channel 16 all day and the Coast Guard had said absolutely NOTHING about this! We looked at the thunder-clouds and lightning ahead of us, then at each other and started doing some very quick thinking. Gail was at the helm. So, I pulled out the charts and re-evaluated the two anchorages we'd discussed, realizing that Mill Creek wouldn't cut it in strong westerlies (not that it mattered, since we needed some place immediately). Just before we reached ICW mile marker zero, which we considered our entry point back into the Chesapeake Bay and home waters, all hell broke loose. The temperature dropped precipitously, the wind clocked from the west to north-west and quickly increased to a steady 35 knots with gusts well into the 40s<sup>103</sup>. A 3-foot chop developed in the river, *Alisios* leaned over and slowed to 3 knots, and the visibility dropped to a few hundred yards. We looked over at Hospital Point where there was an anchorage somewhat in the lee of the shore. It was quickly decided to steer towards it and anchor immediately. I grabbed my life vest and rushed to the bow. By now the rain was bucketing down strongly and it really did begin to hail quarter-inch ice crystals. We pulled about 50 meters behind the edge boat in the anchorage. I dropped our anchor, paid out our chain, and we backed it down, me at the bow, Gail at the helm, both of us using our well-practiced hand signals while the hail went thump thump thump against my jacket and I tasted the sweet rainwater pouring down my face (36° 50.635' N, 76° 17.884' W). As soon as the hook was set, I deployed the rest of our chain, snubbed it off, and hurried back to the cockpit laughing because I was completely drenched. I looked like I had jumped in a swimming pool. We both tucked in under the dodger and spent the next 30 minutes watching the shore and boats anchored in front of us as the storm cell passed. Occasionally I'd pick up a couple hail from the deck, holding them in my palm for Gail while we marveled that it really had come down on a warm day as large as the warning said it would be. At 16:10, just after the worst bit of the squall had passed, the U.S. Coast Guard, Hampton Roads, Virginia Group came over the

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<sup>103</sup> Another boat that we know said they recorded winds of 60 knots. We only saw 40-something but had other things to worry about than watching the anemometer.

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VHF and gave an "emergency marine broadcast" announcing a dangerous storm system that would pass through the Hampton Roads and Norfolk areas at 16:05 – Yes, 5 minutes before the actual broadcast. I guess someone needed to cover their ass and have it officially logged that a warning announcement did go out. Interestingly, by 18:30 everything was calm again. The sun had poked its way back through the clouds and we were hanging out in the cockpit again in [fresh] shorts and t-shirts. In the mean time, the sirens of fire trucks and ambulances blared near continuously on the streets of Norfolk and Portsmouth and did so for a couple hours after the storm's passage. Needless to say, we were struck by what a dramatic end this was to our cruise down the ICW, through the Bahamas, and back – Quite a welcome back to the Chesapeake and home waters.

### 3.5 Back Up The Chesapeake Bay, 29 May 2008

Somewhat to our surprise, Hospital Point turned out to be a pretty nice anchorage, a small oasis of sorts. The Elizabeth River is not scenic. Norfolk hosts the largest naval base in the world in addition to huge shipyards, dry docks, commercial docks, and a healthy dose of heavy industry. The view travelling up the river is fascinating, but you wouldn't eat a fish you caught there. Hospital point was the brief exception to the dock and shipyard covered landscape. It lies between the small civilian entertainment and residential portions of the Norfolk and Portsmouth waterfronts – areas that strive to capture some of the spirit of the renovated Baltimore Inner Harbor. We didn't technically complete the main ICW until Wednesday morning when we passed the red #36 (which we had anchored next to, but just south of, Tuesday night). We had more time to wonder at the big naval ships as there were lots of them. I must say I felt somewhat uncomfortable photographing them in this post-9/11 world – as if taking a snapshot of an aircraft carrier off your bow is not a natural urge. In fact, as we passed a Navy destroyer that had just pulled away from dock, we noticed that the big machine gun on the bow was manned and at the ready. We waved at the crew and one or two actually waved back (not the machine gunner).

The distance from Norfolk, Virginia to our home slip in Deale, Maryland is approximately 120 nautical miles. However, the actual distance to be travelled is somewhat more because one must take several detours en-route, turning off the Bay to reach good overnight anchorages as one works their way north. From the Elizabeth River, we motored across and out the James River past Fort Monroe where we turned into the Chesapeake Bay and put up sail. What started as a very calm morning turned into a pretty nice sailing day with winds of 12 knots. Once one passes Hampton Roads, the area turns quite rural. We continued up the Virginia shore, past the York River, and into Mobjack Bay. Mobjack is a bay off the Bay with 5 major tributaries feeding into it like a spread out hand. While there are homes sparsely fronting the water, there isn't much else and we've always liked this area. Most of our lubber friends have never heard of Mobjack. But, that's true with most of the tributaries of the Bay. The Chesapeake is about 200 miles long and has over 65 rivers feeding into it. In addition to the rivers, there are hundreds of creeks, some of which are larger than the smaller rivers. Most people's geographical knowledge is limited to the major bodies of water, cities, and tourist areas. This was certainly true for us before we bought our first boat and started actively cruising locally. Exploring these waterways, which offer so many great places to anchor, was like opening a book into the area's culture and past and has been a large part of the magic of cruising the Bay for us. At this point we only had a week till our planned return date. In the middle of this was Memorial Day weekend and we wanted to avoid the crowds of holiday weekend boaters to the extent we could. The tributaries of Mobjack are about 100 miles from Deale and remote from local population centers. So, we

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decided to stay in the southern Bay and enjoy them as the last hurrah of our cruise. With this plan in mind, we pulled deep into the East River Wednesday afternoon and anchored (37° 25.448' N, 76° 21.763' W).

We spent two days in the East River before moving to the North River, the next river over. We topped off our diesel tank (20.1 gallons for \$105.30) at the small Mobjack Bay Marina then pulled around the corner and anchored in Blackwater Creek for another couple days (37° 25.799' N, 76° 24.640' W). The weather was pleasant and we whiled away our time exploring in *Moondink*, reading, and enjoying the scenery. The Chesapeake is the migratory home for tens of thousands of cownose stingrays who come into the rivers and creeks each spring to breed. This can be a mystical thing to watch. The female swims just below the surface of the water with her wing tips curled upwards, cutting the top like parallel little shark fins. One or more males follow her, below and behind, in perfect formation. It's quite graceful until all of a sudden it isn't – Periodically, they'll hit shallows and there will be a sudden loud splashing as they come crashing together and alter course in confusion. The rays have large puppy-dog-like eyes and sometimes they'll look up at you in curiosity as they come near the boat. We've been in creeks a bit further north in years gone by that have had hundreds of wing tips cutting the surface. That is an amazing sight, particularly at sunset. (These were the monsters that John Smith wrote about.) There were only a few mating rays in the rivers off Mobjack this time around. But, they gave us a smile nevertheless, if nothing else, for memories of past magic. We made the acquaintance of a few of the locals who drove by in their run-abouts and received a couple offers to tie up to docks and even borrow a car if we needed anything. We didn't, but certainly appreciated the warm friendliness. Sunday we moved over to the Ware River where we anchored in Wilson Creek (37° 21.832' N, 76° 28.421' W) and concluded our stay in Mobjack.

We had reached the time where we had to get going again if we were to get home without having to pull an all-nighter. So, Monday we pulled anchor and sailed 10 hours north up the Chesapeake with the plan of pulling into Reedville, VA. which lies off the Great Wicomico River (in between the Rappahannock and Potomac Rivers). Reedville's claim to fame is that it is the home to the Chesapeake's only remaining menhaden fleet. Menhaden are a small fish that are used for oil, cosmetics, fertilizer, and animal feed. They have a high commercial, but no culinary, value. Menhaden travel in dense schools which facilitate their systematic capture. Spotter planes are used to find the schools and report their exact position back to 100+ foot ships. These stand off while a fleet of smaller boats are used to deploy purse nets around the school. The nets are hauled up and the entire school is hauled into the ships which return to Reedville and off-load the catch for rendering. The outskirts of the town are dotted with the tall chimneys of the rendering plants. Although most are now dormant, one does not want to anchor down-wind when the few active ones are in operation. Unfortunately, the operation is too efficient. The massive schools of menhaden which were thought to be an inexhaustible resource have been over-fished with cascading effects on the ecology of the Bay. In spite (or perhaps because) of its commercial background, Reedville is a charming and rather attractive town. We'd visited it in the past with *Moondance* and would recommend it as a place to stop by and explore to anyone with time. The little waterman's museum was well worth a visit. Unfortunately, weather and time conspired against us. Strong southerly winds developed and there was a small craft advisory through the night and into the next day. We, therefore, chose to anchor in Mill Creek<sup>104</sup> off the southern shore of the Great Wicomico which offered both great protection and great beauty (37° 47.502' N, 76° 19.323' W).

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<sup>104</sup> A popular name – There are several Mill Creeks in the Bay.

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Tuesday we woke with the dawn in order to cover 60+ nautical miles to the Little Choptank River and still arrive before evening. This placed us back in Maryland waters and within a day's sail from home. Our 12 hour voyage was somewhat frustrating. We started the day with a Small Craft Advisory, technically at least. However, the winds never spiked much above 14 knots and dissipated quickly. By mid-morning we had to turn on the engine and spent the rest of the day motor-sailing in order to make time. As we passed the marshlands of the Eastern Shore there was little breeze to keep the biting flies at bay and they descended upon us in the hundreds. The day quickly turned hot and humid and this time around the flies did not remain behaved. They go for the lower legs first. So, each of us sat perched on the cockpit seats with a wire-handled fly-swatter in hand (the plastic handled ones don't hold up to heavy use) and spent the next 7 hours swatting at the little demons whenever they landed. After a couple hours the cockpit floor looked like someone had dumped half a can of coffee grounds on it. (In other words, it was disgusting!) After 5 more hours of crouching and swatting we were plain exhausted. (Bet this is an aspect of cruising you haven't read about in *Sail Magazine* ;-). Luckily, they tended to materialize in waves and towards the end of our day these subsided dramatically. As we approached the Little Choptank River, Gail gathered up the writhing mass of casualties from different areas of the boat and dumped them overboard (while I looked on with admiration thinking "most wives would rebel at this last part").

If you have read Mitchner's "Chesapeake" (which took place in the [regular] Choptank River, just north of where we were), you know that the land surrounding the Little Choptank is fairly flat and the river itself is wide with a number of shallow tributaries. The area is agricultural and only lightly developed. A cold front was forecast to arrive that evening with north winds of 30 knots. In order to find good northerly protection, we wound our way about 3 miles deep into Fishing Creek. This was not for the faint of heart. Most sailboats stop less than 1 mile in, before hitting red #4. There is an ambiguous shallow pinch just after this point and we weren't certain we could pass over it without running aground. The charts didn't give a depth. So, we just had to follow the marks slowly. We got through to the deeper water again. However, we get nervous when we see large, multi-million dollar mansions that occupy their own peninsulas but don't have a large boat at dock. People who build real pillared mansions don't quibble about a \$500,000+ power cruiser out front. It's pretty much a mandatory accessory. The fact that we saw none at all indicated the impossibility of building docks with enough depth to accommodate boats of any size. The fact that we made it so far back into Fishing Creek is a tribute to our electronic chart plotter and the quality of the (U.S. waters) NOAA charts. We crossed our fingers and followed the little boat icon as it moved along the screen, because in muddy water, 2 feet looks the same as 20 to the naked eye. We finally anchored in a tranquil spot (38° 31.903' N, 76° 10.304' W), secure in the knowledge that no other cruiser would even think about coming this far back on a weekday. In fact, the Little Choptank is lightly travelled on weekdays and there were probably only three or four other cruisers on the entire river.

The cold front did arrive as promised and we woke after midnight to the sound of high winds howling through the rigging. As is customary in these situations we periodically got up and "prairie dogged" out the companionway throughout the night to make sure the anchor was holding OK (before having a pee and climbing back under the covers). With the dawn came the old familiar sound of a couple watermen working their trot-lines. In Maryland it is illegal to use crab traps in rivers and creeks. So, the watermen stretch a long weighted line across the bottom with chicken necks tied every X tens of feet as bait. They slowly run their boats (Chesapeake Bay "dead-rises") down the line pulling it out of the water over a hook mounted on the gunnel.



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The crab holds on to the bait until it breaks the water's surface then lets go. The waterman holds a net just below the water behind the line to scoop them up as they fall. The blue crab must be particularly active at dawn, because the watermen are always out with the first light and generally retire by noon. To us, being near this generated nice feelings of being home. Unfortunately, the cold front also brought almost a 20 degree drop in temperature. We went from the high 80s on Tuesday to the high 60s on Wednesday – Such is the nature of Spring and Fall in the mid-eastern U.S. 20 or even 30 degree swings in temperature overnight are not uncommon. After making a few cell phone calls to make sure our slip would be empty when we returned and to coordinate a pick-up from my parents, we hauled anchor and re-located to Hudson Creek, closer to the mouth of the River and about 25 nautical miles from Deale. Hudson is prettier than Fishing Creek and offers easier navigation with better depth. We dropped anchor about a mile up the creek, by a large brick mansion (38° 33.708' N, 76° 15.055' W), to finish out the last full day and night at anchor of our cruise.

At 06:45 the following morning we hauled anchor, waved at the watermen, and headed north-west across the Bay to our home port off Rockhold Creek in Deale, MD (38° 46.667' N, 76° 33.585' W). So it came that on Thursday 29 May 2008 at 11:55 *Alisios* pulled back into her slip after 7 months and 5 days away from home.

### 3.6 *The Seven Sins* by Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869 – 1948)

*There are seven sins in this world:*

1. *Wealth without work*
2. *Pleasure without conscience*
3. *Knowledge without character*
4. *Commerce without morality*
5. *Science without humanity*
6. *Worship without sacrifice*
7. *Politics without principle*

### 3.7 Back In The Real World, 21 June 2008

There is something comforting about familiarity and it was good to pull back into our home slip in Deale. Furthermore, after over half a year of constantly being on the move, it was nice to think we'd have some roots again. However, neither of these comforts ended up being as strong or long-lived as we expected and while we settled back into a comfortable norm we also missed circumambient water.

The marina from which we lease our slip is fairly small (about 45 boats). Since we pulled back in at noon on a weekday, it was almost devoid of people and our return was anti-climatic. We spent an hour quietly setting up dock lines, packing laundry, toiletries, and other essentials, and searching for our house key. Then, my parents arrived as planned and we actually walked down the dock and set foot on shore. There was the joy of seeing family after a long absence and hugs were exchanged. We had been a bit worried that my dad, in particular, might have aged. However, both looked the same as they had before we left. At 82 and 78, neither are up to clambering from wobbly finger piers over stainless steel cockpit rails onto rocking boats. So, we felt some pressure to unload *Alisios* quickly and not leave them hanging out in the hot sun. At the same time, we started bumping into a couple people we knew. In retrospect our sense of

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being rushed was misguided because my mom later remarked how she had enjoyed the view of the water and what a pity it was that we had left the marina so soon. I guess our communication skills degraded during our trip. Our house is only a 35 minute drive from our slip so we didn't bring much home this first time around, although we made up for it in the ensuing days.

Pulling into our neighborhood generated the same feeling of comfort and familiarity as pulling into the slip. The service we had hired to cut the grass while we were gone had left the lawn well trimmed and everything was lush and green from the Spring rains. The interior of our house was spotless. We had left it quite clean and clutter-free before leaving. When we're home, we use a cleaning service that comes for a couple hours once every 2 weeks and had remembered to re-start it the week before our return. It was really a shame to unload our stuff. The water heater came back on without a hitch. But, two of our car batteries were beyond resuscitation and one of the tires on the *Blue Beast*<sup>105</sup> was flat. So, while Gail and my mom talked about our trip, I got enough air into the tire to drive to the service station, then swung by the auto parts store with my dad and exchanged the two batteries. We re-thanked our neighbor Steve who had been looking after the house and by about 16:30 we were "dirt-dwellers" again – CLODs<sup>106</sup>. My parents left after dinner and we went to sleep early out of habit. We have quite a firm mattress that had rejuvenated during the months of non-use. It felt like we were sleeping on cement (though it was good to be able to spread our legs). Our master bedroom is about 4 times the size of *Alisios'* interior. We both lay back a bit uncomfortably staring at the ceiling that was so high above us thinking how strange it was to be lying in this huge unused (wasted) space that didn't rock back and forth reassuringly. This, too, we got (mostly) used to again.

After such a long absence, there was a fair amount to do both at home and on the boat and we spent quite a while knocking out chores. The first few days were particularly hectic. We rushed to the Post Office to cancel the mail forwarding we had put in place before we left and made many calls re-setting our addresses with banks, various financial institutions, and other organizations we hadn't just trusted the Post Office to re-route. Only our bank made us come in in-person. We raked up half a dozen lawn bags worth of leaves from the back porch and around the shrubs. One of our outdoor water spigots needed to be replaced. The gutters were clogged and needed to be cleaned. One short stretch had fallen and needed to be re-secured. (Of course, most of my tools were at my parent's for safe storage.) We made several trips to *Alisios* unloading everything we could, turning her from a live-aboard cruiser back into a weekend sailboat. We laughed when we came across the aerobic hand weights that Gail insisted on bringing and hadn't used more than twice, then laughed again at the "Teach Yourself Spanish" CDs that I had given similar attention to. Neither took up much space and at least I was realistic enough not to bring my guitar with the thought that I'd teach myself how to play while we were out (a favorite cruiser delusion). Once we were able to get into spaces again, Gail spent hours wiping every inch of the interior down with a mild bleach-water solution to remove any salt residue while killing mildew at the same time. While she was doing this, I scrubbed the topsides thoroughly, then spent an equal number of hours polishing all the rails, dorades, and other major stainless steel hardware<sup>107</sup>. It was interesting to see which items rusted and bled. We'd have a deck fitting attached by four screws, presumably from the same batch. Three would be fine, but the fourth would bleed a rust path several inches across the gelcoat. (Davis Fiberglass

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<sup>105</sup> our 1991 VW Westfalia camper-van

<sup>106</sup> Cruisers Living On Dirt

<sup>107</sup> The "stainless" in stainless steel is a comparative term and salt water causes it to rust in a way the only brackish Chesapeake Bay water doesn't. A little surface rust isn't that bad as long as you remove it relatively promptly. If it is ignored pits in the metal develop and you have an irreversible problem.

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Stain Remover ("FSR") was magical in the way it made these rust stains disappear.) Interestingly (?), the spokes on our Edson wheel were and are the worst spots on the boat by far when it came to rusting. One wouldn't expect this from such a high-price part. When we returned home the topsides still needed waxing and the teak brightwork still needed a [maintenance] coat of varnish – each a half-day task in their own right. (We had left with 3 coats of Cetol regular + about 6 coats of Cetol gloss. It held up to the Caribbean sun amazingly well – no chipping at all.)

Back at home, Gail set-up a big tub in the driveway and washed all the foul weather gear, jacklines, and harnesses. We rigged these on a bar set between two ladders to dry. Meanwhile the washing machine went through load after load of clothes, towels, sheets, and blankets. It was strange (wonderfully sinful) to use so much water after months of rationing. I dreameled out the tip of the conch shell and we both figured out how to make it trumpet. Friday evening was spent re-inventorying the remaining provisions against our initial list to see what we had and hadn't used. We had both been afraid that we had WAY over-provisioned. However, we actually did pretty well. We brought a number of cans of stuff home, but not much more than we'd normally stock our pantry with. We ran out of coffee and peanut butter while underway, but were able to replenish both – the coffee at affordable prices, the peanut butter at luxury prices. In retrospect, there is little in our methods of preparation that we would have changed. However, returning certainly turned out to be a whole lot more work than living out on the hook. We figured we'd better get used to it.

Saturday 31 May our marina friends had arranged a small party / get-together in our honor. Initially, the weather didn't accommodate. We had torrential downpours during the morning and early afternoon and it looked like the day would be a total bust. We attempted to wait them out at home. But, by 14:00 felt we had to head down and ended up driving through some of them, then waiting down-below in *Alisios* while the final storm cells blew through. At about 16:30 the sun burned through the gray haze that had over-shadowed everything and it ended up turning into a truly beautiful late afternoon – one of those times when the pre-sunset light was perfect, the air was crisp and clean, and the grass, trees, and everything else glistened from the showers that had recently passed. A number of friends swung by *Alisios* before we finally moved up to the "poop deck"<sup>108</sup>. Rum started flowing, hors d'oeuvres came out, great fun was had, and we all drank and ate too much.

The following couple weeks were spent knocking out more "to dos" at a steady, though less frantic, rate. The temperature climbed into the humid, upper 90s for a week and we were happy for our home air conditioner, even though it's set at 80<sup>109</sup>. We also started talking to (rather than just emailing) our employers to arrange our re-entry into the daily grind. The biggest post-return shocks to our system were the sheer masses of humanity in the D.C. metro area, the gross consumption and waste everywhere, and to some degree the constant ringing of the telephone. Others expected us to be shocked by the gas prices (\$4.00+ a gallon and climbing). But, it was a constant item of conversation and we had expected it. As noted before, we try not to sweat things we have no control over.

We participated in the Susan G. Koman Walk for Breast Cancer with a few long-time friends – the sixth or seventh year we've done so. That same afternoon, we headed over to my brother's

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<sup>108</sup> the name our marina residents use for the deck with picnic tables situated between the two main docks

<sup>109</sup> This summer heat and humidity, for which Washington, DC is famous, is the reason many live-aboard cruisers bypass the Chesapeake and head straight up to Maine when returning from the Bahamas or Caribbean.

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family's home for my sister-in-law, Leslie's surprise 40th birthday party. A couple days later we drove up to Pennsylvania to visit Gail's dad. In no time, the two buffer weeks that we'd given ourselves passed and we returned to work.

I actually drove to our Herndon, Virginia office on Thursday the 12th to attend an all staff meeting. This gave me a chance to say hi to a few people and discuss what I'd be doing with my boss as I would be changing jobs within the organization upon my return. Monday the 16th I woke up at 05:00, left the house at 6 and arrived at work at 7 as had been my habit. My physical office hadn't changed and I hadn't emptied it of my belongings before leaving. So, it was not strange at all. However, I ended up working an eleven hour day and didn't get back home until 19:40. This part kicked my butt. But, I soon acclimated to that too.

At this point our trip has come to a close, our lives full circle, and it is time to end this blog. The fact that we took this trip didn't shock those who knew us well. However, it took a number of our co-workers and more casual acquaintances by surprise. On several occasions people just looked at us and said: "Must be nice!", with notable sarcasm. We never quite figured out how to respond to this. At first I'd try to justify our being able to take the time off without pay by noting that both of us had worked in our jobs for 15 years, didn't have kids, still lived in the smallish Levitt Bowie house in P.G. County that we'd bought 14 years ago, etc. Eventually, we'd just let it slide. When in the Bahamas, we got used to hearing a comment somewhat to the inverse – The majority of our cruising peers were retired and most, but not all, of our new friends were 15, 20, or even 25 years older than us. Repeatedly, they would look at us and say: "We wish we had done it when we were your age". Oddly, I felt the same compulsion to justify our trip, noting that we weren't retired and would be returning to work in June. It's a different enough thing to do that I can't say that even now we're comfortable discussing it with all people. There's too much background information that's missing that can't easily or quickly be explained. However, we are both of the mind that too many people spend their lives forced into a pattern where they work 7:30 – 5:30 (often in jobs they can't stand, but feel tied to), come home, watch TV, run errands, then repeat the cycle while life passes them by. Life should have balance. And dreams should be pursued if they are sincere. Our challenge now is to return to the center in pursuit of some sort of balance while trying to maintain a bit of the inner peace and calm we gained from this trip and developing new dreams to pursue in the future.

### 3.8 Next Steps

Avoid Irritation.

## Significant Deviation



A tanker off our bow during our Gulf Stream crossing from the Abacos to Cape Fear, NC



Gail feeling crabby  
(Yes, this is for kids. But, how could we pass it up?)



This had been two frogs until Gail kissed one.



Our view travelling up the ICW north of Beaufort, North Carolina



Alisios safe in a slip in Oriental, NC before the gale hit. She's starting to develop an "ICW smile".



Slade Creek, North Carolina

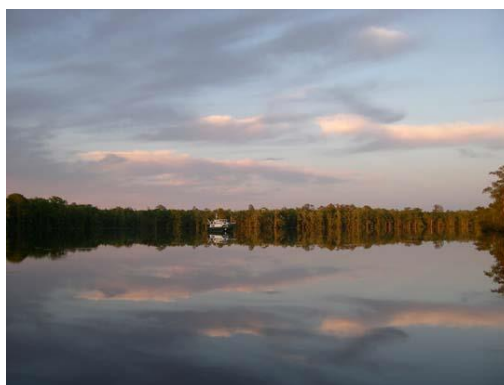


## Significant Deviation

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Merchant's Millpond State Park, NC  
Great Dismal Swamp



The sunset view off our stern while anchored off  
Goat Island, North Carolina



The mass of lift bridges encountered when  
approaching Norfolk, Virginia from the south



An aircraft carrier being worked on at dock



Giving a tug and barge a "one whistle" pass off  
Norfolk, Virginia



Completely drenched after rushing to anchor  
during a 40+ knot squall in Norfolk, VA

## Significant Deviation



Fishing Creek off the Little Choptank River, Maryland (flat, wide, and shallow)



A waterman trot-lining for blue crabs off the Little Choptank River, Maryland



The "House on the Cliff" – Our day mark when returning to our home creek in Deale, Maryland



*Alisios* back in her slip, Rockhold Creek Marina, Deale, Maryland



Putting the boat back in order – Gail waxing the topsides



Matthew sailing *Alisios* back home on the Chesapeake Bay





# Appendix

## Charts and Cruising Guides

Most charts and cruising guides are updated on regular cycles. We'd recommend contacting the publisher to find out what their cycle is, then waiting until near-departure before making large purchases in order to ensure that you get the latest edition(s).

We carried a number of different charts to guide us on each leg of our trip:

**U.S. Coastal charts including the ICW** – The official U.S. charts, produced by NOAA, are physically large, poster-sized, print-outs that are designed to be rolled out on a large chart table. They're cumbersome on a small vessel and the size issue is compounded by the fact that one would have to carry many different individual charts to cover large areas. To address these issues [Maptech](#) has compiled the multiple NOAA charts for different regions going down the U.S. coast into 22" x 17" spiral bound "chart kits" (books). We carried three of these for the U.S. legs of our journey: *Region 4 – Chesapeake and Delaware Bays*; *Region 6 – Norfolk, VA to Florida*, and *Region 7 – Florida East Coast and the Keys*. (There is no Region 5.)

We also carried a much smaller, ICW-specific, chart book: *The Intracoastal Waterway Chartbook* by John and Leslie Kettlewell. This is about the size of a 3-ring binder and presents the ICW portions of the NOAA charts in a flip format, 5 miles to a page, that is easy to follow. It's prime benefit is ease of use, although it does also contain some introductory information on cruising the waterway, distance mileage tables, and a very useful and easily referenced list of all the drawbridges. At some times, this was nice to use. At others, we preferred the chart kits which gave a larger scale view. Note: It is a compliment to and NOT a substitute for a complete set of charts. It is about \$20 (1/3) cheaper at Amazon.com than at West Marine.

**Bahamas Charts** – There are numerous chart options for the Bahamas including charts produced the NOAA, the British Admiralty, and private firms. The quality varies considerably and degrades rapidly as one moves away from heavily populated areas. We carried the "[Explorer](#)" chart books by Monty and Sara Lewis. These are regularly updated and are widely recognized as being the best charts for the Bahamas by a large margin (far superior to the NOAA or Admiralty charts). There are three: *Near Bahamas Including the Abacos, Exumas and Ragged Islands*, and *Far Bahamas*. They are updated on a three-year cycle, one each year in December. In addition to the charts themselves, they include concise lists and tables of information for each town or settlement – more comprehensive and up-to-date information on where to find banks, laundromats, propane, groceries, etc. than any of the cruising guides. They also include multi-year tide tables.

**Electronic Charts** – We used a GPS-integrated electronic chart plotter in conjunction with our paper charts (and highly recommend the use of one). The higher quality chart plotters support the use of detailed charts stored on flash memory chips. Which brand of chart chip one uses is determined by the make and model of the chart plotter. Our Raymarine unit supported Navionics Platinum chips and we were able to cover our entire journey with only two chips: Area #5, #905P - US Mid Atlantic & Canyons (the Atlantic coast from lower-New England to mid-South Carolina) and Area #6, #906P - US Southeast & Bahamas (South Carolina through Florida, the Bahamas, and Turks and Caicos). The charts on these chips were the NOAA charts. They were quite accurate in U.S. waters. However, they lacked detailed information for much of the Bahamas, information that was on the Explorer charts. We used them real-time at the helm, but found the paper ones much easier to plan from and one should always carry paper charts as backups anyway.

Charts provide a detailed roadmap. However, they don't tell you much about favored anchorages, marinas, or historical context. For this reason, cruisers supplement their charts with various "cruising guides". Here are the ones we carried:

**Chesapeake Bay Cruising Guide** – For the Chesapeake we used (use) Chesapeake Bay Magazine's *Guide to Cruising the Chesapeake Bay*. Although it is updated every year, it is not necessary to have the latest version. We like it a lot.

**ICW Guides** – Once in the ICW the single "must have" guide is *Skipper Bob's ICW Anchorages*. This is not a general cruising guide. Its focus is anchorages and navigating the ICW. It started out as a home publication, developed cult status due to its sheer usefulness and is updated every year with input from hundreds of cruisers. Page by page, mile marker after mile marker it goes down the ICW from the Hudson River to the Florida Keys identifying and ranking various anchorages against a simple scale for holding, wind, current, wake, scenic value and proximity to shopping. It provides average tides for each anchorage, information on all drawbridges, reported spots of shoaling, and other items of interest to one traversing "the ditch". It is an inexpensive, simple-format, concise guide that is indispensable. Almost everyone carries it aboard. Skipper Bob died in December 2006 and his wife Elaine partnered with Waterway Guides in 2007 so their publications will be properly maintained. Waterway Guides has stated that they intend to keep the simple, useful format. Skipper Bob Publications also puts out several other guides, including *Marinas Along the ICW*, which we didn't carry since we rarely stay in many marinas.

For information on marinas, services, and area context many carry a conventional cruising guide. We brought along *Managing the Waterway, Hampton Roads, VA to Biscayne Bay, FL* by Mark and Diana Doyle which is a slick, heavily formatted publication that is rich in historical information, information on area books and films, and interesting tidbits, in addition to anchorage and marina information. We used and enjoyed it a lot for area history, but found it somewhat lacking on practical details like the location of grocery stores, chandleries, laundromats, and the like.

**Bahamas Guides** – Skipper Bob publishes an inexpensive book titled *Bahamas Bound* which was very useful when planning our trip. It is a "how to go" guide". So, its value is in pre-trip planning, not giving you information on the islands once you're there. It should be read ahead of time.

Once you get to the Bahamas, the most well known cruising guides are written by Stephen Pavlidis. These were initially produced in the 1995 – 1997 timeframe and have not received significant updates, though they have gone through several printing / re-issue cycles. However, things change very slowly in the Bahamas. The historical background, landmark and navigation information is still valid. The quality of Steve P's guides is so vastly superior to anything else out there that they are still considered must-have books. We carried both *On and Off the Beaten Path*, *The Central and Southern Bahamas Guide* and *The Exuma Guide* and used them all extensively.

For the Abacos, we carried *Cruising Guide to Abaco* by Steve Dodge. This modern, heavily formatted publication with lots of advertisements is recognized as "the" Abacos guide to get and it probably is. It served its purpose, though we wish they had included 2 years of tide tables.

Most people cruise a Winter to Spring season and we were frustrated that the guide we bought new just before leaving didn't have up-to-date tables.

We also carried the *Yachtsman's Guide to the Bahamas*. However, we found it too superficial to be of use and, despite its self-praise and annual update cycle, some of the information was old and invalid. We wouldn't buy it again.

**Reeds** – *Reeds Nautical Almanac* provides a year's information on tides and currents for the Atlantic Coast. There is a separate volume for the Bahamas. Not long ago an up-to-date copy of Reeds was considered a must have onboard reference for any long cruise. However, most modern GPSs, including both our chart plotter and hand-held backup, provide tidal and current information. Multiple year tide tables for the Bahamas are also included in the Explorer charts. Consequently, we didn't really use the copy of Reeds that we brought along.

## Stops Made

10/24/2007	Departed from slip at Rockhold Creek Marina, Deale, MD	38° 46.667' N	76° 33.585' W
10/24/2007	Mill Creek, Solomons, MD	39° 10.791' N	76° 27.047' W
10/26/2007	Prentice Creek, VA	37° 43.689' N	76° 19.694' W
10/27/2007	Willoughby Bay, Norfolk, VA	36° 57.627' N	76° 17.403' W
10/28/2007	Deep Creek Basin, Great Dismal Swamp Canal, VA	36° 45.333' N	76° 18.450' W
10/29/2007	Goat Island, Pasquotank River, Great Dismal Swamp Canal, NC	36° 20.585' N	76° 13.370' W
10/30/2007	Elizabeth City Town Dock, NC	36° 17.920' N	76° 13.096' W
10/31/2007	Alligator River just NW of red #46, NC	35° 40.630' N	76° 04.541' W
11/1/2007	Slade Creek, NC (Tropical Storm Noel)	35° 28.603' N	76° 32.012' W
11/4/2007	Adams Creek, NC	34° 56.977' N	76° 39.863' W
11/5/2007	Mile Hammock Bay, NC	34° 33.065' N	77° 19.410' W
11/6/2007	Carolinia Beach Basin, NC (dragged anchor)	34° 02.905' N	77° 53.361' W
11/7/2007	Mouth of the Calabash River, SC	33° 52.400' N	78° 34.204' W
11/8/2007	Jerico Creek off the Waccamaw River, SC	33° 26.993' N	79° 11.032' W
11/9/2007	Porcher Creek off Dewees Creek, SC	32° 50.570' N	79° 45.338' W
11/10/2007	South Edisto River just NW of green #157, SC	32° 33.550' N	80° 24.815' W
11/11/2007	Downtown Marina, Beaufort, SC	32° 25.781' N	80° 40.460' W
11/13/2007	Herb River, GA	32° 00.863' N	81° 01.997' W
11/14/2007	New Teakettle Creek, GA	31° 27.518' N	81° 18.261' W
11/15/2007	Jekyll Harbour Marina, GA	31° 02.715' N	81° 25.362' W
11/17/2007	Fort George River near green #5, GA	30° 26.515' N	81° 26.385' W
11/18/2007	Matanzas River by Fort Matanzas, FL	29° 43.038' N	81° 14.500' W
11/19/2007	Seven Seas Marina, Port Orange (by Daytona), FL	29° 09.271' N	80° 58.536' W
11/21/2007	Titusville, FL - north of bridge	28° 37.625' N	80° 48.387' W
11/22/2007	Titusville, FL - south of bridge (Thanksgiving Day)	28° 36.754' N	80° 47.921' W
11/23/2007	Indian Harbor Beach (Eau Gallie), FL	28° 08.517' N	80° 36.107' W
11/24/2007	Vero Beach, FL	27° 39.270' N	80° 22.265' W
11/26/2007	Smithsonian Marine Station, Ft. Pierce, FL	27° 27.356' N	80° 18.568' W
11/28/2007	Lake Worth, FL	26° 50.213' N	80° 03.204' W
11/29/2007	Lake Boca Raton, FL	26° 20.762' N	80° 04.404' W
11/30/2007	Bakers Haulover Inlet, North Miami, FL	25° 54.527' N	80° 08.153' W

12/4/2007	Biscayne Bay by Mt. Sinai Medical Center, Miami, FL	25° 48.481' N	80° 08.492' W
12/5/2007	Sunset Lake, Miami, FL	25° 47.962' N	80° 08.439' W
12/14/2007	Between DiLido and San Marino Islands, Miami, FL	25° 47.369' N	80° 09.659' W
12/15/2007	Baker's Haulover Inlet, North Miami, FL (After 1st failed attempt at crossing to Bimini)	25° 54.533' N	80° 08.153' W
12/20/2007	South of Venetian Causeway off Miami Beach Island, Miami, FL	25° 47.265' N	80° 08.831' W
12/21/2007	Baker's Haulover Inlet, North Miami, FL (After 2nd failed attempt at crossing to Bimini)	25° 54.473' N	80° 08.156' W
12/29/2007	No Name Harbor, Key Biscayne, FL	25° 40.614' N	80° 09.800' W
12/31/2007	Blue Water Marina, Bimini, Bahamas	25° 37.128' N	79° 17.621' W
1/9/2008	Great Bahama Bank about 3.5 nm from the Russell Beacon	25° 31.345' N	78° 27.783' W
1/10/2008	Chub Cay, Berry Islands, Bahamas	25° 24.554' N	77° 54.623' W
1/11/2008	Nassau Harbor Club Marina, Nassau, Bahamas	25° 04.504' N	77° 18.764' W
1/12/2008	Allan's Cay, Exumas, Bahamas	24° 44.882' N	76° 50.291' W
1/16/2008	Shroud Cay, Exumas, Bahamas	24° 31.847' N	76° 47.808' W
1/18/2008	Emerald Rock, Warderick Wells Cay, Exumas, Bahamas	24° 23.074' N	76° 37.532' W
1/19/2008	Northern mooring field, Warderick Wells Cay, Exumas, Bahamas	24° 23.883' N	76° 38.006' W
1/23/2008	Cambridge Cay, Exumas, Bahamas	24° 18.111' N	76° 32.342' W
1/26/2008	Big Major Spot, Exumas, Bahamas	24° 11.321' N	76° 27.602' W
1/29/2008	Black Point Settlement, Great Guana Cay, Exumas, Bahamas	24° 05.983' N	76° 24.151' W
1/31/2008	Little Farmers Cay, Exumas, Bahamas	23° 57.336' N	76° 19.517' W
2/3/2008	Black Point Settlement, Great Guana Cay, Exumas, Bahamas	24° 05.994' N	76° 24.119' W
2/7/2008	Cave Cay, Exumas, Bahamas	23° 54.142' N	76° 16.230' W
2/8/2008	Volleyball Beach, Elizabeth Harbor / Georgetown, Exumas, Bahamas	23° 54.142' N	76° 16.230' W
2/19/2008	Thompson Bay / Salt Pond, Long Island, Bahamas	23° 21.756' N	75° 08.271' W
2/21/2008	Two Palms, Flamingo Cay, Jumentos / Ragged Islands, Bahamas	22° 53.084' N	75° 52.141' W
2/24/2008	Water Cay, Jumentos / Ragged Islands, Bahamas	23° 01.790' N	75° 42.910' W
2/26/2008	Thompson Bay / Salt Pond, Long Island, Bahamas	23° 21.709' N	75° 08.190' W
3/5/2008	Kidd's Cove, Elizabeth Harbor / Georgetown, Exumas, Bahamas	23° 30.486' N	75° 45.723' W
3/6/2008	Hamburger Beach, Elizabeth Harbor / Georgetown, Exumas, Bahamas	23° 31.728' N	75° 46.058' W
3/7/2008	Volleyball Beach, Elizabeth Harbor / Georgetown, Exumas, Bahamas	23° 54' N	76° 16' W
3/14/2008	Hamburger Beach, Elizabeth Harbor / Georgetown, Exumas, Bahamas	23° 31.753' N	75° 46.111' W
3/15/2008	Red Shanks Cays, Great Exuma, Bahamas	23° 29.071' N	75° 44.088' W
3/20/2008	Kidd's Cove, Elizabeth Harbor / Georgetown, Exumas, Bahamas	23° 30.247' N	75° 45.903' W
3/21/2008	Sand Dollar Beach, Elizabeth Harbor / Georgetown, Exumas, Bahamas	23° 30.890' N	75° 44.667' W
3/22/2008	Lee Stocking Island by Caribbean Marine Research Center, Exumas, Bahamas	23° 46.291' N	76° 06.325' W

3/28/2008	Rudder Cut Cay, Exumas, Bahamas	23° 52.371' N	76° 14.543' W
3/29/2008	Cave Cay, Exumas, Bahamas	23° 54.141' N	76° 16.264' W
3/30/2008	White Point, Great Guana Cay, Exumas, Bahamas (holding poor)	24° 02.330' N	76° 22.559' W
3/30/2008	Black Point Settlement, Great Guana Cay, Exumas, Bahamas	24° 05.876' N	76° 24.241' W
4/4/2008	Hawksbill Cay, Exumas, Bahamas	24° 29.080' N	76° 46.412' W
4/6/2008	Normans Cay, Exumas, Bahamas	24° 35.448' N	76° 48.770' W
4/7/2008	Allan's Cay, Exumas, Bahamas (conditions bad at Ship Channel Cay)	24° 44.919' N	76° 50.273' W
4/8/2008	Rock Sound, Eleuthera, Bahamas	24° 52.080' N	76° 50.273' W
4/10/2008	Governors Harbor, Eleuthera, Bahamas	25° 11.716' N	76° 14.835' W
4/11/2008	Egg Island, Eleuthera, Bahamas	25° 29.566' N	76° 53.282' W
4/12/2008	Little Harbor, Abacos, Bahamas	26° 19.591' N	76° 59.980' W
4/14/2008	Hope Town, Abacos, Bahamas	26° 32.299' N	76° 57.536' W
4/17/2008	Marsh Harbor, Abacos, Bahamas	26° 32.815' N	77° 03.430' W
4/18/2008	Man-O-War Cay, Abacos, Bahamas	26° 35.665' N	77° 00.427' W
4/19/2008	Fisher's Bay, Great Guana Cay, Abacos, Bahamas	26° 40.057' N	77° 07.198' W
4/21/2008	Treasure Cay, Abacos, Bahamas	26° 40.233' N	77° 16.986' W
4/23/2008	Black Sound, Green Turtle Cay, Abacos, Bahamas	26° 45.541' N	77° 19.381' W
4/24/2008	White Sound, Green Turtle Cay, Abacos, Bahamas	26° 46.720' N	77° 20.236' W
4/30/2008	Allans Pensacola Cay, Abacos, Bahamas	26° 59.278' N	77° 41.144' W
5/1/2008	Passage back to U.S.A.: Allans Pensacola Cay, Bahamas - Cape Fear River, North Carolina		
5/4/2008	Southport Marina, Southport, NC	33° 55.040' N	78° 01.718' W
5/7/2008	Topsail Sound / Sloop Point, NC	34° 24.257' N	77° 35.446' W
5/8/2008	Spooners Creek, NC	34° 43.667' N	76° 48.365' W
5/10/2008	Cedar Creek, NC	34° 56.016' N	76° 38.604' W
5/11/2008	Oriental Marina and Inn, Oriental, NC	35° 01.492' N	76° 41.723' W
5/14/2008	Slade Creek, NC	35° 28.463' N	76° 31.947' W
5/15/2008	South Lake, NC (off Alligator River by Albermarle Sound)	35° 53.992' N	75° 54.029' W
5/17/2008	Paul and Joyce's dock / home, Elizabeth City, NC	36° 20.041' N	76° 13.141' W
5/19/2008	Goat Island, Pasquotank River, Great Dismal Swamp Canal, NC	36° 20.041' N	76° 13.141' W
5/20/2008	Hospital Point, Norfolk, VA	36° 50.635' N	76° 17.884' W
5/21/2008	East River, Mobjack Bay, VA	37° 25.448' N	76° 21.763' W
5/23/2008	Blackwater Creek, North River, Mobjack Bay, VA	37° 25.799' N	76° 24.640' W

5/25/2008	Wilson Creek, Ware River, Mobjack Bay, VA	37° 21.832' N	76° 28.421' W
5/26/2008	Mill Creek off the Great Wicomico River, VA	37° 47.502' N	76° 19.323' W
5/27/2008	Fishing Creek, Little Choptank River, MD	38° 31.903' N	76° 10.304' W
5/28/2008	Hudson Creek, Little Choptank River, MD	38° 33.708' N	76° 15.055' W
5/29/2008	Returned to slip at Rockhold Creek Marina, Deale, MD	38° 46.667' N	76° 33.585' W



## Appendix



## Books Read

Cruising affords a great opportunity for reading and we tried to take advantage of it. There are numerous opportunities to swap books. However, almost everything traded is pulp fiction which isn't particularly to our taste. We, therefore, carried a lot of books with us. These included titles recommended by friends and relatives, volumes that we'd had on our shelves for years but hadn't gotten around to reading, a number of titles referenced in the Doyle's *Managing the Waterway* guide (which we ordered from Amazon.com en-route, before leaving U.S. waters), and finally a few given to us by other cruisers. The following is a list of everything we read during our trip in the order read.

- *The Mind's Sky*, Timothy Ferris (m)
- *The Cold Moon*, Jeffery Deaver (g)
- *Boomsday*, Christopher Buckley (m,g)
- *The Boy, Me, and the Cat*, Henry Plummer (m,g)
- *River Horse*, William Least Heat-Moon (m,g)
- *Oracle Bones*, Peter Hessler (g,m)
- *Islands in the Stream*, Ernest Hemmingway (g,m)
- *The Orchid Thief*, Susan Orleans (g,m)
- *The Da Vinci Code*, Dan Brown (m)
- *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley (g,m)
- *Monkey*, Wu Ch'En (Tr. by Arthur Waley) (m,g)
- *Outboard Motors Maintenance and Repair Manual*, Jean-Luc Pallas (m)
- *The Devil In The White City*, Erik Larson (g,m)
- *Coffee, Tea, or Me*, Trudy Baker and Rachel Jones (g,m)
- *The God Delusion*, Richard Dawkins (m)
- *Defining The Wind*, Scott Huler (m)
- *Where is Joe Merchant?*, Jimmy Buffet (g)
- *The Binding Chair*, Kathryn Harrison (g,m)
- *Crazy in Alabama*, Mark Childress (g,m)
- *The Kite Runner*, Khaled Hosseini (g,m)
- *Love In The Time Of Cholera*, Gabriel Garcia Marquez (m,g)
- *Flush*, Carl Hiaasen (m,g)
- *Of Love and Shadows*, Isabel Allende (g,m)
- *Black April*, Julia Peterkin (m,g)
- *West With The Night*, Beryl Markham (g,m)
- *North To The Night*, Alvah Simon (m)
- *Out Island Doctor*, Evans W. Cottman (m,g)
- *Tobacco Road*, Erskine Caldwell (m,g)
- *Wicked*, Gregory Maguire (g,m)
- *The Magic Barrel*, Bernard Malamud (m,g)
- *World Without End*, Ken Follett (g)
- *Siddhartha*, Hermann Hesse (g)
- *Burmese Days*, George Orwell (m)
- *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Amy Tan (g)
- *Isac's Storm*, Erik Larson (m,g)
- *The 158-Pound Marriage*, John Irving (g)
- *Star of the Sea*, Joseph O'Connor (g)
- *Chocolat*, Joanne Harris (g,m)

- *The Great Bridge*, David McCullough (m)
- *The Brothers of Gwynedd Quartet*, Edith Pargeter (a.k.a Ellis Peters)
  - *Sunrise in the West* (g)
  - *The Dragon at Noonday* (g)
  - *The Hounds of Sunset* (g)
  - *Afterglow and Nightfall* (g)
- *The Last Place on Earth (Scott and Amundsen)*, Roland Huntford (m)
- *Selected Stories*, Anton Checkhov (g,m)
- *Only Yesterday*, Frederick Lewis Allen (m)
- *Microbe Hunters*, Paul De Kruif (m,g)
- *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley (m,g)
- *Elmer Gantry*, Sinclair Lewis (g,m)
- *The Normals*, David Gilbert (g)
- *Eight Essays*, Edmund Wilson (m)
- *The City And The Stars*, Arthur C. Clarke (m,g)
- *The Splendid Little War*, Frank Freidel (m)
- *Swamp Fox*, Robert D. Bass (m)
- *Anna Karenina*, Leo Tolstoy (g)
- *Assorted Prose*, John Updike (m)
- *The Sibyl*, Par Lagerkvist (m)
- *Two Years Before the Mast*, Richard Henry Dana (m)
- *Ines of My Soul*, Isabel Allende (g)

## Inventory and Checklist

Qty:	Item:	Location:
X	USCG Documentation – <i>Alisios</i>	Chart table
X	MD Registration – Moondink	Chart table
X	Logbook	Chart table
X	Owners manual – <i>Alisios</i>	Starboard settee
X	Hardcopies of primary manuals (e.g. Raymarine, Yanmar, Yamaha, VHF's, Garmin GPS)	Starboard settee
X	+ Electronic copies of ALL manuals on laptop (head, windlass, voltage regulator, etc.)	
X	Boat U.S. membership card - unlimited towing	Chart table
X	U.S. passports	
X	Scuba diving certification cards	
X	Health and immunization records + EKG and any prescriptions - mbj, grj	
X	Inventory list	
X	Provisions list	
X	Address list (all friends and relatives)	
X	Photocopies of passports and vessel documentation	
X	Glasses – grj	
X	Calculator	Chart table
X	Pens, pencils, spare pencil lead .5mm, sharpies, highlighter, rubber bands, & paper clips	Chart table
X	100 sheets college ruled paper	
X	2 pads of paper	
X	45 Self-seal envelopes	
X	40 Forever U.S. stamps	
X	250 boat cards	
<u>Electronic Charts</u>		
X	Navionics Platinum Chart Area #5, #905P - US Mid Atlantic & Canyons	Chart table
X	Navionics Platinum Chart Area #6, #906P - US Southeast & Bahamas, v02.19	Chart table
<u>Paper Charts:</u>		
X	ADC Chesapeake Bay Chartbook, 8th Edition ©2005	
X	Maptech Chartkit Region 4, Chesapeake and DE Bays (Cape May to Norfolk)	
X	Maptech Chartkit Region 6 – Norfolk to Jacksonville, 9th Edition	
X	Maptech Chartkit Region 7, FL East Coast and the Keys, 14th Edition	

<u>X</u>	Intracoastal Waterway Chartbook, John and Leslie Kettlewell	
<u>X</u>	Explorer ChartBook - Near Bahamas including the Abacos	
<u>X</u>	Explorer ChartBook – Exumas	
<u>X</u>	Explorer ChartBook - Far Bahamas (Borrowed from <i>Cabocho</i> )	
<u>X</u>	Explorer Chart - Sea of Abacos Chart	
<u>X</u>	Imray #E5 Folded – Chart of Bermuda	
<u>X</u>	Parallel ruler	Chart table
<u>X</u>	Dividers	Chart table

#### Flags:

<u>X</u>	3	U.S.A., 12 * 18	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	2	Wales / Cymru, 12 * 18	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	Wales / Cymru, large	Port cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	Maryland, 12 * 18	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	Yellow quarantine, 12 * 18	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	Bahamas merchant, 12 * 18	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	British red duster, 12 * 18	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	Seven Seas Cruising Association burgee	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	Caliber Cruising Club burgee	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	8	Flag clips (pair)	Starboard cabinet

#### Cruising Guides:

<u>X</u>	Chesapeake Bay Magazine's Guide to Cruising the Chesapeake Bay, 1997
<u>X</u>	Managing the Waterway, Hampton Roads, VA to Biscayne Bay, FL: An Enriched Cruising Guide for Intracoastal Waterway Travelers, Mark Doyle
<u>X</u>	Skipper Bob's ICW Anchorages (August 2007)
<u>X</u>	Skipper Bob's Bahamas Bound (March 2007)
<u>X</u>	Yachtsman's Guide to the Bahamas - 2007 (updates every year in March, not very good)
<u>X</u>	Cruising Guide to Abaco - 2007, Steve Dodge
<u>X</u>	On and Off the Beaten Path, The Central and Southern Bahamas Guide, Stephen J. Pavlidis (May 2002, Borrowed from <i>Cabocho</i> )
<u>X</u>	The Exuma Guide, Stephen J. Pavlidis (2nd Ed. April 2007)
<u>X</u>	The Turks and Caicos Guide: A Cruising Guide to the Turks and Caicos Islands, Stephen J. Pavlidis (June 2002)
<u>X</u>	2007 Reed's Nautical Almanac East Coast (must be renewed each year, not used much)

#### Reference Books:

<u>X</u>	USCG Navigation Rules International - Inland
<u>X</u>	<i>Knots and Splices</i> , Cyrus L. Day
<u>X</u>	<i>US Sailing, Safety Recommendations for Cruising Sailboats</i>
<u>X</u>	<i>Boatowner's Mechanical and Electrical Manual 3rd Edition</i> , Nigel Calder
<u>X</u>	<i>Outboard Motors Maintenance and Repair Manual</i> , Jean-Luc Pallas
<u>X</u>	<i>Advanced First Aid Afloat</i> , Peter F. Eastman and John M. Levinson
<u>X</u>	<i>The Reef Set</i> , Paul Human (3 guides: Reef Fish, Creatures, and Coral Identification)
<u>X</u>	<i>The Galley Kiss Cookbook</i> , Corinne C. Kanter
<u>X</u>	<i>Pressure Perfect</i> , Lorna Sass
	<b>English Dictionary</b>
<u>X</u>	Star finder (wheel) - Northern Hemisphere
<u>X</u>	2007 West Marine Catalog

#### Safety Equipment

<u>X</u>	1	Emergency tiller	Cockpit locker
<u>X</u>	2	Mustang Deluxe Inflatable Collar PFD With Sailing Harness, MD3082 (1 blue, 1 red)	Hanging locker (main cabin)
<u>X</u>	2	Re-arm kits for Mustang Inflatable MD3082	Hanging locker (main cabin)
<u>X</u>	2	Personal strobe light (1 ACR C-strobe, 1 ACR Firefly 3)	Hanging locker (main cabin)
<u>X</u>	2	Tethers - SOSpenders dual line safety tether, model 8030192	Hanging locker (main cabin)
<u>X</u>	1	Deck jacklines - Wichard 35' dual line (webbing) with center clip	Hanging locker (main cabin)
<u>X</u>	1	Cockpit jacklines, webbing	Hanging locker (main cabin)
<u>X</u>	8	Economy near-shore life jackets	Cockpit locker
<u>X</u>	1	Horseshoe buoy with integral drogue	Cockpit rail
<u>X</u>	1	Forespar floating strobe light WL-1, part #205102 (tethered to horseshoe buoy)	Cockpit rail
<u>X</u>	1	Handheld rechargeable spotlight - 1,000,000 candle power	Starboard settee
<u>X</u>	1	EPIRB - ACR 2744 manual deploy with integral GPS	Bulkhead above quarterberth
			Bulkhead between nav station & quarterberth
<u>X</u>	1	Handheld waterproof VHF with DC charger (ICOM IC-M72)	Starboard cabinet, ditch bag
<u>X</u>	2	[Backup] handheld GPS (Garman GPS Map 76 and Magellan 2000 - only one needed)	V-berth, Galley cabinet, Nav station
<u>X</u>	3	Fire extinguisher	Quarterberth (add'l First Aid book on shelf)
<u>X</u>	-	First aid kit and manual	
<u>X</u>	1	Grundig Yacht Boy 400 PE SSB Receiver + roll-up shortwave antenna (Uses 6 AA batteries)	
<u>X</u>	1	<u>Ditch Bag</u>	Nav station by quarterberth
<u>X</u>	1	EPIRB (must grab from mount)	
<u>X</u>	1	Waterproof handheld VHF (must grab from mount)	
<u>X</u>	1-2	Handheld GPS with spare batteries	
<u>X</u>	1	Signal / Flare Kit - orange tube (old flares kept in addition to current ones)	

<u>X</u>	4	USCG hand-held red flares, expire Nov. 2010
<u>X</u>	3	USCG hand-held red flares, expire Dec. 2000
<u>X</u>	3	USCG hand-launch red aerial flares (Orion SkyBlazer), expire Oct. 2007
<u>X</u>	3	USCG hand-launch red aerial flares (SkyBlazer XLT), expire Oct. 1999
<u>X</u>	2	SOLAS hand-held white flares, expire Nov. 2007
<u>X</u>	2	Light sticks / cylumes
<u>X</u>	1	SOLAS orange floating smoke signal
<u>X</u>	1	Signal mirror with whistle
<u>X</u>	1	Waterproof flashlight with spare batteries
<u>X</u>	3	Liters drinking water
<u>X</u>	2	Survival blankets
<u>X</u>	1	Waterless towel
<u>X</u>	1	Hand compass (Silva Boy Scout compass)
<u>X</u>	1	Folding knife
<u>X</u>	1	Box windproof, waterproof matches
<u>X</u>	-	\$50 cash
<u>X</u>	-	Photocopies of passports
<u>X</u>	1	Can opener
<u>X</u>	-	Paper and pencils

#### General Equipment

<u>X</u>	1	Boson's chair	V-berth
<u>X</u>	1	Anchor day shape (ball)	Port settee
<u>X</u>	-	Spare hose clamps	Box 3
<u>X</u>	-	Spare 4.25" hose segment for water pump (hose connecting pump and accumulator tank)	Box 3
<u>X</u>	2	Fly swatters (wire handle)	Quarterberth hanger
<u>X</u>	4	Trash towels	Starboard settee
<u>X</u>	1	Air horn	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	Spare air canister	Port cabinet
<u>X</u>	-	Tapered soft wood plugs for thru-hulls	Box 3
<u>X</u>	1	Funnel with extension tube	Starboard settee
<u>X</u>	1	Foul weather suit, offshore / coastal - mbj	Hanging locker (main cabin)
<u>X</u>	1	Foul weather suit, offshore / coastal - grj	Hanging locker (main cabin)
<u>X</u>	1	Foul weather slacks, light - mbj	Hanging locker (main cabin)
<u>X</u>	1	Foul weather slacks, light - grj	Hanging locker (main cabin)
<u>X</u>	1	Foul weather jacket, light - mbj	Hanging by companionway
<u>X</u>	1	Foul weather jacket, light - grj	Hanging by companionway

<u>X</u>	2	Sailing gloves - mbj	Port cabinet
<u>X</u>	2	Sailing gloves - grj	Port cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	Preventer / block and tackle	Starboard settee
<u>X</u>	-	Plastic sheeting to use as chafe guards, shims, etc (cut from 1-gallon jugs)	Starboard settee
<u>X</u>	10	Porthole insect screen	Port cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	Companionway curtain	
<u>X</u>	2	Companionway insect screen	
<u>X</u>	1	Dust pan and brush	
<u>X</u>	2	Stainless steel side-open carabineer, 5"	Shoebox 1
<u>X</u>	4	Wax applicator pads	Box 2
<u>X</u>	2	36" bungees (blue)	Box 2
<u>X</u>	6	24" bungees (red) - water jugs	Box 2
<u>X</u>	4	18" bungees (yellow)	Box 2
<u>X</u>	2	12" bungees (red rubber) - transom tank	
<u>X</u>	2	Blue masking tape - 1" * 60 yard roll	Box 2
<u>X</u>	1	Duct tape - roll	Box 2
<u>X</u>	2	White electrical tape (large roll)	Box 2
<u>X</u>	1	Red electrical tape (large roll)	Box 2
<u>X</u>	1	Green electrical tape (large roll)	Box 2
<u>X</u>	1	Rubberized self-amalgamating marine tape (25mm * 5m roll)	Box 2
<u>X</u>	1	16 oz jar fiberglass stain remover (FSR)	Box 2
<u>X</u>	1	T-shirt rags (1 gallon zip-loc bag of)	Box 2
<u>X</u>	5	1" paint brushes	Box 2
<u>X</u>	3	Paint stirrers	Box 2
<u>X</u>	1	Scotch-Brite pad	Box 2
<u>X</u>	-	Assorted air pump ends	Box 2
<u>X</u>	2	Moonlight Marine 8.5" spring (small)	Box 2
<u>X</u>	2	Tube clear silicone sealant	Box 2
<u>X</u>	1	Tube 151 sealant	Box 2
<u>X</u>	1	Tube BoatLife Life Calk (polysulfide) underwater	Box 2
<u>X</u>	2	Sail bags (Genoa, staysail)	
<u>X</u>	2	Sunglasses - mbj	Shoebox 1
<u>X</u>	2	Sunglasses - grj	Shoebox 1
<u>X</u>	8	Velcro line holders	Shoebox 1
<u>X</u>	1	Xantrex cigarette lighter-type DC outlet inverter	Shoebox 1
<u>X</u>	2	Lighter (grill-type, refillable)	Shoebox 1
<u>X</u>	1	Butane fuel (to refill lighter)	Shoebox 1



<u>X</u>	1	Whistle	Shoebox 1
<u>X</u>	1	Nylon hammock	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	1 gallon garden sprayer	
<u>X</u>	1	RailLight solar-powered LED light	
<u>X</u>	1	Davis light (for cockpit)	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	2-D cell Maglite flashlight	Mounted by nav station
<u>X</u>	2	3-AAA cell LED flashlights	Chart table, v-berth
<u>X</u>	1	Reading light	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	7 x 50 binoculars - Tasco Offshore 54	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	2	Walkie talkies	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	Dell Latitude D420 Laptop	
<u>X</u>	1	AC/DC charger / adapter - laptop	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	2GB MP3 Player (Ultra Hydra)	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	Auxiliary cable for stereo (to MP3 player / laptop)	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	Camera - Nikon Coolpix 4200, 1 GB memory card	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	Camera charger, USB cable, and spare battery	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	2GB thumb-drive	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	50-pack CDRs + envelopes	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	AC charger - iCOM handheld	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	DC charger - iCOM handheld	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	AC charger - Motorola phone	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	DC charger - Motorola phone	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	AC charger - LG phone	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	DC charger - LG phone	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	Hoyles Rules of Games	Shoebox 2
<u>X</u>	1	Deck of Cards	Shoebox 2
<u>X</u>	1	Dominos (28)	Shoebox 2
<u>X</u>	1	Chess	Shoebox 2
<u>X</u>	1	Snakes and Ladders	Shoebox 2
<u>X</u>	2	Fishing pole - collapsible	Starboard settee
<u>X</u>	1	Fishing pole - big	Quarterberth
<u>X</u>	-	Fishing gear	Starboard settee
<u>X</u>	1	2' gaff	Top sleeve of Bimini
<u>X</u>	1	Handheld fish net	Cockpit locker
<u>X</u>	1	Anchor - 33 lb Bruce (would have preferred 44), 100' 5/16" HT chain, 200' 5/8" line (primary)	Anchor platform
<u>X</u>	1	Anchor - 35 lb CQR, 20' 5/16" HT chain, 250' 5/8" line (secondary)	Anchor platform
<u>X</u>	2	S-hooks and cord to secure the anchors during crossings	Shoebox 1

X	1	Anchor - Fortress FX-16 10 lb aluminum Danforth-type, 10' 5/16" HT chain, in stow bag	Cockpit locker
X	1	150' 9/16" twisted nylon anchor line (for Fortress)	Cockpit locker
X	1	ABI "Chain Grabber" snubber rig (2 - 7/16" stainless steel D shackles with 15' 9/16" line each)	Anchor well
X	2	Snubber - includes chain hook for 5/16" chain and 25' of 9/16" 3-strand nylon line (Imtra)	Anchor well
X	1	Wash-down hose (spring coil) with nozzle	Anchor well
X	2	Fender - large (De-Fender 10" x 28" - white)	Aft starboard locker
X	2	Fender - medium-large (Taylor Made Superguard #950824, 8.5" x 26" - white)	Aft starboard locker
X	1	Fender - small	Cockpit locker
X	1	Taylor Made hand [air] pump #1005	Port cabinet
X	2	Telescoping boat hook	Cockpit locker
X	2	Buckets	Cockpit locker
X	1	Look bucket	Cockpit locker
X	1	Pole brush	Cockpit locker
X	1	Hand brush	Cockpit locker
	1	Hand scrub brush (for cleaning hull beneath water line)	
X	2	Car sponge	Cockpit locker
X	4	35' 1/2" (would have preferred 5/8") braided nylon dock lines with spliced loop on one end	Cockpit locker
X	4	20' 1/2" (would have preferred 5/8") braided nylon dock lines with spliced loop on one end	Cockpit locker
X	2	25' 5/8" 3-strand nylon dock lines with spliced loop on one end (for tying to mooring balls)	Anchor locker
X	1	100' 3/8" 3-strand nylon twisted line (for dink lift, spare dink anchor line, etc.)	Starboard settee
X	2	50' polypropylene line (swim float)	Cockpit locker
X	3	48 ft 1/8" Nylon cord (working load limit 40 lbs)	Port cabinet
X	1	Spool tie-wrap wire	Port cabinet
X	2	5-gallon jerry can(s) water (blue)	Starboard rail
X	3	5-gallon collapsible water containers	V-berth
X	1	Weighted buoy / small marker float)	Port settee
X	1	50' marine shore power cord - 30A/125V AC	Cockpit locker
X	1	Rain shield for v-berth hatch	Port cabinet
X	1	Mother's Mag & Aluminum Polish (used for stainless steel)	need more
X	1	3M liquid wax	Starboard settee
X	-	Electric cord bag	Starboard settee
X	1	50' medium duty standard 3-prong electric extension cord	
X	1	8' heavy duty standard 3-prong electric extension cord	
X	1	30A/125V 3-prong standard male to marine female AC converter	
X	1	30A/125V marine male to 3-prong standard female AC converter (pigtail)	
X	1	3-outlet standard AC plug / adapter	
X	1	50' collapsible water hose	Cockpit locker

<u>X</u>	1	3' water hose (for use with filter)	Cockpit locker
<u>X</u>	2	Shurflow Waterguard in-line water filters (hose ends), Model #: RV-210GH-A	V-berth
	1	Medium size Igloo-type cooler (e.g. Playmate or small Igloo marine)	
<u>X</u>	1	Collapsible cooler	Starboard settee
<u>Tools</u>			
<u>X</u>	1	7 oz claw hammer	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	1	12" adjustable wrench	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	1	8" adjustable wrench	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	1	Stubby handled adjustable wrench (same size jaws as 8")	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	1	6" adjustable wrench	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	1	Vice grips - 10WR	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	1	Vice grips - needle nose 6LM	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	1	Adjustable side jaw pliers	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	1	Standard 2-position pliers	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	1	Needle-nose pliers	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	1	Wire clippers - medium	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	1	Screwdriver - #1 flathead (12" long)	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	1	Screwdriver - #1 Philips (11" long)	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	1	Screwdriver - #2 (medium) flathead	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	1	Screwdriver - #2 (medium) Philips	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	2	Screwdriver - 4-way (medium and small flathead & Philips)	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	1	Screwdriver - stubby 2-way (medium flathead & Philips)	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	1	Jewelers screwdriver (multiple heads stored in handle)	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	1	Torx key set	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	1	Alan wrench (hex key) set - standard	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	1	Alan wrench (hex key) set - metric	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	2	Special hex key for NavPod locking bolts	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	1	Tape measure, 12'	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	1	Calipers, 0 - 5"	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	1	Retractable mat knife with spare blades inside handle	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	2	Scraper	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	2	Toothbrushes	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	1	1/2" wrench (spare)	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	-	Small wrench set - 1/2", 7/16", 3/8", and 5/16"	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	1	Brad awl	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	1	Spring-loaded punch, pointed head	Tool bag

<u>X</u>	1	Punch - 1/4" diameter head	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	1	Mini hacksaw (half-length, half of blade fits into handle)	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	1	7" home and garden file (for sharpening tools)	Tool bag
<u>X</u>	-	Sandpaper and hand-sander	Port cabinet
<u>X</u>	2	3" C-clamp	Box 3
<u>X</u>	1	Strap wrench	Box 1
<u>X</u>	1	Small can WD-40	Port cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	Small bottle Loctite (blue)	Port cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	Small bottle Gorilla Glue	Port cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	Tube Instant Krazy Glue	Shoebox 1
<u>X</u>	1	Electric drill	Starboard settee
<u>X</u>	1	Hand drill (eggbeater style)	Box 3
<u>X</u>	-	Drill bits	Box 3
<u>X</u>	-	Tap and die set	Box 3
<u>X</u>	1	Knee pads (pair)	Starboard settee
<u>X</u>	-	Socket wrench set(s) - 3/4" and 1/4" drives, standard and metric	Starboard settee
<u>X</u>	-	Wrench set - standard and metric	Starboard settee
<u>X</u>	1	Hacksaw - 12"	Starboard settee
<u>X</u>	2	Hacksaw blades - 12"	Box 3
<u>X</u>	1	Rigging knife	Bottom galley drawer
<u>X</u>	1	Kabar penknife	Chart table
<u>Engine Maintenance Parts and Supplies</u>			
<u>X</u>	17	Quarts diesel engine oil, Shell Rotella T 15/40 (Yanmar 3YM30 takes 3 quarts)	Cockpit locker
<u>X</u>	5	Oil filters for Yanmar 3YM30, Yanmar part # 119305-35151	Box 1, locker behind quarterberth
<u>X</u>	1	DC-powered oil change pump	
<u>X</u>	1	Oil funnel	Starboard locker
<u>X</u>	4	Empty gallon jugs (sturdy, anti-freeze type)	Cockpit locker
<u>X</u>	1	Quart oil for transmission, SAE 30	Starboard settee
<u>X</u>	4	Fuel filter elements for Yanmar 3YM30, Yanmar part # 104500-55710	Box 1
<u>X</u>	4	Fuel filters - Racor 500 MA diesel fuel filter / water separator, 2 micron	Box 1
<u>X</u>	2	Fuel filters - Racor 500 MA diesel fuel filter / water separator, 10 micron	Box 1
<u>X</u>	1	O-ring - coarse fuel strainer	Box 1
<u>X</u>	1	16 oz BIOBOR JF (biocide / slime eliminator for diesel)	Starboard settee
<u>X</u>	1	Alternator belt - Bando v-belt A-37.5, Yanmar part # 119831-42290	Box 1
<u>X</u>	1	Water pump belt for Yanmar 3YM30 diesel engine, Yanmar part # 128990-77350	Box 1
<u>X</u>	2	Impeller for Yanmar 3YM30, Yanmar part # X08810B	Box 1

<u>X</u>	2	O-ring gaskets for Yanmar 3YM30 water pump, Yanmar part # X02173476	Box 1
<u>X</u>	2	Air filter elements for Yanmar 3YM30, Yanmar part # 128270-12540	Box 1
<u>X</u>	1	Antifreeze - Prestone Long Life, 1 gallon	Cockpit locker
<u>General Replacement Parts and Supplies</u>			
<u>X</u>	1	Rebuild kit for Raritan PHII marine toilet	Box 1
<u>X</u>	1	Raritan C253 joker valve for PHII marine toilet	Box 1
<u>X</u>	6	Packets Sealand Granulated Holding Tank Deodorant (each treats 40 gallons)	Head
<u>X</u>	1	Replacement drinking water filter for Seagull IV X-1F, General Ecology part # RS-1SG	Starboard settee
<u>X</u>		Monel seizing wire	Shoebox, starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	-	Assorted stainless steel screws, nuts, bolts	Red box, starboard settee
<u>X</u>	4	8mm * 3.5cm stainless steel bolts and locking washers (spare for radome)	Red box, starboard settee
<u>X</u>		<u>Electrical &amp; Spare Bulb Box</u>	Starboard settee
<u>X</u>	1	Multimeter	
<u>X</u>	1	Stripper / crimper with terminals	
<u>X</u>	1	Small wire clippers	
<u>X</u>	-	Tie-wraps	
<u>X</u>	-	Automotive fuses (assorted)	
<u>X</u>	-	Assorted o-rings	
<u>X</u>	2	Aqua Signal Series 40 navigation lights 25w/12v AS part # 99W 90002-7	Electrical box
<u>X</u>	3	Cabin lights - white small 2-contact bayonet, 12v, 15w	Electrical box
<u>X</u>	2	Cabin lights - red 2-contact bayonet, 12v, 15w	Electrical box
<u>X</u>	3	Reading lights - xenon	Electrical box
<u>X</u>	1	Dental pick	
<u>X</u>	10	Barrel bolts (for Schaefer batten slides)	
<u>X</u>	2	Bulldog clip cable clamp - 3/16" (for emergency repair of backstays)	
<u>X</u>	2	Bulldog clip cable clamp - 1/4" (for emergency repair of shrouds)	
		<u>Appliance Batteries</u>	
<u>X</u>	2	9 volt (multimeter)	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	2	D (big flashlight)	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	12	C (dive lights)	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	36	AA (SSB receiver, dink lights, handheld GPS)	Starboard cabinet
<u>X</u>	36	AAA (mini lights, walkie-talkies, MP3 player)	Starboard cabinet
		<u>Spare shackles</u>	
<u>X</u>	1	7/16" stainless steel U shackle - 7/8" opening, 2 3/4" interior, 11,500 pounds	Box 3
<u>X</u>	2	5/16" stainless steel U shackle - 3/4" opening, 1 1/4" interior, 1,320 pounds	Box 3
<u>X</u>	1	5/16" stainless steel bow shackle - 3/4" opening, 1 1/2" interior, 1,320 pounds	Box 3

X	2	1/4" stainless steel bow shackle - 1/2" opening, 1 1/8" interior, 750 pounds	Box 3
X	1	Ronstan RF6210, 92mm snap shackle, small bale, 4,990 pounds	Box 3
X	2	Bronze thumb clips (sun shower, dive lights, etc.)	
X	2	Small bronze clips (like flags use)	Electrical box
X	4	6' sail ties	Box 3
		Stripper for Lofrans Project I000 capstan anchor windlass	
X	1	Imtra windlass control box (solenoid)	Box 3
X	1	Groco AS-100-6 bilge pump switch set	Box 3
X	3	Winch handle (2 - Lewmar + 1 - 8" floating)	Bottom galley drawer, spare in Box 3
X	1	Roller furler grease	Box 3
X	1	Winch grease	Box 3
X	2	Zink, 1" diameter, collar type	Box 3
X	2	Chafe guards	Box 3
X	1	Fid	Box 3
X	2	Dorade plates	Box 3
X	-	Plate keys (2 small "U", 1 medium "U", 1 medium bronze hinged)	Box 3
X	1	Plate key (large) for diesel inspection ports	Bottom galley drawer
X	5	Water / diesel / holding tank keys	Bottom galley drawer, spares in Box 3
X	1	Spare 5/16" galvanized anchor (bow) shackle, 1,500 pounds	Box 3
X	-	Spare Clevis pins	
X	-	Spare Cotter pins and rings	
X	1	Snatch block with snap-shackle, 5/8" line	Box 3
X	3	Block with snap-shackle, 1/2" line	Box 3
X	1	Fid for 3-strand	Box 3
X	1	Sail repair kit - 3 bobbins of thread, 2 straight needle, 1 hooked needle, 2" wide sail tape	Box 3
X	1	Roll of 3" wide sail tape	Box 3
X	1	Sail palm	Box 2
X	-	Whipping twine	Electrical box
X	1	Staysail	Cockpit locker

#### Dink and Kayaks

X	1	Avon Rover 281 inflatable dingy	
X	1	Pair of oars	Cockpit locker
X	3	Avon oar bungees (spare)	Box 2
X	1	Pump with appropriate nozzles (for dink)	Cockpit locker
X	-	5 ft of spare (replacement) 3/4" ribbed tubing for dink pump	
X	1	Mini pump with appropriate nozzles (for kayaks, emergency backup for dink)	

X	2	10' Painters	Cockpit locker
X	1	C-Level Sea Step, part #8832, 1-Step (in-water boarding step / webbing loop)	Cockpit locker
X	1	20' security cable with eye splices	Starboard cabinet
X	1	2.5 lb Danforth anchor, 50' 3/8" line, 3' chain	Cockpit locker
X	1	3 lb collapsible grapnel anchor with 1' chain	Cockpit locker
X	1	Navigation light set (suction cup red/green for bow + white for stern)	Port cabinet
X	1	Hand pump (water)	Cockpit locker
X	1	Avon inflatable repair kit	Cockpit locker
X	1	Spare tube Bostik Inflatable Boat Adhesive	Starboard settee
X	1	16 oz can acetone	Starboard settee
X	1	Tow line / rig	Cockpit locker
X	1	Lifting harness	Cockpit locker
X	1	Yamaha model 5MSHX, 5-hp 2-cycle outboard engine	
		Yamaha service manual for outboard, part number LIT18616-01-33	
X	3	Spare spark plug, part number NGK-B7HS0-00-00	Box 1
X	1	Spark plug gap tool (disk style)	Electric box
		Inexpensive 3/4" ratchet, 13/16" sparkplug socket, and screwdrivers to keep in the dink	
X	1	Spare fuel filter, part number 646-24251-02-00	Box 1
	1	Carburetor re-build kit, part number 6E0-W0093-04-00	
X	1	Spare impeller, part number 6E0-44352-00-00	Box 1
X	1	Spare pull cord and handle	Box 1
X	1	Spare propeller, part number 6E0-45941-01-EL	Box 1
	1	Spare propeller nut, part number 6L5-45616-00-00	
X	5	Spare shear pins for propeller, part number 91490-25030-00 (only need 1 or 2)	Electric box
X	3	Spare in-line filter element (for use with external tank)	Box 2
X	1	Spare Yamaha female fuel hose adapter	Box 2
X	1	5-gallon gasoline can	Starboard rail
X	1	2-gallon gasoline can	Anchor locker
X	1	3-gallon Moeller Marine Dinghy-Mate transom fuel tank	Anchor locker
X	1	External tank fuel hose with in-line pump and fuel filter	Anchor locker
X	4	ft spare fuel hose tubing	Box 2
X	3	Quarts Yamalube 2-cycle engine oil 2-M	Starboard settee
X	1	Graduated measuring cup for 2-cycle engine oil	Starboard settee
X	2	Inflatable 1-person kayaks (Stearns Spree One)	Cockpit locker
X	2	Kayak paddles	Cockpit locker
X	2	Kayak repair kit	Box 2
X	2	Swim floats	Cockpit locker

<u>X</u>	2	[Inexpensive] air mattress swim floats	V-berth
<u>Skin Diving</u>			
<u>X</u>	2	Masks - mbj	V-berth
<u>X</u>	1	Masks - grj	V-berth
<u>X</u>	1	Mares Avanti HP full-foot fins - mbj (blue 11-12)	V-berth
<u>X</u>	1	Mares Avanti HP full-foot fins - grj (yellow 5-6)	V-berth
<u>X</u>	3	Snorkels	V-berth
<u>X</u>	1	JBL 6-foot travel pole-spear	V-berth
<u>X</u>	-	6mm spear tips (#825 single tip, #845 paralyzer, #865 trident, tri-cut double-barb)	V-berth
<u>X</u>	1	Wetsuit, 2mm shorty - mbj	V-berth
<u>X</u>	1	Wetsuit / diveskin, 1mm full - grj	V-berth
<u>X</u>	1	Dive knife	V-berth
<u>X</u>	2	Weight belts + 8 lbs (each)	Cockpit locker
<u>Bed and Bath</u>			
<u>X</u>	2	Alarm clock	
<u>X</u>	2	V-berth sheet sets (fitted bottom, top, pillow cases)	V-berth
<u>X</u>	1	Quarter-berth sheets (regular queen fitted and standard sheet + pillow cases)	V-berth
<u>X</u>	1	Blanket	V-berth
<u>X</u>	1	Sleeping bag (unzips to use as quilt)	V-berth
<u>X</u>	1	Fleece	V-berth
<u>X</u>	2	Bed pillows	V-berth
<u>X</u>	2	Throw pillows	Settees
<u>X</u>	2	Bath towels (light)	V-berth
<u>X</u>	2	XL REI camping towels	V-berth
<u>X</u>	2	Hand towels	Head cabinet
<u>X</u>	3	Beach towels	V-berth
<u>X</u>	8	Wash cloths (use a substitute for napkins and paper towels)	Head cabinet
<u>X</u>	1	Sewing kit	Head cabinet
		(Consumable bath items are on the "Provisions" list)	
<u>Galley</u>			
<u>X</u>	2	Pairs of pot holder clamps for Force 10 gimbaled range	
<u>X</u>	1	Kitchen timer	
<u>X</u>	1	4-quart Miro pressure cooker	
<u>X</u>	1	Frying pan, 10" * 2"	



<u>X</u>	1	Soup pan, 8" * 4"	
<u>X</u>	1	Soup pan, 6" * 3.5"	
<u>X</u>	1	Universal lid, 10"	
<u>X</u>	1	Heat diffuser, 8"	
<u>X</u>	1	Pyrex baking pan with plastic lid, 9 * 13	
<u>X</u>	1	Pyrex baking pan with plastic lid, 8 * 6	
<u>X</u>	1	Pyrex baking pan with plastic lid, 5 * 7 (3 cup)	
<u>X</u>	1	Baking pan, 9" * 13" * 1.5"	
<u>X</u>	2	Bread pan	
<u>X</u>	1	6-muffin pan	
<u>X</u>	1	Cookie sheet 9" * 13"	
<u>X</u>	-	Mixing bowl set	
<u>X</u>	1	Colander, medium	
<u>X</u>	-	Tupper ware set (2 * 1-cup, 2* 2-cup, 1, 2 * 4-cup, 1 * 6-cup)	
<u>X</u>	1	Tupper ware bowl - medium	
<u>X</u>	-	Container set - (1 - 15 cup, 2 - 10 cup, 2 - 4 cup)	
<u>X</u>	1	Thermos bottle	
<u>X</u>	1	Range top toaster	
<u>X</u>	1	9-cup coffee percolator	
<u>X</u>	1	Fitz-All model #135 percolator top (spare)	Shoebox 1
	1	Replacement percolator basket (TOPS Mfg. Co. #409)	
<u>X</u>	1	Coffee scoop	
<u>X</u>	1	Drying rack	
<u>X</u>	6	Plastic plates, bowls, mugs	
<u>X</u>	1	Small cutting board	
<u>X</u>	1	Large cutting board (15 3/4 * 11 5/8 - for cleaning fish, conch, etc.)	
<u>X</u>	2	Cloth pot holders	
<u>X</u>	1	1-cup measuring cup (type with handle and pour spout)	
<u>X</u>	1	1/2-cup measure (for measuring flour when baking)	
<u>X</u>	1	Funnel	
<u>X</u>	1	Plastic shot glass	
<u>X</u>	2	Plastic drink glasses	
<u>X</u>	4	Plastic wine glasses	
<u>X</u>	-	Assorted plastic cups	
<u>X</u>	-	Knives, forks, spoons	
<u>X</u>	2	Large serving spoon	
<u>X</u>	1	Hors d'oeuvres fork	

<u>X</u>	2	Spreading knives
<u>X</u>	-	3-piece cutting knife set (chef's knife, medium paring, small paring)
<u>X</u>	1	Bread knife
<u>X</u>	1	Boning knife
	1	Secondary paring knife (for cleaning fish / conch)
<u>X</u>	1	Knife sharpener
<u>X</u>	1	Peeler
<u>X</u>	1	Spatula
<u>X</u>	1	Soup ladle
<u>X</u>	1	Cooking spoon
<u>X</u>	1	Potato masher
<u>X</u>	1	Tenderizing mallet (for pounding conch)
<u>X</u>	1	Small wisk
<u>X</u>	1	Can opener
<u>X</u>	1	Bottle opener
<u>X</u>	2	Corkscrew (primary corkscrew also has bottle opener)
<u>X</u>	1	Ice pick
<u>X</u>	2	Salt and pepper shaker
<u>X</u>	4	Can cozies
<u>X</u>	3	Bottle cozies
<u>X</u>	6	Dish towels
<u>X</u>	2	10 lb. tanks propane (each lasts about 5 weeks of live-aboard, daily use)

\* Items in red are ones we didn't bring, but wish we had.

## Provisions

The following table contains a list of the provisions we carried and where they were stored. The quantities have been adjusted in light of what we actually used. Before leaving, we threw out as much packaging as possible and made extensive use of a vacuum sealer to re-portion bulk-purchased items. *Alisios* did not have refrigeration. So, this list is heavy on dry and canned goods.

	Qty:	Item:	Location:
<u>Baking Ingredients</u>			
X	4	5 lb bags all-purpose flour (self-rising = 0.5 tsp salt + 1.5 tsp baking powder / cup flour)	Port settee
X	2	5 lb bags wheat flour	Port settee
X	1	5 lb bag rye flour	Port settee
X	1	2 lb bag corn meal	Port settee
X	1	1 lb box sugar	Port settee
	1	1 lb box brown sugar	
X	3	8 oz bottles of honey	Port settee
X	18	Packets of dry yeast for baking	Port settee
X	2	4 oz containers baking powder	Port settee
X	1	12 oz container baking soda	Port settee
X	1	12 oz jar molasses	Port settee
X	8	1/2 cup vacuum sealed packets of sunflower kernels	Port settee
X	1	3.75 oz jar sesame seeds	
X	2	2 oz bottle caraway seeds	
X	4	12 oz cans Budweiser-type beer (held aside for beer bread and stews)	Port settee
X	4	boxes of Jiffy Cornbread / muffin mix (removed from box and vacuum sealed)	Port settee
<u>Dried Meal Starters</u>			
X	4	1 lb box Barilla pasta - assorted types	Port settee
X	4	1 lb box Barilla thin spaghetti pasta	Port settee
X	3	packets Ramen noodles (oriental flavor)	Port settee
X	1	5 lb bag jasmine rice	Port settee
X	1	1 lb packages dried kidney beans	Port settee
X	1	1 lb package dried black beans	Port settee
X	1	2 lb package white (Navy) beans	Port settee
X	1	1 lb package dried garbanzo beans	Port settee
X	1	1 lb package split green peas	Port settee

X	4	Hamburger Helper - Assorted Flavors	Port settee
X	4	Chicken Helper - Assorted Flavors	Port settee
X	4	Zatarian's Jambalaya Mix	Port settee
X	2	Vigo Paella (8 oz)	Port settee
X	2	Mahatma Yellow Seasonings and Rice, 5 oz. packet	Port settee
X	4	Couscous - assorted flavors (removed from box and vacuum sealed)	Port settee - upper
X	4	Kraft Macaroni and Cheese (removed from box and vacuum sealed)	Port settee - upper
X	2	Knorr sauce mix - Pesto	Port settee
X	6	Chili Seasoning packet	Port settee
X	6	McCormick White Chicken Chili Seasoning packet	Port settee
X	2	Taco Seasoning	Port settee
X	5	Spaghetti sauce packets (each requires 6 oz. tomato paste)	Port settee
X	2	.75 oz packet SunBird Fried Rice Seasoning Mix	Port settee
X	15	Knorr Lipton Sides - Creamy Garlic Shells	Port settee, V-berth
X	10	Knorr Lipton Sides - Tomato Parmesan	Port settee, V-berth
X	10	Knorr Lipton Sides - assorted other	Port settee, V-berth
X	12	4 oz. packs dry mashed potatoes - assorted flavors	Port settee, V-berth
X	4	Packets Shake N Bake - Original (2 boxes of 2 packets each)	Port settee
X	2	Stovetop Stuffing - Herb (for Thanksgiving & Christmas)	Port settee
X	1	15 oz can seasoned bread crumbs	Port settee
X	4	2 oz vacuum sealed portions (approx 2 cups loose) dried shiitake mushrooms (Costco)	Port settee - upper
X	2	2.25 oz vacuum sealed portions sun-dried tomatoes (Costco)	Port settee - upper
<u>Canned Meats, Fish, Soup, Etc.</u>			
X	8	vacuum sealed packets (approx 3/4 cup ea.) pre-cooked crumbled bacon	Port settee - upper
X	10	16 oz can ham - Plumrose brand	Port crate
X	12	12 oz can premium brisket roast beef in beef broth	Port settee, Port crate
X	4	12 oz can corned beef - Hormel brand	Port settee
X	24	12.5 oz can chicken breast	Port settee, Port crate
X	4	12.7 oz can turkey	Port settee
X	36	6 oz can Albacore tuna in water	Port settee, Port crate
X	18	7 oz can Atlantic salmon	Port settee
X	6	6 oz can crab meat	Port settee, Port crate
X	18	6.5 oz can chopped clams	Port settee, Port crate
X	3	10 oz can baby clams	Port settee, Port crate
X	6	4 oz can small shrimp	Port settee, Port crate

X	3	2 oz can Anchovies	Port crate
X	6	15 oz can corned beef hash	Port settee, Port crate
X	2	15 oz can Chunky beef stew	Port settee, Port crate
X	6	Cream of mushroom condensed soup	Port settee
X	6	Cream of celery condensed soup	Port settee
X	8	Envelopes of Cup-A-Soup	Galley
X	6	40 oz jar Jif peanut butter (Costco)	Starboard settee (aft)
X	1	16 oz jar tahini	Port settee (with baking stuff)

#### Canned Vegetables / Fruit

X	36	8.5 oz can sweet peas	Starboard settee, Starboard crate
X	48	4 oz. can sliced mushrooms	Port settee, Starboard crate
X	20	7.75 oz can whole leaf spinach - Giant brand	Port settee, Starboard crate
X	12	8.25 oz can carrots	Port settee, Starboard crate
X	8	8 oz can cut green beans	Starboard settee, Starboard crate
X	8	8.75 oz can yellow corn	Starboard settee, Starboard crate
X	4	8.25 oz can cream style golden corn	Starboard crate
X	8	8 oz can asparagus	Starboard settee, Starboard crate
X	4	14.5 oz can cut wax (yellow) beans	Starboard settee, Starboard crate
X	4	14.5 oz can sliced green beans	Starboard settee, Starboard crate
X	10	15.5 oz can dark red kidney beans	Starboard settee, Starboard crate
X	4	15.5 oz can chick peas (garbanzos)	Starboard settee, Starboard crate
X	16	14.5 oz can diced tomatoes - Del Monte brand	S settee: 8 - orig box, 6 - w. m. bag
X	2	14.5 oz can Zesty diced tomatoes - Del Monte brand	Starboard settee, Starboard crate
X	8	6 oz. can tomato paste	Starboard settee, Starboard crate
X	4	7 oz can Mexican salsa / picante - medium	Starboard settee, Starboard crate
X	4	7.75 oz can sliced green jalapenos	Starboard settee, Starboard crate
X	6	2.25 oz can sliced black olives	Starboard settee, Starboard crate
X	2	14 oz can artichokes	Starboard settee, Starboard crate
X	2	can water chestnuts - sliced	Starboard settee, Starboard crate
X	2	can baby corn	Starboard settee, Starboard crate
X	1	14 oz can collard greens	Starboard settee (black mesh bag)
X	4	13.5 oz cans lite coconut Milk	Port settee, Starboard settee
X	4	1/4 cup portions, red Thai curry paste (vacuum sealed)	Port settee (shoe box - upper)
X	1	Capers	Port settee (shoe box - upper)
X	2	120 g can Laverbread	Port settee (in small black mesh bag)

X	2	16.5 oz can baked beans	Port crate
X	2	Small cans cranberry sauce (for Thanksgiving & Christmas)	Port settee
X	4	8 oz can Pineapple chunks	Port settee
X	6	4 oz. cans Delmonte lite fruit cups - mixed	Port settee
X	6	4 oz. cans Delmonte lite fruit cups - peaches	Port settee
X	8	vacuum sealed portions mixed dried fruit (Costco bag broken into smaller portions)	Port settee - upper
<u>Milk, Eggs, Cheese</u>			
X	2	32 oz. box Parmalat 2% reduced fat milk (for making chowder)	Port crate
X	15	8 oz. box Parmalat 2% reduced fat milk	Port crate
X	26	3.2 oz envelopes Carnation Non-Fat Dry Milk (makes 32 oz ea.)	Starboard settee - aft
X	6	5 oz (small) cans Carnation evaporated milk	Port settee (shoe box - upper)
X	6	6 oz packets powdered scrambled eggs (each equivalent to 12 eggs)	Port settee - upper
X	1	WSU Creamery Cougar Gold canned cheese	Port settee - upper
X	1	WSU Creamery Smokey Cheddar canned cheese	Port settee - upper
X	6	8 oz vacuum sealed portions Velveeta Cheddar	Port settee - upper
X	6	8 oz vacuum sealed portions Velveeta Pepper Jack	Port settee - upper
<u>Breakfast</u>			
X	6	Boxes of Jiffy blueberry muffin mix (removed from box and vacuum sealed)	Port settee
X	1	32 oz Arrowhead Mills - multigrain pancake mix	Port settee
X	1	18 oz container Quaker Oats - old fashioned	Port settee
X	10	Quaker instant oatmeal - maple brown sugar, packets (1 box)	Port settee
X	12	Quaker Instant Grits, packets (1 box)	Port settee
X	2	34.5 oz boxes Quaker Natural Granola (Costco, vacuum sealed into smaller portions)	Port settee
<u>Snacks</u>			
X	1	30 oz jar popcorn kernels	Port settee - upper
X	8	Boars Head brand half pepperoni sticks (each vacuum sealed)	Port settee - upper
X	3	Hard salami - various	Port settee - upper
X	20	1 cup vacuum sealed portions of mixed nuts (2 large Cosco jars)	Port settee - upper
X	6	3.88 oz. can fillets of Trader Joe's smoked trout	Port settee (white mesh bag)
X	6	3.75 oz can sardines (King Oscar or Crown Prince)	Port settee (white mesh bag)
X	2	3.25 oz can herring fillets	Snack box
X	12	3.75 oz can smoked oysters	Port settee (white mesh bag)
X	8	3.66 oz can smoked baby clams	Port settee (white mesh bag)

X	4	4 oz can octopus in garlic sauce	Snack box, Port settee
X	6	can stuffed vine leaves	Port crate, Port settee (white m. bag)

#### Crackers, Cookies, Desert

X	6	10.6 oz box Red Oval Stoned Wheat Thins crackers	Port settee - upper
X	3	8.5 oz box Triscuits	Port settee - upper
X	2	4-sleve box Ritz crackers	Port settee - upper
X	8	1/2 lb vacuum sealed bags ginger snaps	Port settee - upper
X	2	12 bar box Granola Bars - assorted	Port settee - upper
X	32	Lunch cups of pre-made pudding (2 Costco packs, 1/2 chocolate, 1/2 vanilla)	Port settee - upper
X	4	Brownie mix packet	Port settee (with baking stuff)
X	2	6 oz bag Life Savers (hard candies)	Port settee - upper

#### Staples

X	1	Pound canister Morton's iodized salt	Port settee
X	1	2.5 oz bottle lemon pepper	Galley
X	2	Black pepper grinder bottle	Galley, Port settee
X	4	Pam cooking spray	Galley, Port settee
X	2	25.5 oz bottle extra virgin olive oil	Starboard small crate
X	1	32 oz bottle vegetable oil	Starboard small crate
X	1	32 oz bottle red wine vinegar	Starboard small crate
X	8	18 oz jar Hellman's lite squeezable mayonnaise	9 - P settee, 1 S small crate
X	2	10 oz jar Grey Poupon Deli Mustard	Starboard small crate
X	1	6.5 oz jar horseradish	Starboard small crate
X	2	Bottles of hot sauce	Galley, Starboard small crate
X	1	5 oz bottle Kikkoman soy sauce	Starboard small crate
	1	5 oz bottle Kikkoman teriyaki sauce	
X	5	8 oz containers of Kraft grated parmesan cheese	Galley, Port settee
X	1	125 g (4.5 oz) jar Marmite	Galley
X	1	10 oz bottle sweet relish	Starboard small crate
X	1	25-cube jar Chicken bouillon cubes	Galley
X	1	6-cube pack Vegetable bouillon cubes	Galley
X	2	dried parsley (dollar bottle)	Port settee
X	2	garlic powder (dollar bottle)	Port settee
X	2	chopped onion (dollar bottle)	Port settee
X	2	Italian seasoning (dollar bottle)	Port settee

X	1	Dried chives (dollar bottle)	Galley
X	1	Bay leaves	Galley
X	1	Dill	Galley
X	1	Rosemary	Galley
X	1	Thyme	Galley
X	1	11.5 oz can coffee - Folgers 100% Columbian (lasts about 7 days)	Galley
X	8	34.5 oz can coffee - Folgers 100% Columbian (lasts about 25 days)	Starboard settee - aft
X	50	Lipton tea bags	Starboard settee - aft
X	2	10-count box Swiss Miss lite instant hot chocolate, packets	Starboard settee - aft
X	2	Nestea diet iced tea mix (powder)	Starboard settee - aft
X	2	19 oz Country Time pink lemonade mix (makes 8 quarts)	Starboard settee - aft
X	8	34 oz. Tang (makes 22 quarts) (lasts about 20 days)	Starboard settee -aft
X	8	11.5 oz can cranberry juice concentrate	Starboard settee - aft (w. m. bag)
X	1	8 oz bottle Real Lemon juice	Galley
X	1	8 oz bottle Real Lime juice	Galley
X	5	5-litre box red wine	Galley dry locker, V-berth
X	1	5-litre box white wine	

#### Galley and Cleaning Supplies

X	3	Dobie Pot scrubbie	Lower head cabinet
X	8	Galley sponges - regular	Lower head cabinet
X	4	Galley sponges - medium-large	Lower head cabinet
X	6	Handi-wipes	Lower head cabinet
X	1	25-pack Chinette medium plates	Galley
X	2	75' roll heavy duty tin foil	V-berth
X	2	200' role Glad cling wrap	V-berth
X	2	85 tissue [square] boxes of Kleenex	
X	12	Rolls of half-perforation paper towel (1/2 roll week)	V-berth
X	25	Rolls toilet paper (estimated 1 roll week, used less)	Head, V-berth
X	1	50-pack Scott moist wipes	Head
X	50	Ziploc bags - 1 pint (Costco)	Galley, V-berth
X	120	Ziploc freezer bags - 1 quart (54 per box - Costco)	Galley, V-berth (in blue mesh bag)
X	50	Ziploc freezer bags - 1 gallon (38 per box - Costco)	Galley, V-berth (in blue mesh bag)
X		Ziploc bags - L (3 gallon)	V-berth (in blue mesh bag)
X	1	Ziploc bags - XL (10 gallon)	V-berth (in blue mesh bag)
X	3	Ziploc bags - XXL (20 gallon)	V-berth (in blue mesh bag)



X	3	Boxes medium white trash bags (18 per box)	In trash can (underneath bag)
X	1	1 roll from a Cosco-sized box of Large [green] garbage bags	Lower head cabinet
X	1	32 oz bottle bleach	Cockpit locker
X	1	12.6 oz Lemon Joy dish detergent	Galley sink cabinet
X	1	Lemon Joy dish detergent - 30 oz refill bottle	Lower head cabinet
X	1	Soft-scrub	Lower head cabinet
X	1	Spray bottle Lysol cleaner	Lower head cabinet
X	2	78-wipe canisters Clorox disinfecting wipes (Costco)	Lower head cabinet
X	1	32 oz Wisk 3x concentrate laundry detergent	Lower head cabinet
X	1	40-sheet (small) box Bounce dryer sheets	Lower head cabinet
X	-	Clothes pins	Lower head cabinet

#### Bath and Grooming Supplies

X	2	Hair brush	Upper head cabinet
X	1	Comb	Upper head cabinet
X	1	Beard trim scissors	Upper head cabinet
X	1	Fingernail clippers	Upper head cabinet
X	1	Toenail clippers	Upper head cabinet
X	1	Tweezers	Upper head cabinet
X	-	Hair ties	Upper head cabinet
X	2	15 oz bottles Finesse shampoo / conditioner combo	Upper head cabinet, V-berth
X	1	12.6 oz Pantene Pro-V shampoo	Upper head cabinet, V-berth
X	1	1.8L (40 fl oz) Pantene Pro-V shampoo (Costco)	Upper head cabinet, V-berth
X	1	12.6 oz Pantene Pro-V conditioner	Upper head cabinet, V-berth
X	1	1.8L (40 fl oz) Pantene Pro-V shampoo (Costco)	Upper head cabinet, V-berth
X	1	10 oz Finesse spray-on comb-in hair conditioner	Lower head cabinet
X	10	4.5 oz bars of Ivory soap	Lower head cabinet
X	1	bar of Lava soap	Upper head cabinet
X	2	Toothbrushes (brought a separate electric toothbrush)	Upper head cabinet
X	2	8.0 oz Crest toothpaste	Lower head cabinet
X	2	Deodorant - mbj	Lower and upper head cabinets
X	2	Deodorant - grj	Lower and upper head cabinets
X	2	Gillette Sensor razor - mans	Upper head cabinet
X	2	Gillette Sensor razor - women's	Upper head cabinet
X	10	Gillette Sensor razor blades	Upper head cabinet
X	1	Shaving cream - regular size	Upper head cabinet

X	1	Shaving cream - travel size	Upper head cabinet
X	1	Saline solution - small bottle	Upper head cabinet
X	1	500 count Q-Tips	Upper and lower head cabinets
X	4	16 oz Clear Care contact disinfectant	Lower head cabinet
X	70	Tampax	Lower head cabinet
X	40	Tampax lite	Lower head cabinet
X	50	Light day pads	Lower head cabinet

#### Other General Supplies

X	500	Ibuprophen	Upper head cabinet
X	365	Multi-vitamin	Upper head cabinet
X	300	500mg calcium with vitamin D	Upper head cabinet
X	24	Loperamide Anti-diarrheal tablets	Upper head cabinet
X	30	Band-aids - cloth type	Upper head cabinet
X	4	Ace [type] bandages	Head
X	1	Aloe vera gel	Head
X	1	Talcum powder	Head
X	1	Tube A+D diaper rash cream	Head
X	1	3.5 oz can Lotrimin AF miconazole nitrate antifungal powder spray	Head
X	1	16 oz rubbing alcohol (mix with white vinegar 9/1 for swimmer ear solution)	Head
X	1	16 oz hydrogen peroxide	Head
X	2	32 oz white vinegar (look for bottle with good screw on top)	Starboard settee
X	1	16 oz white vinegar (jelly fish stings)	Lower head cabinet
X	3	10.8 oz Hawaiian Tropic sun-block lotion spf 45	Lower head cabinet
X	1	6 oz Oil of Olay facial moisturizer with spf 15	Upper head cabinet
X	2	Tubes ChapStick lip balm, spf 15	
X	2	Deep Woods Off insect repellent	Lower and upper head cabinets
X	1	Off Skintastic insect repellent cream (often nicer to use than spray)	Upper head cabinet

## Caribbean Weather Forecasts

UTC	AST	STATION & REPORT DESCRIPTION	FREQ	TYPE	MODE
0600	0200	NMG Broadcast	B	Wefax	USB
0930	0530	Offshore Forecast	A	Voice	USB
1030	0630	Caribbean Weather Center (Chris)	4045	Voice	USB (Note 2)
1030	0630	Trinidad Emergency Net 9Z4CP (Eric)	3855	Voice	LSB / ham
1030	0630	Caribbean Emergency and Weather net	3815	Voice	LSB / ham
1100	0700	Caribbean Weather Center (Chris)	8137	Voice	USB (Note 2)
1100	0700	Caribbean Maritime Mobile Net	7250	Voice	LSB / ham (Note 3)
1130	0730	KP2G Caribbean Weather Net (George)	7086	Voice	LSB / ham (Note 1)
1200	0800	Caribbean Weather Center (Chris)	4045	Voice	USB (Note 2)
1200	0800	NMG Broadcast	B	Wefax	USB
1230	0830	Caribbean Weather Center (Chris)	8104	Voice	USB (Note 2)
1300	0900	Caribbean Weather Center (Chris)	8104	Voice	USB (Note 2)
1300	0900	Caribbean Sea (WLO)	C	Voice	USB
1330	0930	Caribbean Weather Center (Chris)	12350	Voice	USB (Note 2)
1530	1130	Offshore Forecast	A	Voice	USB
1800	1400	Caribbean Sea (WLO)	C	Voice	USB
1800	1400	NMG Broadcast	B	Wefax	USB
2000	1600	Southbound II (Herb)	12359	Voice	USB
2030	1630	Caribbean Cocktail and Weather Net (George)	7086	Voice	LSB / ham
2130	1730	Offshore Forecast	A	Voice	USB
2235	1835	Caribbean Emergency and Weather net	3815	Voice	LSB / ham
0000	2000	Caribbean Sea (WLO)	C	Voice	USB
0000	2000	NMG Broadcast	B	Wefax	USB
0330	2330	Offshore Forecast	A	Voice	USB

### Frequencies (in kHz):

- A NMN, Chesapeake, 4226, 6501, 8764, 13089, 17314  
Caribbean Sea approximately 25 minutes later  
NMG, New Orleans, 4316, 8502, 12788  
Caribbean Sea approximately 25 minutes later  
Schedules can be found at [www.hnc.noaa.gov/tafb-atl.shtml](http://www.hnc.noaa.gov/tafb-atl.shtml)
- B 4316, 8502, 12788, 17144.5
- C 4369, 8788, 13110, 17362, 22804, Gulf of Mexico, Southwest North Atlantic, then Caribbean Sea

**Note 1:** An in-depth voice report followed by faxes and SSTV, except Sundays.

**Note 2:** Unless severe weather threatens, this net is not conducted on Sundays. When there are active Tropical systems in the Atlantic, the Caribbean Weather Center (Chris Parker) runs a net at 2300 UTC / 1900 AST on 8137, Voice, USB. For complete schedule and changes visit [www.caribwx.com/ssb.html](http://www.caribwx.com/ssb.html)

**Note 3:** George comes on at 0715 and gives a weather synopsis then moves to 7086 and at 0730 gives the complete Caribbean forecast including rebroadcasting WEF

\* WWV has World Marine Storm Warnings (Voice) at 8 minutes after each hour and Solar Flux information at 18 minutes after each hour on 2500, 5000, 10000, 15000, and 20000 AM.

\* During hurricane activity, information can be found continuously on the Hurricane Watch Net, 14325 USB / ham.

\* There is daily news, entertainment, and sports on BBC World Service. See schedule at [www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/schedules/internet/800/radio\\_frequencies\\_caribbean.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/schedules/internet/800/radio_frequencies_caribbean.shtml). American Forces Network broadcasts 24 hours a day (5446.5, 78125.5, and 12133.5 USB).

\* Anyone, licensed or not, may legally operate on HAM frequencies in the event of a life-threatening emergency.

SELECTED CRUISER'S VHF NETS

0715	Marsh Harbor, Abacos	VHF 68	Daily
0700	Georgetown, Exumas	VHF 68	Daily
0730	Highborne Cay, Exumas (weather only)	VHF 06	Daily
0800	Warderick Wells, Exumas (weather only)	VHF 06	Daily
0900	English Harbor	VHF 68 / 06	Daily
0730	Grenada	VHF 68	Monday - Saturday
0800	Porlamar	VHF 72	Monday - Saturday
0745	Puerto La Cruz	VHF 72	Monday - Saturday
0730	St. Martin / Maarten	VHF 14	Monday - Saturday
0800	Chaguaramas	VHF 68	Daily
0900	Union Island	VHF 68	Monday - Saturday

\* This list was copied in total from a page of the same title published in *Compass* the winter of 2007 - 2008.  
Information was believed to be correct at time of printing and is subject to change

### ***The Dong With A Luminous Nose* by Edward Lear (1812 – 1888)**

*When awful darkness and silence reign  
Over the great Gromboolian plain,  
Through the long, long wintry nights;—  
When the angry breakers roar  
As they beat on the rocky shore;—  
When Storm-clouds brood on the towering heights  
Of the Hills of the Chankly Bore:*

*Then, through the vast and gloomy dark,  
There moves what seems a fiery spark,  
A lonely spark with silvery rays  
Piercing the coal-black night,—  
A Meteor strange and bright:  
Hither and thither the vision strays,  
A single lurid light.*

*Slowly it wanders,— pauses,— creeps,—  
Anon it sparkles,— flashes and leaps;  
And ever as onward it gleaming goes  
A light on the Bong-tree stems it throws.  
And those who watch at that midnight hour  
From Hall or Terrace, or lofty Tower,  
Cry, as the wild light passes along,—  
“The Dong!— the Dong!  
The wandering Dong through the forest goes!  
The Dong! the Dong!  
The Dong with a luminous Nose!”*

*Long years ago  
The Dong was happy and gay,  
Till he fell in love with a Jumbly Girl  
Who came to those shores one day.  
For the Jumblies came in a Sieve, they did,—  
Landing at eve near the Zemmerly Fidd  
Where the Oblong Oysters grow,  
And the rocks are smooth and gray.  
And all the woods and the valleys rang  
With the Chorus they daily and nightly sang,—  
“Far and few, far and few,  
Are the lands where the Jumblies live;  
Their heads are green, and the hands are blue  
And they went to sea in a sieve.”*

*Happily, happily passed those days!  
While the cheerful Jumblies staid;  
They danced in circlets all night long,  
To the plaintive pipe of the lively Dong,*

*In moonlight, shine, or shade.  
For day and night he was always there  
By the side of the Jumbly Girl so fair,  
With her sky-blue hands, and her sea-green hair.  
Till the morning came of that hateful day  
When the Jumblies sailed in their sieve away,  
And the Dong was left on the cruel shore  
Gazing— gazing for evermore,—  
Ever keeping his weary eyes on  
That pea-green sail on the far horizon,—  
Singing the Jumbly Chorus still  
As he sat all day on the grassy hill,—  
"Far and few, far and few,  
Are the lands where the Jumblies live;  
Their heads are green, and the hands are blue  
And they went to sea in a sieve."*

*But when the sun was low in the West,  
The Dong arose and said—  
"What little sense I once possessed  
Has quite gone out of my head!"  
And since that day he wanders still  
By lake and forest, marsh and hills,  
Singing— "O somewhere, in valley or plain  
Might I find my Jumbly Girl again!  
For ever I'll seek by lake and shore  
Till I find my Jumbly Girl once more!"*

*Playing a pipe with silvery squeaks,  
Since then his Jumbly Girl he seeks,  
And because by night he could not see,  
He gathered the bark of the Twangum Tree  
On the flowery plain that grows.  
And he wove him a wondrous Nose,—  
A Nose as strange as a Nose could be!  
Of vast proportions and painted red,  
And tied with cords to the back of his head.  
—In a hollow rounded space it ended  
With a luminous Lamp within suspended,  
All fenced about  
With a bandage stout  
To prevent the wind from blowing it out;—  
And with holes all round to send the light,  
In gleaming rays on the dismal night.*

*And now each night, and all night long,  
Over those plains still roams the Dong;  
And above the wail of the Chimp and Snipe  
You may hear the squeak of his plaintive pipe*

*While ever he seeks, but seeks in vain  
To meet with his Jumbly Girl again;  
Lonely and wild— all night he goes,—  
The Dong with a luminous Nose!  
And all who watch at the midnight hour,  
From Hall or Terrace, or lofty Tower,  
Cry, as they trace the Meteor bright,  
Moving along through the dreary night,—  
"This is the hour when forth he goes,  
The Dong with a luminous Nose!  
Yonder— over the plain he goes;  
He goes!  
He goes;  
The Dong with a luminous Nose!"*

## About the Author (and his wife)



Matthew and Gail Jenkins grew up in middle class homes in the Washington DC and New York, NY metropolitan areas. Both had parents who instilled in them an interest in travel and other cultures. (Matt's father is Welsh.) They met at Gettysburg College in January 1984, fell in love, and have been together ever since. During summer breaks they travelled Europe via bus and backpacker hostels, discovering that they not only could tolerate each other's company 24/7 for weeks on end, but actually kind of enjoyed it. After graduating with their BAs they got married and worked entry-level white collar jobs in banking and insurance

for a couple years while developing their first obsessive hobby – scuba diving. In 1989, at the age of 24, they quit their jobs, gave up their apartment, loaded their still minimal belongings into a storage vault, and headed down to Grand Cayman BVI where they found employment as dive instructors for the better part of a year, learning to drive boats in the process. From Cayman they flew to New Zealand and spent a month doing a figure eight of the two islands in a small camper-van before continuing on to Australia for three months and Thailand for a couple weeks then returning to the U.S. via Wales and England. Their total out-of-pocket expenditure for a year and a quarter on “walk-about” was \$6,000 each and it instilled in them the knowledge that it was actually possible to leave everything and still come back. Experiencing a serious case of “What am I doing with my life?” anxiety, Matthew returned to university and got a MBA with a concentration in Information Systems while Gail became a travel agent. At this time, they bought a 1991 VW Vanagon camper they named *the Blue Beast* and began a multi-year series of camping excursions in the eastern U.S. Upon graduation, Matthew went to work for the Smithsonian Institution in IT management and they both continued diving wrecks off the northeastern Atlantic coast and making yearly trips to the Caribbean with an occasional “cultural” trip to Europe. In 1996, while diving in Honduras, they met a Virginia man who owned a sailboat in Maryland and became a good friend. Their obsession with diving was soon transferred to sailing and a year later they bought their first sloop, a 1990 Hunter 28 they christened *Moondance* after the Van Morrison song they danced to at their wedding. Aboard *Moondance* they cruised the Chesapeake Bay extensively, spending every bit of spare time they could at anchor, including a couple-week targeted trip every year and a circumnavigation of the Delmarva Peninsula. At the same time, they took courses and charter vacations, read cruising-related books, and fell in with a live-aboard crowd. Without acknowledging or admitting what was happening, they upgraded *Moondance* to a more sturdy, longer range boat in the fall of 2004, “notching it up a bit” with *Alisios*. During these years they also travelled to India, China, and both got their USCG 50-ton master's (captain's) licenses. By 2007 both were experiencing some degree of mid-life crises and egged on by the likes of Lin and Larry Pardey and Beth Leonard<sup>110</sup>, they finally succumbed to the inevitable and went on walk-about again, the story of which is related above. (“Beats the hell out of buying a Harley!”). They returned to work in June 2008 and are currently working on their next dream.

Matthew and Gail may be contacted at [matthew@cblights.com](mailto:matthew@cblights.com).  
Their website is <http://cblights.com>.

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<sup>110</sup> Well known cruising authors