



WINDBORNE

ALAJUELA 38

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Dear Family & Friends,

Greetings from Trinidad! We arrived here in August and for the past ten weeks have been experiencing the kalidoscope that makes up Trinidad. From quiet beaches to bustling cities, open-air markets and malls, refineries and nature centers. The rich diversity continues throughout its people who trace their roots back to India, China, Africa, Syria, Lebanon, Britian, Portugal and Spain, forging one of the world's truly multiracial societies. Perhaps it is the interaction of so much variety that has produced so much creative energy. For this is also the birth-place of The Carnival. More on that to follow. First, let me give you a quick overview of Trinidad's "Big Picture":

THE BIG PICTURE

GEOGRAPHY: Trinidad lies approximately 1,400 miles southeast of Miami and only 7 miles east of Venezuela. Trinidad and Venezuela were linked 11,000 years ago and separated when the last ice age lowered the sea by 300 feet.

AREA: 1,864 square miles (or about the size of Delaware)
Highest point is 3,085 feet.

POPULATION: 1.2 Million (350,000 in the capital, Port of Spain)

ETHNIC GROUPS: East Indians 43%, Africans 40%, Mixed 17%
Since about two-fifths of Trinidad's people are descendents from India, major Hindu and Muslim festivals are recognized as Public Holidays.

LANGUAGE: English, some Hindi still used among the Indian community.

LITERACY: 97%

CROPS: Sugar, cocoa, coffee, citrus, banana

INDUSTRIES: Oil products, cement, rum, Angostura Bitters.
Trinidad is one of the most prosperous islands in the Caribbean. Oil production has increased with offshore finds. After 1996, Trinidad will be the world's largest exporter of methanol and become the first exporter of commercialized iron carbide.

HISTORY: When Columbus discovered himself in Trinidad in 1498, it was inhabited by South American Indians. They pretty much had it to themselves until the Spanish started to colonize in 1776. The British then captured Trinidad in 1797 and held onto it until independence. In the early days, Trinidad had a flourishing plantation economy based on sugar. However, after slavery was abolished in 1838, former slaves quite naturally wanted no part of working on the plantations. The landowner's solution to the problem was to import some 150,000 indentured servants from India. Trinidad and neighboring Tobago became an independent twin-island state in 1962, a democracy in British tradition.

During WWII, the United States established major naval and air bases in Trinidad. They served to protect oil shipments to England which were prime targets. Today, there is still evidence of sub bases, deep water ports, barracks and administrative buildings.

Today the capital, Port of Spain, is a sprawl of the old and new - colonial mansions built in 1903-1907, giving way to dark-tinted glass office blocks and fast-food outlets. The streets are crammed with traffic, pedestrians, and industrious vendors selling anything from fruit to safety pins.

Trinidadians are a sociable, partying bunch; loud conversations, heated gesticulations and unrestrained laughter -- they love a good laugh and a stiff drink, and most of all they love to dance. That is why for many, Carnival is the climax of the Trinidadian year. The season begins after Christmas and reaches its peak on the Monday and Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, though a lot of time-consuming preparation begins before the season opens. The three most important components are the masquerade (or "playing mas"), calypso and steelband (or "Pan") music.

The Pan was invented here 50 years ago, a by-product of the oil industry and its discarded oil drums. And if you've ever heard a hundred-strong pan orchestra with its high voltage sound, you'd believe it could fill the universe!

We regret that our time in Trinidad doesn't allow us to stay for Carnival. However, we were fortunate enough to attend the First Annual World King and Queen Carnival Competition held in the National Stadium in September. This gave us a glimpse of how extraordinary the Carnival costumes are! Design work starts almost a year ahead and large amounts of money are put into their creations. The results are magnificent as costumes can measure up to 30 feet high and 40 feet in diameter --all worn and controlled by one human being. Then these brightly plumed monstrosities jump and wind for miles following towering trucks packed with sound systems and live pan bands thundering their calypso and soca music for the entire parade.

I am told by witnesses that New Orleans' Mardi Gras and Rio's Carnival are mere shadows to the size, color and sheer talent of the show put on by Trinidad. Someday, I hope to be my own judge.

The stamina and endurance needed for Carnival is kept limber by their patronage to nightclubs during the rest of the year. Although we did not attend, we had the misfortune of being anchored near one whose weekend music was still booming at 5:00 a.m.! On weekends, we anchored elsewhere.

Partying is not the only love of the Trinidadians ("Trini's" for short). Sports are a big part of life with soccer, rugby, cricket and even horse racing. They also have a 9-Hole Golf Course (which they joke that the land crabs keep adding a few more holes!).

The Arts also flourish with a few theater and dance companies, as well as frequent concerts by pan orchestras.

For the leisure, there are the cinemas where all showings are double-features and only cost US\$2.75 --for a balcony seat. By the way, Trini's pronounce "film" as "flim". One can also go shopping at any one of seven large, modern malls; some offering three levels.

To our delight we also found many modern grocery stores stocked with items we haven't seen in months and enjoyed the splurge. However, the perseverance of the traditional open-markets remain on Charlette Street. The open-air, unrefrigerated stalls filled with fruit, vegetables, fish and meat -- including many parts we'd consider waste, such as pig snouts and tails, chicken feet, livestock heads are all heaped on giant platters. Blood pudding (sausage) and cow heel soup are also very popular.

We steered clear of the above, but thoroughly enjoyed the East Indian inspired "Double", which is a saucy, spicy curried channa (chick peas) inside a soft dough wrapping. And of course, their main-stay fast food is a Roti. It's sort of a Caribbean version of a burrito with a soft outer skin wrapped around curried meat or fish with vegetable. We liked ours served with pumpkin, bodi (extra long green beans) and mango chutney. The Trini's favorite condiment is HOT SAUCE which comes in dozens of varieties. Kuchela is another popular topping which we really got hooked on. Made with mustard oil, green mangos and curry. For a change of pace Trini's also love Chinese food and pizza whos restaurants seem to be on every corner. They do an odd thing to their pizzas, however, and squirt liberal amounts of ketchup, mustard and hot sauce all over it.

After eating all their spicy foods, they refresh by having a "Cool Nut". It's a chilled, whole green coconut sold by a street vendor who lops off the top with a machete. Then once you drink the water, you can scoop out the sweet white jelly with a "spoon" that the coconut man slices off from the side of the nut.

Another specialty are the large blue-backed land crabs which are sold in open markets, bound by claws in "bouquets".

When you've exhausted Port of Spain, there is the dense rainforest of the northern mountains. Trinidad is home to over 400 species of birds and over 600 species of butterflies. My favorite were the huge Emperor butterflies with an 8" wing span in the most electric blue you can imagine. Squadrons of hummingbirds and parrots too. The most unusual nest was of the corn bird, which looks like a coconut strung in a mesh sack hanging from a high branch.

Speaking of nests, Tom and I witnessed the midnight hatching and instinctive crawl back to the sea of a dozen leatherback turtles whos eggs were laid in the sand two months prior by their mother. A tremendous thing to behold!

One more touching experience happened when we were anchored off the desolated island of Chacachacare. It was a daily occurance to see 50 or so porpoises come in the bay to feed mid-morning. However on the third day, they were absent. That afternoon we spotted a lone pair just 25 yards off our bow. One was dead, floating rigidly on its side; the other was gently herding its mate, keeping vigil and never leaving its side even to feed. This went on for two days. Porpoises mate for life and in death, remain with their mate

until the body sinks. The rest of the porpoise pod remained absent throughout this bereavement period. It was simply nature taking care of its own.

Hidden in the lush, green hills we also heard our first Howler Monkey which sounded more like Godzilla than a monkey! Really would give you a fright if you didn't know who the voice belonged to. And native to Trinidad is the Cowboy Spider, a clever beast which throws its web at its prey. But of all the curiosities we've encountered, the outlying island of Chacachacare was the most bizarre . . .

CHACACHACARE ISLAND

Chacachacare lies right between Trinidad and Venezuela and until about 17 years ago, was a leper colony. It was a major community with a good sized village and road busy enough to require a traffic light. However when a cure for leprosy was found, the colony was abandoned. Many household, personal, even medical items were left where they were last used. Nature is slowly reclaiming the buildings which are numerous and mostly still in good shape.

We tucked Windborne up into a small cove beneath the Nun's Quarters bluff and had the entire island to ourselves. The locals don't come out here much--and certainly never overnight. For two reasons: One is that its close proximity to Venezuela had lent itself to drug transactions in the past; one raid ended in a shoot out and deaths of Coast Guard and drug runners. Secondly, the Coast Guard used to operate a base here using the abandoned Nurses Quarters until one night they fled in terror after the ghost of a white American nurse tortured and raped them all.

On a very still morning with low rumbles of thunder rolling in the distance, we set out to have a look around. Perfect ambiance for exploring a ghost town!

Nº 9738

Original

**PASS FOR VISITOR
TO THE LEPROSARIUM, CHACACHACARE**

PERMIT.....

to travel on the Visitor's Launch to visit.....

on.....or during period.....

The usual fare is/is not to be paid before travel.

.....
*Superintending Medical Officer,
Chacachacare*

This pass is revocable at any time at the discretion of the S.M. Officer
G.P., Tr./To.—1607—100 Bks.—8/64

We climb the stone stairway leading up to the Nun's Quarters consisting of three buildings. The largest is constructed of stone and concrete with 12' high ceilings and an enormous veranda overlooking the bay. The main floor had four empty classrooms with dusty, page-eaten books strewn about the floor. Erie titles such as "No Way Home" gave us goosebumps. As you moved cautiously through each room you'd either get swooped by a startled bat or hear some creature scuttling for cover.

Climbing the stairs to the second floor, we surprised a pair of vultures looming on the railing. Dull, coal black feathers with their grey hooded heads and red eyes. We were about three seconds too late with our camera as they soared away. Upstairs the wide center hallway held probably 20 doors on either side. Behind each was a 10' x 12' room, some with a rusty bunk bed frame, wall-hung sink, crucifix.

The other two buildings were frame consisting of kitchens, showers and laundry basins as well as a strange long, narrow ramp we assume was for loading supplies.

The lane lead us up to a small, wrought-iron fenced cemetery lying eight graves. Headstones revealed all were nuns between ages of 45-85; only one had died of Hanson's Disease (leprosy).

Across the 1/2 mile bay stands the village. The crumbling main dock welcomes you right to the now vandalized Administration Building and Admitting Office. Records of admission dated around the late '60's and early '70's tumble from overturned file cabinets and the vault cemented into the wall shows signs of a chisel. Upstairs the Medical Officer's room still has an empty desk, rusty bed frame and yellowed girlie cut-outs pasted to the wall.

Along the shoreline in the Power Station, stands the rusted ruins of a diesel generator along with written log sheets from 1966 which have survived better than the machinery in the salt air.

The dozen or so small cottages lining the shore seem to be in the worst shape; some burned, some falling down and most are overgrown with tangle. Found an old iron here, circa 1950.

The rain finally caught up to us sending us back to Windborne and ending our first day of exploration. Late in the afternoon, we began hearing a strange, intermittent noise aboard. Sounded like a small motor or vibration or rubbing. For some time, we ignored it. However by dinnertime, the sound persisted and became louder and more frequent. Click-Buzz-Buzz (silence) Click-Buzz-Buzz

With ears against floors, walls, mast, cabinets, we zeroed in on "it" emitting from the lower port-side lockers. We spent the next few hours tearing apart all four port lockers down to the hull but still couldn't find the source of "it". We concluded that "IT" was coming from outside the hull.

In the darkness, we climbed into our dinghy armed with flashlights, spotlights, telescoping boat hook and brush. Spent yet another hour shining lights into the water and stroking the port side hull with our 8-foot pole brush, but saw (or felt) nothing.

Still, "IT" persisted.

Finally we gave up and went to bed. Sleep failed me as I lay awake listening to "IT", wondering what IT was. Tom's theory was a fish, perhaps a remora or even an electric stringray beneath the hull. My theory is more wildly imaginative (probably due to lack of sleep!): A homing device placed on our hull marking the stash of some drug runner for later pick up! Nevertheless, at midnight I got up, slid our companionway slats in place and locked us in! That allowed me to finally fall asleep.

The following night IT made noise again. Tom laid on the floor with the stethoscope from our medical kit, listening. Even attempted to catch IT on a cassette tape. Still don't know what IT is, but no longer really care-- though at 3:00 a.m. it was loud enough to annoy me. IT finally stopped at 4:00 a.m.

On the third day when I heard IT begin again around 4:30 p.m., I boldly slipped into the water. Keeping my back toward the hull and quickly looking left and right, I saw nothing (to my relief). As I grew a little braver I swam beneath and around the entire boat inspecting every inch of hull. Again, I saw nothing but continued to hear IT while I was in the water.(????) I give up.

On subsequent trips to Chacachacare with Jean Sinclair, Shelly and Chip Higgins, we sought even deeper with our machete into the camouflaging brush that hides the remains of the Leprosarium.

Countless living quarters still with a few pieces of furniture, curtains, ironing boards, shoes, toothbrushes, empty bottles. There are two churches with lots of birds and bats in the rafters.

The main room of the Hospital was set up like a large field Hospital. One big room with numbers on the wall above where the beds would've been, each about 8 feet apart. The ancient looking X-Ray Machine is in an adjacent room and dusty X-Rays lie scattered about with names on them. Next door was an examining room with a dentist-type looking chair with clamps that must have been in a Frankenstein movie!

We peered into the first floor of the Dispensary and heard two of the largest bee hives we've ever seen. They virtually were bee 'columns' measuring roughly 3-4 feet in diameter and 6-8 feet long, hanging from the ceiling.

Behind the Hospital we stumbled upon a large, concrete foundation with a heavy metal chamber looking quite like a CAT Scan. It had a horizontal rack that slid into the chamber and huge bolts would seal the robust, round door shut.

Gauges and piping were clustered on the side by large switches. Tom and Chip quickly concluded that this was a crematorium. I hedged, trying to point out that there really were no signs of heat or carbon residue. Their theories kept building on how this contraption did its dirty work when I saw something behind the chamber. I picked up a piece of paper which made us all laugh with relief . . . it was a laundry ticket listing the contents of the last load!!

Further on, what we saw in the Pharmacy was absolutely incredible. Two parallel rooms each 20' x 40' still stocked with rows and rows of boxes, vials, bottles, syringes, tablets, powders, solutions, ointments, and jars. Countertops and floor cluttered with patients records, broken vials, spilled over bottles. Even a Doctor's daily log book containing a note to himself to issue a letter of reprimand regarding a subordinate.

A Real Twilight Zone.

Indeed the bright spot of Chacachacare is its manned lighthouse, which stands on an elevation of 823 feet and can be seen from a distance of 26 miles. One morning we packed our 35mm and VCR cameras and some magazines for the lighthouse keeper and set out on the hours walk up. Reaching the pinnacle, we were greeted by a barking dog and a noisy generator house. After 10 minutes of seeing no one, I thought I'd just set the magazines on the step. Just then a black man appeared saying not one word and totally lacked any expression at all. Handed the zombie lighthouse keeper the magazines and left. Guess they don't send an extrovert out on a job like that!

THE CRUISING SCENE

The Trinidad & Tobago Yachting Association (TTYA) became our home for nearly three months. It is a local membership sailing association that has opened its doors to cruising yachtsmen. The Association holds memberships for approximately 100 locals who keep their 20-30 foot sailboats on moorings in the Chagaramas Lagoon. A family-oriented place with full enrollment for their daily sailing lessons for ages 7-16 years. The park benches beneath shade trees are always filled on weekends.

But during the week, we cruisers pretty much have the run of the place. The patio and snack bar will always find cruisers trading information or sea stories. The upstairs office gals are forever helping us with the use of their phone, fax, copier and handle our mail. Their newly installed washer and dryer have again spoiled we "sea hags" who haven't seen either in the last 14 islands! In addition, there were so many services that brought their wares to TTYA, you almost never needed to leave the compound. For instance, the vegetable and fruit truck would come by every Wednesday and Saturday, fresh shrimp was

delivered Saturday mornings, the Roti Lady was there every day at lunch and the bakery man came twice a day. Even Pizza Boys would deliver their thick, delicious, inexpensive (US\$4.00 for 14"mushroom) pizza.

The exchange rate is 5.70TT (Trinidad-Tobago Dollar) to US\$1.00. Overall prices are low on most everything except wine and liquor.

The entire cruising community in Trinidad would tune in each morning to VHF Channel 68 at 0800 for "The Cruiser's Net". This is a 30-minute, open participation format for the exchange of information. It kept us all abreast of weather, security, cruiser arrival/departures, assistance required, if anyone was leaving Trinidad by air for the US or Europe who was willing to take the cruisers flat, stamped mail, Treasures of the Bilge (items For Sale), and social announcements.

All cruisers at TTYA (approx. 75 while we were there) would get together each week for our Thursday night BBQ and Potluck under the pavilion. This was usually followed by some talented cruiser bringing along their guitar, flute, banjo (sometimes an accordian!) for entertainment. Everyone's favorite was Henry. He and his wife along with 8 year old son were from South Africa on a boat named Ghostdancing. Henry would play his guitar and sing for hours without break until we were all laughing and singing along.

Ghostdancing was only one of a dozen or so boats that had just arrived in Trinidad from South Africa. They are an outgoing and jolly bunch of people and we learned a great deal about their facinating culture -- they even taught me a few words of Zulu..

South enough to be safe from hurricanes and offering just about every yachting service imaginable, Trinidad has become a popular spot during the hurricane season. Massive boat yards with capable 150 Ton Lifts can haul, repair, paint, or construct anything out of canvas/upholstery, wood, fiberglass or metal. Trinidad grows its' own teak which results in bargain prices. We had a new teak bow sprit made for us which measured approximately 8' x 2' x 1½" and cost us US\$250.00. Comparative Stateside price would have been \$1,000.00. Our other boat maintenance on Windborne included replacing high density foam padding in our salon cushions, repaired our radar unit, installed a new starter battery and new VHF Radio. And of course, the constant battle to keep our propeller and anchor chain free of barnacles. This water grows them like weeds.

The sea water quality is not one of Trinidad's assets. Because of the Orinoco and six other rivers which run into the Gulf of Paria, the water is brackish and tea-colored, usually bringing lots of debris with its 3-foot tides. Unfortunately, this debris of plastic, cups, bottles, bags, etc., washes up choking the shorelines. The Trini's try to keep up by organizing local "Clean The Beach" Days which Tom and I volunteered for, but their problem is overwhelming.

In sharp contrast, they have no problem at all with their fresh water supply due to the enormous amount of rainfall. We are here during their wet season

and it rains intermittently every day. More accurately, the heavens turn on a fire hose several times a day. Normally, we love rain. On a boat, however, you play musical hatches -- close-open, close-open. I suppose one could leave them closed except for three things: high humidity, high temperatures and instant death by suffocation! Another thing that this wet season festers in Trinidad is mosquitos. Oh Thank God for our screens.

Well, I guess that about wraps up another chapter of Sinclair's Seafaring Saga. Tom and I will be in Ohio for the month of December and hope to see or speak with you then. We want to wish everyone the Happiest of Holidays and the best of everything for 1995!

Love,

Monika



Mind the Rudder
Or Meet the Rock