

August, 1992

Ahoy, Family and Friends!

Here it is . . . our first (and long overdue) Sailing Sinclair Newsletter! We certainly have seen and experienced a lot during the last five months in the Caribbean-- where and how do I even begin to describe?! There are so many aspects: the terrains and foliage, the natives and their customs, the local fruits, vegetables and cuisine. Then add to all that the other cruisers we've made friends with, their nationalities and personalities. The end result is quite a kaleidoscope!

First of all, we've covered some quick distance since leaving the States on March 24, 1992. With good reason. Due to the fact that one must (should) be south of 13° North latitude by July to avoid the typical path of a hurricane during hurricane season, July through October.

Our ports of call (in order) have been: Virgin Islands, St. Christopher, Nevis, Antigua, Guadeloupe, Isle des Saintes, Dominica, Martinique, St. Lucia, Bequia, Mayreau, Union, Carriacou and presently, Grenada. Grenada is the last island in the Windward chain and lies 120 miles northwest of Venezuela. Incidentally, next week we shall voyage to Venezuela where we will spend the next three (3) months. (Watch for our next Newsletter from there.)

It's hard to imagine that each island is so different from each other. My meager descriptions probably won't do these islands justice, but I'll try (or, you can come see for yourself!).

The Virgins which are so familiar to us are still filled with charter boats, vacationers, lovely anchorages and lots of fun.

St. Christopher (also referred to as St. Kitts) and Nevis are very steep to

islands with elevations of 4,000 feet. The high mountains trap passing moisture; usually the island peaks are shrouded in the clouds throughout the day. Both are only 5-10 miles long. Only spent three days there between the two islands.

We had a rough passage from Nevis to Antigua, which began at 2:30 am in order for us to time our arrival before dark. We arrived at 5:30 pm. We were slogging against the winds and 8 foot waves. Nothing serious, just uncomfortable for 50 miles and so many slow hours. Antigua, not as high but much larger in circumference than other islands. Really looks like an inviting island, but unfortunately we had only time for one day there (we'll be back!) before making the 60 miles to Guadeloupe.

In Guadeloupe, we left the English language behind and traded our Eastern Caribbean currency (called EC for short; ex-rate is 2.67 EC = \$1.00 US) for French Francs (5 Franc = \$1.00 US). Our French pocket dictionary was well worn within a week (Thanks, Bob and Michelle) and our favorite mainstay was camembert cheese, freshly baked baguettes and red wine (good wine at cheap \$3.00/bottle).

Five miles south of Guadeloupe are a cluster of four small French islands called Iles des Saintes. They are dry and steep with red and brown cliffs. Peaks climb to over 1,000 feet and white beaches abound. There are but a few automobiles on the islands; mostly ruled by an overpopulation of mopeds (which has the Governor presently in an uproar). The only small town, Bourg des Saintes, is on the largest island, Terre D'en Haut. The towns center is a charming, almost fairy land setting of a white picket fence surrounding the park with a lighted fountain as its centerpiece. We'd buy a bagette fresh from the oven and eat it warm from a shaded park bench by the fountain. Heaven.

Onward to Dominica which we felt was the most untouched, jungle-like island we'd visited. Lush and wild. Despite being underdeveloped and poor, Dominica's people were friendly and cheerful. One day we, along with another sailing friend, went for a walk through the remote fishing town of St. Joseph--very off-beaten track for yachties. The narrow, dirt roads through town were busy with locals chatting, children playing, elderly sitting. As we three young Americans approached the sudden hush was only amplified by their stares. Once they composed themselves over the initial shock of seeing white tourists, they all were welcoming and talkative towards us wanting to know where and how we've come from. I'm not sure that some of the younger children ever saw a white person before; their stares and open mouths never re-composed!

Because of Dominica's relatively primitive atmosphere, we were most surprised that we were boarded by the Dominica Coast Guard for a routine check. The officials

were very polite and friendly and were gone in 15 minutes after finding everything in good order. Funny about Dominica's priorities!

Martinique was next with countrysides looking exactly like the vineyards of France. This island was also possibly the most cosmopolitan, with strong European influences. All French spoken here and the best coffee, cheeses and wines to offer. Finally south enough, our traveling pace begins to slow down a bit and we spend 18 days between St. Pierre and Anse Mitan. Also, it's here we welcome our first visitors, Tom's parents and sister. They stayed in a beach hotel right where Windborne was anchored. What fun it is to share our trip and lifestyle with folks from home! (And we look forward to anyone else wishing to visit!--More on that later.) We had a ball with Tom, Jean and Shelly; discovering the French creole cuisine, laying on beautiful beaches and shuffling around the big city of Fort de France. The only unfortunate thing about Martinique is that everything was so expensive. After one week, Tom flew home while Jean and Shelly moved aboard Windborne for our continuation sail to St. Lucia.

Beautiful St. Lucia! By far the most stunning scenery of all the islands we've seen to date. Jagged, high mountains draped in emerald green. The lagoon of Marigot is indeed a natural tropical Hollywood movie set and we can fully understand why they shot "Dr. Dolittle" there back in the 60's. They wouldn't have had to change a thing! Perfect paradise: white beach rimmed aquamarine waters, manicured lawn leading to a quaint little bistro on the water. The main town of Castries has everything you are looking for, including the first real supermarket we've seen for a while. Lamb was surprisingly inexpensive and we spoiled ourselves by cooking Rack of Lamb one evening (although we did have to "rearrange" the rack so that it fit into my small oven). It was also in Castries that we all received our first braids. Jean was first with two small french braids just above each ear, Shelly followed same suit with one each side, mine was one large french braid on each side of my head (which looked more like Heidi from the Alps than native!) and even Tom got one very small and discreet one in the back which most of his hair covered. Rodney Bay was a yachtie haven with chandleries, extensive wather reports, happy hours and pizzeria. People, landscape, fun -- all is good in St. Lucia.

We all had to pry ourselves away from St. Lucia. Shelly was the first to go, with an early morning flight back to the States. Jean, Tom and I then sailed Windborne 75 miles to the island of Bequia, south of St. Vincent. Bequia didn't disappoint either. Although not as dramatic, we thoroughly enjoyed the waterfront of Admiralty Bay. The stone walkway just on the waters edge joins eatery after eatery and plenty of boutiques. There always seems to be a festive mood here,

especially between two favorite establishments, The Gingerbread and Frangipani, which we frequented. Plenty to do in Bequia. Unfortunately it was also a place for quick goodbyes when a teary-eyed Jean was whisked off in a bus for the airport under a flurry of confusion caused by the sudden cancellation of the ferry service to St. Vincent! By the time she reached the airport, all the natives aboard the bus were singing to her, "Everything's gonna be alright . . .", and she knew most of them by name. (It's quite a funny story and those of you who know Jean will have to ask her about it!) That's truly the warm nature of the island people.

As you can imagine, we're not the only cruisers floating around out here. There is truly a population of us. Many Americans, Canadians and French, followed by a smaller percentage of German, Danish, British, Australians and South Africans. All intermix well with each other; Of course, the French still need to learn how to anchor and all yachties hold their breath (even other French!) while a newly arrived French boat settles in. No matter what nationality, there is every level of age, lifestyle and standard of living. Ages range from 20 to 80, with the largest group found between 40-60. Backgrounds and lifestyles range from beach bum to brokers and doctors, and standards of living don't always change with age. Anyway on the whole, all these people are earnest, friendly and always willing to help a fellow yachtsman. We've met few exceptions.

Because everyone's general float plan is SOUTH, you are constantly re-acquainted with yachties from a previous anchorage. It may have been a week ago or a month ago, but everyone seems to turn up again. This has lent itself to about a dozen other American yachts with whom we've become quite close and travel together in loose company. When we're all together (which during the last month has been 80% of the time) we plan many social events and group tours of an islands' interior. For instance on the Fourth of July, we all happened to be here in Admiralty Bay. As proud Americans, twenty-nine people in sixteen dinghies landed on the beach in late afternoon, planted an Old Glory in the sand, set up a grill and ate hot dogs, potato salad, chocolate cake, etc., in true tradition. Once dark, we lit some donated old, expired flares which still had some spunk. Under the red and white glowing flares, we all sang patriot songs. Even General Patton would've had goosebumps!

Without guests, Windborne seemed pretty quiet as we made our way to Mayreau, marking the beginning of the Grenadines. Our sudden loneliness from losing our guests was made up by seeing all our cruising companions again in Salt Whistle Bay. Also we catch up on some work around the boat which we've put off while we had visitors.

The Grenadines are a string of islands with lots of places to cruise like the Virgin Islands, except more spectacular. Particularly its masterpiece, the Tobago Cays. Incredible because of the reefs which extend for miles, calming and protecting the waters. Anchoring seems odd because you're in wide open ocean (no land) nothing between you and Africa, yet you're in protected waters. Calm in fact. It's a strange sensation. But the real sensation is diving in and doing some of the best snorkeling you've ever imagined in less than 10 feet of water - for miles. Sea fans, corals, and fish in every size, shape and color. Pristine! We'll spend more time here next pass through.

We stopped in Union briefly to clear out of Customs and continued another 10 miles to Carriacou where we spend our four days working on the boat. Of course, some free time in the evenings was spent with other yachties at Scrapper's Restaurant & Pub. Scrapper himself (a former Calypso singer) was celebrating the completion of his brand new building which the local priest was coming to bless. Afterward, everyone in the harbor was invited for his free rum punch party.

Grenada is the southernmost island of the Windwards and is majestic with lush green mountains, crystal waterfalls, golden beaches and the fragrant spice trees that give the island its epithet "Isle of Spice".

Tom, Jim (a fellow yachtie) and I were fortunate (and energetic) enough to accomplish a five (5) hour unguided hike into the interior rain forest, climbing 2,500 feet on the muddiest, obscure trails you can imagine. Nearing the top ridge the trail, a ledge sometimes only a foot wide, overlooked a gorge 1,000 feet straight down. Occasionally treacherous. The density of tropical foliage shaded the climb; it was actually quite cool and at times clouds would drift through adding an erie cast to the forest. We began at Grand Etang, a lake formed from volcanic crater and clawed our way northwest to eventually finish at Concord Falls. In our possession were bread, cheese, water, cookies, BandAids and a can of OFF. Everything was of use except the insect repellent. To our disbelief, there were none. And we saw no snakes either-Thank God!- although we were informed that Grenada had none which were poisonous. At times monkeys would scurry along the tree tops, screaming at us. Not chimps, but red-backed, white bellied with small white faces and extra long, black tails. Bamboo grew everywhere, towering 50 feet high. Nutmeg trees all bearing nature fruit, spiced the air. Banana trees with leaves bigger than me. The trunks of the palm trees offered a place for the lizards to sun themselves. And of course, it rained sporadically. Throughout our hike a few puddles were noted, then a trickling run-off which slowly grew into a stream, then a creek, then some fast moving rapids. We knew we were approaching the end;

we heard the roar of the Falls. By this time we were mud-caked up to our knees and spattered throughout, as each of us had our share of slips, slides and falls. Jumping into the cold pool beneath the Falls was such jubilation! Such a reward. Our blistered feet and burning muscles instantly relieved. What fun to swim under the pounding water, letting it push you a few feet below the surface before the current swept you gently around the pool! The entire day was such a stark impression; an experience like no other.

But you must know that all is not fun in the paradise sun. There are still the daily/weekly/monthly chores that don't escape us. Particularly some of which take twice the effort, time and/or expense that they would stateside. Laundry for example. Yesterday I hand washed 9 T-shirts, 4 tank tops, 7 shorts, 10 underwear a few kitchen towels and washcloths. Laundromats do not exist in the islands. However, their substitute is a few local women who will wash your clothes for you. For a cost of about ten US dollars, they will hand wash, line dry and sloppily fold what you would call a very small load! For this, I'd rather do it myself. Once in a blue moon (even more rare in the Caribbean!) I'll find someone with a washing machine. Then we do splurge to have our sheets and bath towels done since those are difficult to wash by hand.

We may no longer have a lawn to mow, but we sure do have BOAT MAINTENANCE. This encompasses everything from mandatory (diesel engine maintenance: oil changes, oil and fuel filters, transmission fluid changes, battery checks, pencil zincs, etc), to cosmetic (painting, varnishing, cleaning) to troubleshooting -- which is the worst (water pumps, regulators, switches, connections) just to name a few. The boat-owner has just as much to do as the home-owner. In addition are my ongoing canvas projects, like sewing a new sun/rain awning for the foredeck, new staysail bag, cover for the liferaft, companionway screen and more. I also have done clothes mending and alterations for other yachties which has earned some extra "EC".

One of the most time consuming things is scouring a town for some widget that you desperately need. Oh, how we miss K-Mart! Searching for one item will have had you in and out of a dozen shops, still unsuccessful. This can be quite frustrating if you're in the middle of repairing something.

To slow the process further is walking. Yes, we may take a bus into town, but first you walk to the bus stop. Then in-town you walk everywhere along with all your packages, groceries, paperwork, etc. It's not unusual for us to walk five miles on errand day. Of course, the advantage to walking is you don't miss much and have time to take it all in.

There is also the matter of business to attend to. It is protocol when entering each new country (or island in this case) to raise a yellow Q (Quarantine) Flag until you have properly gone to the authorities and checked in. First, you go to the Customs Official on shore and complete all the necessary documents. He will issue you your Entry papers. These you take to the Immigration Officials (sometimes at the Police Station and usually clear across town) where you will complete another set of forms. Afterwhich, Immigration pounds his rubber stamp across them as his blessing. Returning to your vessel, you may now lower your Q Flag. This same, sometimes lengthy process is done in reverse upon your leaving that same island. Paperwork! Paperwork! Paperwork!

But, before you start feeling sorry for us, our leisure time is very sweet. Beaches, swimming, snorkeling, socializing, reading (to-date, 17 books collectively), and lounging. Another pastime is listening to the BBC and Voice of America on our 12-Band radio. We obtain most of our news this way. Newspapers are expensive and although we have a black and white TV on board, reception (IF there's anything to receive) is often obstructed by the island peaks. So, no soap operas, no game shows, no awful sitcoms, no repeats of Lucy -- this MUST be paradise!

A few general topics on life in the islands:

Colorful, open-air markets are throughout all the island, mostly on Saturday mornings. Strange fruits and vegetables that met us in the beginning are now commonplace to us. Soursop, ahkey, breadfruit, plaintains, christophans, calalou, tania, sapodilla and passion fruit. Food shopping in the island is remarkably different than the States. It is part of their (and now our) daily routine. Probably due to the tropical heat where things don't keep for a long time. They are big on pork and chicken legs with thighs, but it is near impossible to find breasts. Also hard to find is ground beef, however pre-formed and boxed hamburger patties are sometimes available. Beef in general is more difficult to identify due to their different cuts. Camembert, Gouda and Edam cheeses are all you will find until Martinique. After that we've found a delicious white cheddar from New Zealand. Fresh milk does not exist, but they offer a long-life homogenized milk which is vacuum sealed and needs no refrigeration until openen. It tastes fine but Tom doesn't like it much. Brown, unrefrigerated eggs prevail. Butter comes in tins mostly. In the French islands, you'll find wonderful bread on a shelf, not sliced and generally not bagged. However, I've been baking our own bread onboard. No lemons, but endless limes. In the islands prior to Grenada, calling them supermarkets is a misnomer. Typically they're the first floor of a two story building, owners living upstairs. The store being perhaps 500-800 square feet.

Lots of dry goods and canned goods. In the back is the white horizontal freezer (just like the ones in American basements) filled with miscellaneous stone hard frozen meats, chickens and whole fish wrapped in plastic bags. We even saw a frozen, whole armadillo! No wheeled carts--the aisles wouldn't be wide enough--only baskets. Grenada, however, does offer an American-style supermarket.

An "auxiliary" form of shopping available to cruisers are the Boat Boys. Some not boys at all; ages range from 9 to late 30's. They row out to the anchored boats every morning and sometimes late afternoon, their dinghies laden with fruits and vegetables for sale. Whole stalks of bananas, coconuts, avocados, limes, grapefruits, pineapple, tomatoes, sometimes fresh fish, sometimes ice. To date the most unusual cargo was mangrove oysters. Others sell handicrafts of carvings, baskets, T-shirts or jewelry. At times aggressive, but mostly very polite. In a few places we've stayed long enough, we've even developed a rapport with our boat boy. He would describe his life on the island, about his family, unsuccessfully teach us a few words in patois, the West Indian native language. The ones we got to know well would bring us handmade gifts of birds carved from coconuts, various creatures woven of palm fronds. Kem taught us how to weave a palm basket on a St. Lucian beach one day.

These native island Indians are a very friendly, social people. Their most important thing in life is to dance. From this very deep desire they invented what they call, "Jump Up". These are weekly gatherings of people for the purpose of dance. Seriously taken, the smaller jump ups are held at a bar/restaurant; the larger ones are the equivalent of an outdoor block party complete with concert-size amplifiers supplying the music! It is an incredible experience; one without words. Incidentally, their music is neither reggae nor solely steel drum, but rather an Indian calypso called Soca which offers a quicker tempo.

The other event seriously taken is Carnival. Each island schedules its own dates and we most recently attended Grenada's Carnival. This street event stops practically everything for four days. Dancing, parties, music, parades and odd ceremonies are non-stop, around-the-clock. Under the heading of 'Odd Ceremonies', I would include on the first day of Carnival, it is a ritual to pour used motor oil over themselves, drink madly, dance and try to hug everyone in sight thereby smearing oil onto your neighbor. This is not difficult considering the streets are packed with a crowd. To top it off, a live, sacrificial snake may be hung around one's motor-oiled neck until it absorbs enough poisons from the oil through its skin and dies. This, from what I'm told, is to rid yourself of evil spirits(!?!?). We did not attend on this day.

Well, the latest, biggest topic amongst yachties has become . . . Venezuela. Being out of hurricane range (one in 100 years) most everyone lays there for the season. Right now the only thing between Windborne and Venezuela is one tiny island called Los Testigos, and 120 miles of water (one days sail). So, yachties are buzzing with talk of good/bad anchorages, visas, inexpensive food and drink, boatyards, chandleries, cholera vaccines, Spanish (anyone know any?), and the like.

Tom and I are looking forward to this new , completely different cruising ground. We're presently just waiting for a batch of mail which should arrive within the next two days -- hopefully, there will be mail from you! After that, we're off to Venezuela for several months. We plan to spend time on the northern island of Isla Margarita, as well as the mainland ports of Puerto La Cruz and Cumana, between which includes Mochima National Coastline Park. The possibility of inland travel, perhaps Angel Falls, will be investigated once we're there.

We have altered our cruising plans for next year. I suppose it is apparent from reading this newsletter that we were rather hurried traveling down-island, especially the Leeward chain. Every island has so much to offer and we feel we missed a great deal by racing ahead of the impending hurricane season. Therefore, once the dangerous season is over in late October, Windborne will take us back to the Virgin Islands where we'll find a secure spot for her while Tom and I are hoping to fly home for Christmas. After the Holidays we'd return to again explore the Caribbean, this time over an eight (8) month period (instead of 4). There are many islands we hadn't visited the first time through; even more new anchorages on the ones we had. No problem filling eight more months with new sights and experiences!

This also gives you another chance if you'd like to visit us in the Caribbean or Venezuela during 1993. If you'd like to discuss the possibilities, look us up during the Holidays or convey your interest to Jean Sinclair anytime at (216) 494-2472.

Regardless of whether you can visit or not, we'd love to hear from you! Thanks to those who have written--Keep them coming! We enjoy answering each letter, but be patient . . . sometimes our mail doesn't reach us until it's six (6) weeks old due to our traveling schedule and/or reliable mail drop addresses down here.

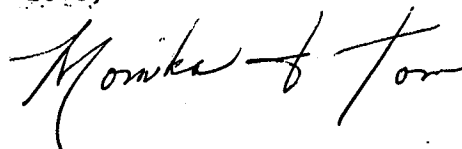
Nevertheless, Jean Sinclair is still the place you address your mail for us (letter, audio cassette or video):

Tom & Monika Sinclair
Yacht Windborne
c/o Jean Sinclair
306 Gaslight Circle S.E.
N. Canton, OH 44720

Hearing from you would really make our day!!

We hope this newsletter has shed a little light on how we're doing, where we've been and what it's like. Our next newsletter will cover our travels to Venezuela. Until then . . . Adiòs!

Love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Monika & Tom". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed word "Love,".

STATISTICS

MILEAGE

<u>Time Period</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Miles</u>
6/91	Newport, Rhode Island	Minnesott, N. Carolina	11	695
3/92	Minnesott, N. Carolina (IntraCoastal Waterway)	Ft. Lauderdale, FL	27	935
4/92	Ft. Lauderdale, FL (Offshore)	British Virgin Islands	11	1,307
5-6/92	British Virgin Islands (Leeward Islands)	Martinique	30	466
6-8/92	Martinique (Windward Islands)	Grenada	70	<u>235</u>
			Total ---	3,638

DIESEL FUEL

Consumption down the IntraCoastal Waterway (935 miles) ----- 119 Gallons
Consumption since leaving the United States (2,008 miles) ----- 91 Gallons
Highest price per gallon ----- \$2.55 - Guadeloupe
Lowest price per gallon ----- .76 - North Carolina

WATER

Amount of purchased water since 3/24/92 ----- 487 Gallons*
Highest price per gallon ----- .20¢ - Most Islands
Lowest price per gallon ----- .15¢ - Virgin Islands
Water is typically FREE within the United States

* Actual consumption from above period is probably around 550 gallons, as we are supplimented by catching rain water.

AVERAGE CARIBBEAN PRICES

	US Dollars
Motor Oil	\$14.50/gallon
Film Developing (36 Exp.)	18.00
Newspaper - USA Today	2.25
Paper Towels (cheap brand)	3.65/roll
Ice (10 lb. block)	4.00
Soda Pop (24 cans)	11.50
Beer (24 cans) Local brand "Carib"	13.00
Beer (Bar Price Each)	1.50
Dewars Scotch 750 ml	14.20
Beefeaters Gin 750 ml	13.00
Local Rum 750 ml	3.00
Steaks	10.50/lb
Fork Chops	4.50/lb
Local Fish (Mahi-Mahi, Tuna)	2.80/lb
Bacon 8 oz.	2.50
Pringles Potato Chips	5.20/can
Red Delicious Apple (one single apple) .	.95 ea
Potatos	2.10/5 lb.
Bananas	Practically Free!
Tomatoes, Carrots, Cucumbers	1.50/lb
Watermelon	1.00/lb
Cream Cheese (Philadelphia) 8 oz.	2.50
White Cheddar Cheese	1.75/lb

THE OFFSHORE PASSAGE

~This is an excerpt on my log which still needs completion.~
Unfortunately, it also needs proofread and corrected, so
bear with me.

BONUS SECTION!

The hour was marking our eleventh day at sea when the mountains of Tortola rose up from the flat horizon. A family of dolphins played in our bow wake and escorted us over the Anegoda Banks. I didn't realize how overwhelming the sight of our first landfall would be. Tears of joy streaked my cheeks and Tom danced around on the foredeck. Such sense of jubilation, pride of accomplishment and relief filled our souls. All day we were running hard at 180° South, knowing that making our anchorage by nightfall would be cutting it close. Windborne was flying all the canvas she could and was moving along like a freight train; sometimes reaching 9 knots! If we couldn't arrive by nightfall, we would be forced to wait out the night 20 miles or so offshore as it's never prudent to enter strange harbors after dark. Although our eleven day passage had been relatively pleasant, the thought of one more night at sea (particularly within sight of land) was inspiration enough for us to tune Windborne into a racing machine. And she responded wonderfully.

We had allowed for the westerly set of the North Equatorial Current which never ended up affecting our position. Therefore, we would make our approach on the north eastern side of Tortola; dropping anchor in Trellis Bay, Beef Island, at sunset.

Nothing compared to the sudden tranquility. For the past 264 hours, our bodies had been constantly flexing against each motion of the boat, our ears hearing only wind and waves and our eyes seeing only blue water meet blue sky. This sheltered bay barely nudged Windborne with ripples and the sights and sounds of vacationing charter boaters against a tropical green island were hypnotizing. With the anchor firmly set, we toasted an ice cold beer and giggled at our disbelief of being there! We reveled in our recent offshore memories:

Windborne forged ahead of the Queen Elizabeth II on the way out of Port of Everglades, Fort Lauderdale. I couldn't help to think of the contrasts between the two cruises. Alas, theirs would be over in a week. Alas, ours wouldn't be as pampered.

After crossing the Gulf Stream our route would take us through the Bahama Providence Channels, then due East over the bottomless Atlantic Ocean until longitude 65°W. At which point we'd drop 180° South to our long awaited rendezvous with the Virgin Islands.

Sunny and hot; it was 5:10 pm on April 23, 1992 as we motored into the choppy waters that hung near the coastline of Florida after several days of an east wind. It is customary to make a night crossing to the Bahamas. Thereby timing your arrival during daylight hours in order to safely navigate through those shallow waters. If we needed to (equipment or mechanical failure, etc.) we could anchor in Stirrup Cay, but as we approached, all was well and we were anxious to keep underway.

The forecast of light ENE winds was correct for the first three (3) days. So correct in fact, that we were becalmed 40% of the time. We could have swam our way through the Bahamas faster! Although we carry 75 gallons of diesel fuel, we were reluctant to motor due to the fact that we still had more than one weeks travel ahead. Being that we must run our engine twice daily for an hour in order to maintain power to our "life-support systems" (radar, GPS, refrigeration, etc.) we would need to insure that at minimum, those systems be provided for. And so, we simply waited for wind. Sometimes floated idle for as many as 8 hours. The entire sea resembling an inky oil slick--not a ripple, only long swells swinging Windborne side to side like a metronome.

By the end of our fifth day, this would all change giving us more wind than we would want.

It was 11:00 pm; Tom's watch was over and I was coming on deck until 2:00 am. During the usual shift-change briefing, Tom relays the fact that the NE winds had increased during the pst hour from 10 knots to 15-18 knots. Otherwise, the sky gave us no indication of any weather brewing, so perhaps we'd just have a good, progressive night sail. However, the next hour was the changing point. At midnight the winds had backed around to the NW and were steadily increasing.

Already with one reef in the main sail, Windborne flew at 8.5 knots -- time for another reef. Suited with our safety harnesses, Tom and I set in our second reef point quickly and efficiently (we has become quite good at reefing in the last few months!). There was no doubt about it, this blow would get worse before it got better. We only wondered how much worse and for how long. Our only blessing was that the NW wind was pushing us from behind, on our port quarter.

The storm was proceeding quickly; another thirty minutes, winds had reached 25-30 knots, heightening waves to 10 feet. Disaster usually breeds disaster. Too much wind for our double reefed main, so Tom claws his way up on deck and pulls it down. The storm jib, our smallest sail at 100 square feet is hoisted, just to give us stability in these conditions. A sudden lurch of the boat steals the bitter end of the main halyard from Tom's hand as he was re-securing it. The loose halyard, a line 50 feet long now whips through the air. Tom is beside himself in both anger and concern at this new dilemma. Without it in control it will undoubtedly get fouled in the rigging, possibly out of reach completely. Meaning our main sail would be rendered useless.

While ducking the halyard pendulum on a pitching deck, Tom's safety tether must have snugged under the release latch of our life raft canister. The next surging wave sent both Tom and our run-away life raft to the starboard gunnel, only stopped from going overboard by a 6" high bulwark and caprail. Tom screams for my assistance. I leave the Monitor Auto-pilot to steer and scramble out of the cockpit. The velocity of the wind is forced down my throat and for a moment, I can't speak. Tom is laying over the 3' x 2.5' x 1' high canister like a linebacker on the one yard line. If it goes overboard, we've really got a mess on our hands. The struggle begins as we manhandle the 100 pound clumsy square across the slanting deck, back into its bracket without getting beamed by the free-flying halyard.

Secured once again, we retreat to the cockpit to rest. We're both breathing hard. Sweating in our safety gear. It's dark. The wind shrieks through the rigging. Surfing down waves. We're 600 miles from any land. We've got to conserve our energy. No telling how long this will last.

Our rest ends suddenly as a wave breaks over our stern into the cockpit. The waves have increased to 12-15 feet. Foaming water fills the cockpit and gallons cascade down the companionway ladder onto the cabin floor. Tom springs to the tiller, disengaging the Monitor in order to steer himself. In these confused seas, it takes the craft of human touch to maneuver down each surf individually. Another wave crashes into our stern. The power of the boarding water against Tom's back nearly knocks him to his knees. He urgently commands me below and orders that the companionway slats be slid in place and lashed closed. This alarms me because by sealing off the slats, I'm basically locking myself inside the cabin; and Tom outside with the

elements. I would be unable to keep my eye on him. I am fearful of his safety and stammer my concerns, but the urgency in his voice convinced me that there was no alternative and, no time to loose. My hands were shaking as I slid them in place. I knew that I was securing them not just for boarding waves, but the possibility that was silently on both our minds: a knockdown. I suppressed the thought as I couldn't bear locking Tom outside with those possibilities. Just before I slid the hatch closed, Tom instructed me to close off all through-hull fittings and check the bilges every 15 minutes for water. Our frightened faces looked at each other for a moment. We told each other 'I love you', and I slid the hatch closed.

At times Windborne sweeps through 80 archs as she mounts, then surfs down the waves, ever increasing, now to 15-18 ft in 45 knots of wind. Once in a while, a rogue cross wave will slam her almost broadside creating a horrible crashing sound. I yell at the top of my lungs through the slats if Tom's okay. I hear his muffled reply. I could visualize him in the cockpit. Tiller wedged between ribs and underarm; half bracing himself for the next powerful thrust, half just hanging on. Red foul-weather suit secured tightly around each extremity trying to prevent any more sea water onto an already soaked body beneath. The bright orange harness snug around his chest connected to the blue 6 foot tether, leashing him to the boat. How I worried for him.

Below the noise was deafening. Every content in every locker smashed left to right, forward and aft. The cabin sole creaked its complaints and jack lines on deck scrapped loudly with every movement. I had closed off all the through-hull fittings and checked bilges. In between, I had placed our well-stocked abandon-ship grab bag close to the companionway, double checking its contents complete. I placed the hand-held VHF radio in its waterproof sleeve, sealed it, and included it in the abandon-ship bag. Binoculars were also ready to go. Two EPIRB's (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons) live in the bag. What else? My mind raced. My mouth was dry and pasty. My heart pounded. I just wanted to be prepared for anything. The motion in the cabin was violent. You had to claw your way around. For a slip second I let go of my handhold to seal the VHF sleeve and I was instantly picked up off my feet and hurled across the cabin, staving my back against the stove. Incredible power.

When all I could think of was accomplished, I sat on the floor wedging myself between the chart table and galley sink, trying to think positively. Indeed, these were not the worst storm conditions Tom and I had been through. Much to the contrary. The gale in which we were caught a month prior in

Beaufort, North Carolina (offshore) was right out of a documentary on survival! Nevertheless, this was bad and perhaps more mentally frightening due to our distance offshore. (We had been only 120 miles offshore from Beaufort. Here we're 600 miles offshore.) We were definitely on our own. Times like these you question your desires to cross oceans in a small boat!

It had been three (3) hours since I'd seen Tom. He must be exhausted. I suited up in my full "foulies", also complete with harness and tether, climbed the companionway ladder and released the latch, slid open the hatch and climbed out. It was 5:00 am. Dawn revealed the fury of the peaked, cresting waves. Tom looked tired, welcomed my insistence for a shift change and heads below. He slides the hatch closed and I am all alone with Mother Nature. She looks real angry. I think to myself that I liked it better when it was dark outside.

I commend Tom for being at this helm for three hours--the tremendous pressure of the tiller is startling. I don't know how he played Tug-O-War with it for that long.

While in storm conditions, I have noticed how you mentally put everything into accomplishing any task. A great deal of concentration goes into ordinarily simple tasks - which are now extraordinary feats. Also spans of time to be conquered become minuscule. Instead of thinking, "tomorrow, this will be better", it becomes, "if I can just get through this next hour . . ."

Tom slept on the cabin floor, exhausted, still in his full suit of soaking wet clothes and gear. One hours rest has an amazing restoration. He changes into dry clothing and reappears through the hatch. With the daylight showing us the waves angle of movement (which have become more consistent now), we feel that the Monitor can once again steer.

With the Monitor taking our burden, Tom and I sit with our backs against the bulkhead looking aft at the waves racing to play tag with our stern. Each swollen wall of water is so different from each other; all possess such stark beauty once you remove "the fear factor". Colors ranging from deep midnight blue, sapphire and turquoise to translucent greens fringed in foamy white. We were riding a straight-line roller coaster. As we careened to the bottom of each wave, we would lose sight of the next one building behind it because of our bimini's obstruction. (A bimini is a cockpit awning.) You had to look up to these waves. We silently sat watching in awe; fear no longer a part of it. Perhaps due to fatigue or maybe we'd become used to the forest of waves.

It was now 7:30 am. For the moment there was nothing either one of us could do. Windborne and the Monitor were doing well by themselves. We retreated to

to the cabin and would take turns gaining back some precious sleep. Not much else you could do below, as the motion was still extreme. The day slowly passed without change.

At 5:00 pm, we both clambered on deck wanting to do our "deck check" before it gets dark. Snapping our harness tethers to the jack lines, we thoroughly inspect everything from cockpit to foredeck. Making sure there are no loose lines, double checking all lashed-down items and that all is as ship shape as can be expected. Our real triumph was catching the stray main halyard, which miraculously had not become fouled during the last 17 hours of freedom!

In all of this, we're still grateful that the wind and waves are in our favor. We placed 110 miles under the keel during the last 24 hours with only 100 square feet of sail. (Probably most of those were 'vertical' miles!)

At 8:30 pm, the storm had gotten no worse, but certainly no better. We began wondering how much longer its strength would last. We hailed out on VHF radio, "Any vessel, any vessel, any station, any station, this is the sailing vessel Windborne. Anyone copy?" No response had been received to our previous attempts throughout the day. But this time a voice crackled back, "This is the tug and barge 'Betty Woods' to the vessel calling . . ." Our hearts soared at the sound of the older man's slightly southern voice. I immediately pictured him as a seasoned old salt, white beard and graying hair peaking beneath his red woolen cap and deep crow's feet outlining the corners of his eyes--probably also wearing the typical bright yellow oilskin and huge sea boots. This image and the fact that there was another unfortunate person out here in this mess was a comfort to me.

His coordinates placed him 50 miles southwest of us; he was heading northeast to Louisiana. He relayed a recent weather forecast obtained by his single side band radio. The gale warning was indeed right in our quadrant. The good news was that its movement was tracked northwest. Tonight would still be rough, but within the next day, we should see improvement. Just for the sake of good order, we filed our float plan with the Betty Woods and asked if he would kindly relay it to the Coast Guard in Miami. He gladly did this for us. (A typical float plan carries such information as vessel type, description, name and documentation number, names of persons aboard, port of departure and date, desired port of arrival and estimated day of arrival.)

After we signed off with the kindly captain of the Betty Woods we felt much better; we now had an idea of how much more we had to put up with, we

knew we weren't the only idiots out here (not that Betty Woods' presence could help matters), and also that now the Coast Guard knew exactly where we were (their presence--unlikely needed-- could definitely help matters). And so, for the entire night we still rode the storm, still listened to the screaming winds, still got bruised on every pitch and still longed for our arrival in the Caribbean.

Daybreak of our seventh day at sea; the past thirty (30) hours through a gale. Our spirits had lifted before the winds had. We could feel it. Today, things would be better. --We even threw out our fishing line!

As quickly as the winds came, they went. By 9:00 am, they were NW at 15 and it was a cloudless, blue sky. Waves were still pushing, but losing their kick.

Within the hour, the bungee cord on our fishing line goes long, signaling we've got something. Something big. Tom pulls in the line while we can see the occasional glint of a fighting opponent. It catapults out of the next wave crest. A quick flash of blue/green and back in the water. We're almost in disbelief that we've caught something this quickly. I grab the VCR camera. --Sure don't want to miss this! Tom pulls in the last ten feet of line and reveals a 30" Dorado, beautiful full-finned, sleek body with dazzling colors of blue, green and yellow--still fighting. Tom still holds the fish outside the boat, yells for me to get the 'spirits'. I make a mad dash for the liquor cabinet and grab the first thing; tequila. A quick shot is poured down the dorado's throat and within seconds, he's still. In my opinion, this is a much more humane method than the head-beating. One shot for him; one shot for me.

Tom lays the 20 lb fish on the side deck and removes the hook. I return to the deck with my virgin fillet knife in hand. Watching Rick Krogel from Michigan made filleting fish look easy. Now it was time for my solo. (Thanks, Rick--I did good!)

Fresh dorado (also known as mahi-mahi) was served for lunch just two hours after it landed on deck. Spectacular!

Nothing heals the soul after a storm more than a good warm meal and a nap! It had been the first real food we'd eaten over the last two days. Too rough to cook. Most of that afternoon, we were actually becalmed in roly seas, rocking us both into our desperately needed sleep. We were refreshed by the time our night watches began and thankfully, it was a peaceful, uneventful evening. Total mileage for the 24-hour period was 124; now 804 miles into the passage.