

Around the World at Five Knots

or

As the Anchor Drags

By Dee Walther

TO THOSE INTERESTED READERS WHO WANTED A BOOK:

CHAPTER 2

This “book” is not really the kind of reading that gets published. Had I set out to pursue such an endeavor my requirements would have been different. Instead, I followed my logs and hit the highlights of our movements, but I left out most of the names of other boats we saw in ports and the different people we enjoyed so much during those 10 years. They were important to us but maybe not to you, the reader. Also, I didn’t describe in detail all the many tours and sights we saw and experienced. Alluding to them and occasionally going into a little detail had to suffice.

I also apologize for some of the typos you may encounter. My proof reading was cursory at best. Possibly a 4th or 5th rereading would have improved things. But that’s why I can also not call this a book. I had no editor on my back to force such discipline on me.

Not everybody finds someone else’s 10 year adventures that interesting. But I’m the type so therefore it was not that onerous for me to write it. If you are too, enjoy.

Another thing: this manuscript starts with Chapter 2 for a good reason. The first chapter was all family history, as my point for writing this in the first place was as a gift for my son’s only child. I would hardly expect my childhood and ancestry to be of much interest to anyone else.

And so I begin my story for how this all took place:

I spent a good 10 years of active service in the US Coast Guard Auxiliary learning and doing all the things available to us as civilians. I taught, studied, and participated in boat handling. Originally, it was my intention to do some sailing with an old friend of many years standing “down the line.” But as things occurred, by the time we got closer to any possible sailing adventure, the friendship fell apart. I was now retired from teaching and all the knowledge and experience I had accrued I simply didn’t want to go to waste. So I looked around for someone who might want company from an experienced boater. And that’s where Jim Odendahl enters the picture.

But first, before I offered myself for offshore experience I went sailing for 6 weeks with a lady skipper I happened across. We went down the Florida ICW and over to the Keys. I discovered that I could live life on a sailboat very easily. So for the next year I looked into ads placed in Cruising World magazine and responded to about 6 of them. The first five, who I made a point of meeting, were an eye opener to me. I thought I had been fairly discriminating but apparently not. I was about to throw in the towel after the fifth one and seek other outlets during my retirement when I happened across Jim’s ad. He took the time to visit me on a return to the States. Neither of us was particularly impressed with the other at the first meeting. But when he was ready to move his boat through the Panama Canal and hadn’t found a suitable person to accompany him on that leg of his trip, he remembered me. I agreed to go on that segment with him. I was to

meet him on Bonaire island off of Venezuela in October 1990 for the trip. Two weeks before I was scheduled to leave he and about 13 other boats were shipwrecked on the shore of Bonaire by an unexpected weather system. When he informed me that he was able to get his boat repaired I agreed to come down later and give him a hand in reorganizing it and for an abbreviated circuit of the area once he was back in the water. On December 20, 1990 I flew down, fully expecting to be home again in a couple of months. Why the generous gesture? Actually, I had nothing else planned at the time and I had lots of experience working on boats of my own while in the CG Auxiliary. And so it began.... I was 58 years old.

Chapter 3

Dec. 1990—June, 1991

The day I got on that plane was the beginning of an odyssey that was to change my conventional life style, put me in a world with vagabonds, dreamers, and some pretty interesting people, and challenge every bit of resourcefulness I had. I also didn't realize at the time that Jim had a cadre of cruisers passing judgment on the various First Mates he had been interviewing for the different legs of his proposed trip. His previous one had not proven to be too dependable and he wanted to make sure he could sleep safely when he was off watch in the future. He apparently had had too many scares in the past. So, when I had offered to come down early and help after the shipwreck, I apparently had a leg up in the opinion of the "cruising committee." Not until I got there did I realize why. They hadn't even started on repairing the boat. So, in effect, I joined a ship wrecked sailor!

Bonaire doesn't have much on the island other than resorts catering to the tourist interested in SCUBA diving. It had a population of about 11,000, largely black, under Dutch administration. Cruisers liked to hang out there during the hurricane season. It wasn't particularly good holding in the bay but was okay as long as the prevailing trade winds didn't die and best of all it was free. Unfortunately, the trades had died on the occasion FREE SPRIT was swept ashore and a reverse wind and surge over the narrow shelf surrounding the island caused 13 boats in the anchorage to end up on the coral shore—some of them in kindling as the waves pounded. When I got there shortly before Christmas she was propped up in the yard of a resident with two big holes below water line from her pounding on the coral. Jim had contracted with a fiberglass man on the next island to begin work on her. But time in the tropics isn't the same as time in other zones. He never arrived until I was there 6 weeks. Meanwhile Jim and I had time to get to know each other and I soon made the acquaintance of a number of other cruisers. I also began my education in the cruising life style: The first thing I learned is that it involves a lot of walking and lugging of your groceries. Next you relearn the fine art of hitch hiking. The larger boats bought bicycles but we were only 38 feet. You also quickly reduce your wardrobe down to sandals, shorts and T-shirts and hope you don't need an iron for those miniscule occasions when you wear something better. I quickly grew to like the life style and especially the people who were living that way.

When the man finally arrived to work on the boat we moved into the office of the home on whose property the boat was resting. The lady there let us use her kitchen and bathroom and we tried not to be around too much when she was home from work. I propped up boat cushions for beds, and we gratefully regarded the fan and phone we had access to in the room. Two doors down from us another shipwrecked boat was propped up in the front yard and a couple from South Africa was partaking of someone else's hospitality.

Since the storm that had wrecked so many boats, a lot more cruisers were now in the marina than before. So it turned out life in the marina was where a lot of the action was that year. But first we had to get our boat back in the water. THAT was an experience in inventiveness. Jim got the two cranes on the island to lift her onto the low boy truck from the department of agriculture and then someone to weld supports to hold FREE SPRIT in position. The whole town of Kralendijk came out to watch our slow procession down the road along the bay, swaying over the bumpy parts and one of the tug boat operators, by this time a friend of ours, lifting the telephone lines from the top of the boat. Once in the port the cranes lifted her off again while a tug boat pulled her out from the cement wall. None of these people were in eye contact with each other we learned. Previous to that the boy who was supposed to break the welds on the supports ran off because he was afraid the boat was going to fall on him. But we launched successfully in spite of it all, although I had to cover my eyes for some of it. There was help from lots of sources and it was all needed as we motored right up to the marina and the motor conked out. When finally in our slip, Jim had to go through all the boat systems to see what needed repair. The usual routine for the next 6 weeks was to get one thing fixed only to discover two more waiting for him.

I did my share of work as well but the mechanical and electrical was out of my domain. So, I took care of the cooking and laundry (forget the cleaning; the boat was in a constant state of disrepair) and enjoyed the socializing in the marina. If you stay long enough in a place you make some great friends and I did. The population of the island was so small that crime tended to be almost nonexistent. You could leave your possession right out on the street or on the boat and it was never taken. In fact, it was the natives who came to the rescue of those boaters in the anchorage that managed to escape wrecking. They untangled all the anchors to enable the boats to leave a lee shore.

When we finally had the boat ready for a shake down cruise Jim decided it was too late for the Panama Canal that season. Instead he decided to make a circuit of the Caribbean and then return to Bonaire and try again in the fall. His son wanted to come down for a visit so it was arranged to meet him in the Virgin Islands. In order to get north against the prevailing winds we had to get on a better angle than Bonaire. The usual method from there was to drop down to Puerto Cabello, Venezuela, provision and tank up, and then motor along the coast eastward for some miles. After that one could generally do a straight shot northward for Puerto Rico, the gateway to the Virgins.

FREE SPIRIT, the joy of Jim's life, was not exactly a boat with a lot of built in luxuries. For one thing, its fuel tank had no gauges on it and fueling up was not fun. Most often, whether filling it from jerry cans or a pressurized hose, you ended up spilling diesel fuel. That's a big no-no around ports in the U.S. but in 3rd world countries we got away with it. But I never learned to like a stop to get fuel. Another feature of F.S. was her full cruising keel and her heavy weight. This made her a hard boat to stop in confined areas and almost impossible to back up, especially in a wind or current. So, not going into marinas, or as little as possible, became the norm. That meant launching the dingy and the motor, all of which was heavy work but the lesser of two

evils. F.S. also had what is known as an open cockpit. I called it a wet cockpit. Jim had discarded all the old cushions so you sat on the deck with your feet in the wheel cockpit. Fairly soon I figured out that those low beach chairs could be used quite well back there and subsequently we went through a bunch of them as they rusted out from the salty air and splashing. The one luxury (necessity in the tropics) was a bimini over the cockpit and a dodger over the steps going down to the interior. Later, in New Zealand, we were to replace the dodger with a hardtop. Down below, we had the usual boat interior arrangement: a tiny galley, refrigeration, stove, sink, salon eating area, side bench, head, and a V-berth bed—very wide at the top but narrow at the foot. And, always you have to make the bed on your knees. And you had to tear up the whole bed to get to the storage area where Jim put a lot of his extra parts.

To get to the engine room the steps had to be lifted. These were very heavy. They were supported by hooking them up. Once up, no one could leave the boat or come down without unhooking them. So when Jim was doing engine room work you had to decide where you wanted to be for the next few hours. He did a LOT of engine work with that first engine he had when I joined him. It also was not a particularly powerful one for a boat as heavy as F.S. was. In the head there was an arrangement for showering but we never liked it. It drained into the bilge where the bilge pump was supposed to take the shower water over the side. More often than not, we used a camper's sun bag in the cockpit or out on deck to shower when in an isolated anchorage. Leaks. Lots of boats have leaks, generally deck leaks or something similar. Ours was in the cap rail. And we never got rid of it over the V-berth area the whole 10 years. But it only affected us if the seas were rough. Only after I saw a few other cruising sailboats did I see how much more comfortable a boat could be than we had. But at the time of my first sail my plans were to only go through the Panama Canal and up to Mexico. Visions of world wide traveling only evolved by degrees for me. And by that time I was kind of used to FREE SPIRIT and her limitations.

It was 4 days to Puerto Rico. I have to laugh at some of dumb things I did and what I learned on that first trip. We were still off the coast of Venezuela doing our easting when Jim checked out why the bilge pump light was on. On checking the bilge he found it with more water than was warranted. I had heard the pump going on but didn't question it—then. Anyway, the upshot of it all was we had no water in our water tanks, tho we had filled them before leaving. Not a good idea to leave on a trip with no water. But not to fear, we had four 5 gallon jerry cans of water on deck. He said we could safely make Puerto Rico with that amount so we didn't turn back but continued on. I think the pressurized water system was leaking from the bashing we were doing against the prevailing winds. It turned out it never worked right and down the line we simply stopped using it and I used a foot pump for water. However, that story wasn't finished; unbeknownst to him I had "disinfected" the jerry can water. Not knowing a darn thing about what I was doing I put a few capfuls of Clorox into each can. UGH!! About 3 drops would have done the trick. In fact, I never again put ANYTHING in the water I brought on board after that. When we arrived in P.R. we had tons of water left in the cans.

Of course at the beginning of every new cruise Jim was always seasick and this was no exception, especially since we had 30 knot winds on our beam once we started sailing. I got

tossed around quite a bit and loved none of it. Finally, he figured out that if he was going to keep me for a second cruise he's better not heel the boat so much so took down a lot of the sail. On a more level deck I was happier but I don't believe even then I did much cooking. Neither of us was even hungry. This was not unusual on longer passages. Usually, after about 5 days I knew we had to eat more and I'd somehow get a hot meal in us. But every passage we both lost weight. On this one, however, between the foul tasting water and the rough seas we arrived with pretty much full stores.

What generally happens—at least for me—was, once you got to land, you were so happy to see it that you sort of forget all the bad parts of a passage. The mere fact of having arrived safely was such a relief! But on this passage even my first night in port was something else to experience. We dragged. The little harbor was so mucky and we had not taken time to test the anchor as the motor had died on us and we were dead tired. And so we ended up in the middle of the night rubbing the rocks next to the seawall. Jim somehow got the motor started and we circled and cropped anchor and circled and dropped anchor until it finally set properly. That was not our last dragging experience. I never got over being anxious about whether or not it would drag when the winds were up.

Once at our destination in Fajardo at the east end of the island, we embarked on a bunch of errands for the boat. I unloaded all the soggy paper backs from the V-Berth area as well as wet mattresses and left them on the dock to dry in the sun. We arranged to have a new bimini build, checked into Customs, did some shopping and cleaned up the boat. Then it was on to St. Johns Island in the Virgins to meet Jim's son Richard and his girl friend. We anchored off Charlotte Amalie among a lot of other boats within sight of some of the cruise ships docked there. The first evening in, when one of the cruise ship was backing out, its wash reached our anchorage and we swung around and side swiped another boat. Were they mad! The law of the anchorage is that whoever is there first has all the rights and YOU have to move. Well, we got scratched up too. But we didn't move—much, as there simply wasn't room to move and we weren't going to do it in the dark. But we did leave early the next morning.

From then on things went a lot better. We had a delightful sail through all the Virgins and went down the chain of windward islands finally letting Richard and Cheryl off in St. Lucia to catch their plane back to the States. I really enjoyed all the various islands and for the most part we were in protected waters and doing only day hops. We ran into friends from Bonaire and spent some time with them and saw parts of Race Week while in Antigua and some of the really big and famous racing sailors, like Ticonderoga, Centurian, and Endeavor. All was not play time however. Richard had come down with a whole lot of boat parts and Jim took the time to install some of it, especially the refrigeration. Of course, the boat was in total disrepair as Jim excavated his various storage areas and distributed his tools around. Only grudgingly did he reorganize any of it so I could cook a meal. His excuse: after all, he was going to continue working the next day on his projects. He never could understand why I begrudged him my miniscule counter space. Or why I was unhappy at the sight of some greasy piece of equipment in my sink or on the table.

But eventually we moved on. I had another new learning experience further down the line. My anxiety over dragging resulted in Jim giving up the anchor with the nylon rode and using the anchor with all chain. It was more work for him, even with a windlass. But, as it turned out, it was also going to be more work for me. I had to flake the chain as it came down and the only way to do that was to climb in the V-Berth, pull back the foot end of the mattress and then lie on it to keep it down, pull up the panel to the chain locker, toss it to one side with one arm, and then flake the chain in the locker so it would come out properly later. As soon as the anchor was up, I had to disengage myself, put back the panel, flatten the mattress, scoot off the mattress backwards and race up to the cockpit and take over the steering while he finished up on the foredeck. In one anchorage I decided that my part of the job could wait till we got clear of the shore. Jim objected but let me do it my way. Was I ever sorry! There is nothing like trying to store chain while you bounce in the waves. He didn't care for it any better up on deck.

I liked some of the islands better than others but all of them were interesting. I also learned that the more 3rd world the island the more paper work you had to do to clear in and often that paper work went into a box on the floor by some barefoot official. You also had to walk more to find the various offices required to check in. Some islands were quite advanced, like Martinique and Granada. And then there was poor Dominica, full of unpicked bananas but a medical school for students who couldn't get into stateside schools. In Bequia, we watched a wedding party on the back of an open stake truck get drenched by a sudden shower. They retreated to a covered market till it stopped, than, still dripping, climbed back on the truck, happy as ever.

Grenada, for all its loveliness, had pan handlers everywhere and lots of thieves watching the boats in the harbor. Daylight theft was rampant. But such a lovely place had the smells of spice which could be discerned even off shore. Best of all was a supermarket right on the anchorage shore.

Next we headed for Margarita Island and had a Sat Nav. experience. It had stopped computing our location and we ended up on the shore of Venezuela, luckily in the only harbor for miles around. After a night's rest and reprogramming the machine, we arrived at the fishing village on Margarita. Like a lot of other anchorages we had been in, this one was rolly too. But we took a bus into the main city for the day and enjoyed the experience of finding some of the things we were looking for. Generally that was odds and ends needed on the boat.

Since I had to get back to Michigan (I had been gone six months, having only planned on two) we moved on to the last landfalls before Bonaire. These were the Roches and Aves islands, really mostly coral atolls with some scattered islands. Both places were very popular for boaters who want to get away from it all. There was good fishing and lots of isolation. If you had a water maker, then an expensive and rare item on a cruising boat, you could spend months there so long as you enjoyed lots of fish and canned food. The Venezuelan authorities pretty much left you alone there. We had a hard time finding the opening in the coral on entering the Roches and very nearly ended up on shore in the rough waves but eventually saw some other boats going through it and followed them. The angle of the sun is all important when approaching coral openings as the water color changes according to depths. Deep blue water means an opening.

Fortunately, in that part of the Atlantic there is little tide so little current going in and out. We had a relaxing few days there before moving on to the Aves. But when ready to anchor for the night we had a rough time doing it. The first place Jim wanted to try was full of rocks and after once getting in he didn't like it so we hurried to get out of there, with me up on deck trying to direct him back out to deeper water. We scraped a goodly number of times. It was getting dark so we picked another likely spot only to have trouble setting the anchor. Jim dived it to make sure and convinced me it would hold. The next morning we woke up to unfamiliar surroundings—lots of ocean around us. We had dragged a good distance in the current and trade winds but since we had no lee shore it was all out to sea—towards Bonaire. And the bottom was still relatively shallow around us. If you have to drag, it was pretty ideal conditions.

The last sail to Bonaire was perfect, with good seas and the wind behind us. We returned to the marina there and a week later I flew back to Michigan—with a big list of boat parts and spares. Jim had extracted a promise from me to return. He had decided he didn't need to interview any more first mates and I was the one. I could stand a good night watch, didn't sleep on the job, I could navigate, cook and do laundry, shine “stainless” steel, clean and decorate the cabin, and assist him by contorting my body in confined areas to help tighten or loosen some screw. I also didn't panic in scary situations. But then most of the scary situations were still ahead of me and I just didn't know it yet. Anyway, without too much thinking ahead, I still had to make some arrangements for my house, car and dogs while I accompanied him on the next leg through the Canal and up to Mexico. While I was gone Jim was going to try and make the boat motor more reliable. Hopefully some of the spare parts I was to bring back would do the trick.

Chapter 4

Sept. 1991—June, 1992

I returned to Bonaire in September with six large boxes of parts and backups and my clothes stuffed throughout them as insulation. I was very nervous about Customs letting me through duty free as the boat was technically no longer wrecked. For whatever reason, everything got through unopened. Once back in the groove of boat life it was a return to stubbed toes on deck and hearing about the latest boat part to crash. My job while in the marina was to help Jim where I could, shop, cook, do the laundry, and enjoy the amenities of the resort attached to the marina. As we neared the anniversary of last year's storm and numerous shipwrecks, more boats left the anchorage for the safety of the marina. Social life picked up considerably. There were lots of pot lucks, happy hours, women's lunches, and meal invitations to other boats. Bette and Don from TIME OUT were parked next to us, and after a year on Bonaire had decided to move on. Together we decided to buddy-boat to Cartagena, Columbia. I was a bit skeptical about the condition of their boat but happy at the idea of company. Don spent all his time working on everyone's refrigeration on the island but he was worn out now. Meanwhile, his own boat could have stood some attention. It was November before either of us was to throw off any dock lines, however.

Before that happened Jim had to leave Bonaire for a few days as his three months were up. Immigration required a break as part of their policy. We decided to spend a week in Venezuela with another cruising couple. We split our time between Caracas and Merida, an inland city in the Andes. The day we arrived in Merida the city workers had gone on strike for the day and the city police, following the usual tradition, had kept them honest by a liberal dose of tear gas. We could do nothing but retreat to our hotels for the rest of the day but by morning everything was cleaned up again and we left for the teleferico to take us up a mountain. Our ascent to 13,000 was awesome. I was then moved to want to climb DOWN one of the four stages as a way of seeing even more. Not too smart—I had my first experience with oxygen deprivation. In Caracas we took local tours into the countryside, visiting an old monastery at one point that dated back to the 1600s. I also practiced how to swing a sock with stones in it as a way of discouraging the muggers and pickpockets in the city's subway.

On our return to Bonaire we ran into a single hander from Canada whom we had met in Grenada earlier in the spring. He had a reputation for experiencing numerous strandings and other mishaps—not surprising when you consider he had no navigational equipment. He left before we did—still jeopardizing his life in his own peculiar style. TIME OUT also left ahead of us headed for Curacao but got delayed there with—what else? Boat problems! We arrived a few days later to pick up a Colombian visa and found them doing what else? Waiting on boat parts to be returned. Nothing much changes in the cruising life! If you are wondering why we didn't leave together as in normal life styles

understand that “traveling together” often means nothing more than heading in the same direction at ABOUT the same time. Even if you left together seldom do boat see each other after the first day at sea thanks to different hull speeds and angles. Nonetheless, TIME OUT got out ahead of us once again and we met up with them in Aruba, the next island. It was a bit of a surprise to find them nicely ensconced in the marina there and Bette declaring that she had found her nirvana. The island was full of resorts and gambling casinos and Bette loved to gamble. Also, Don had had enough of breakdowns. They were going to stay put for a while. It turned out to be for another year.

We spent a few weeks with them there before moving on. Our water line was fouled with sea grass and we had a balky masthead light that wouldn't stay on and a starter that wouldn't start at times. So we had a few things we needed to do too. We stayed till early December at which point we left on the roller coaster ride to Cartagena, Columbia.

We planned on staying at least 50 miles off the coast so as to minimize contact with pirates or drug runners. I don't believe I cooked any meals those three days as the seas were big and following.

I'll say it now and I'll say it again about my cruising years: someone was looking out for our safety. This time, despite KNOWING about a false entry into the harbor of Cartagena, I navigated Jim right into it. And we managed to avoid the rocks that had been put down there by the Spanish centuries ago to thwart English pirates from slipping in unseen. Fully loaded we drew six feet. I don't know what old wooden sailing ships drew but rocks were always effective in tearing out their bottoms. They and everyone else is now obliged to go further down island and make an entry where they could be seen from a greater distance by the fort residents. This gave the fort time to prepare for a fight. On top of that, the bay is full of sandbars and back in those days there were no navigational aids to keep you in a channel. Frankly, I can't imagine how a pirate survived any of this. I don't know how we did either when I finally realized what I had done.

We anchored off Club Nautico and across from a naval base. Cartagena was very popular with cruisers, in spite of Columbia's bad reputation. Prices were ridiculously low so everyone who came took advantage of the availability of shopping, extensive marine services, and a good place to hang out. Cruisers were having upholstery done, boats painted, and things fixed. Most hung around for a season before setting off for Panama or up north to central America. No sailboat could buck the trade winds and seas going east where we had just come from so they went north before going east. The marina had a restaurant/bar and it was a great hangout for all of us. Norman, the New Zealander married to a Colombian, who ran the place had a temper but mostly he tried to be accommodating.

The anchorage, however, where we were was notorious for theft from some of the locals. Norman was not loath to get out his shot gun when he suspected thieves and fire it at night in the direction of any suspects. We anchored boats, incidentally, were also out there! No authorities every showed up to arrest him so we guessed it was within the framework of Colombian justice. We never had anything stolen in our over 2 months there but plenty of others anchored around us did. Our boat was a bit harder to climb into and we also weren't as big or flashy as some. Further, we hung our dinghy some feet above the water with the halyard and then chained it to the boat. And I flattered myself as being a light sleeper. That doesn't explain why I heard nothing of the theft to a boat right next to us..... The thieves also liked anchors and loose gear on deck, if they couldn't quite reach your electronics. And the poor Belgium couple next to us had their deck stripped.

Columbia, in short, was for years now a very dangerous country. There were at least five different elements of violent behavior: pirates, banditos, drug runner, private armies, and the military. One could hire an assassin for about \$25 and land travel between cities on public buses was done only by the locals or the ignorant. These buses could and were held up and robbed. When we were there it happened that the passengers managed to overcome the culprits who were summarily killed and left dead in the road. Vigilante justice. The only way to travel in Columbia was to fly or go on a bus that had armed guards on board. We elected not to leave the confines of Cartagena because it was a city visited by tour boats and, in order to keep that going, there were armed “tourista policia” everywhere. One was perfectly safe in the old city or in the part of town with the resort hotels. Further, all the banks and many stores also had their armed guards. Not till we got to Israel did we again see such an armed country.

We enjoyed the old city and it’s famous forts and especially liked the fact we could take our mechanical problems to shops that could repair things. We could also get mail at the marina so we decided to order some more solar panels from the States. We also heard about someone doing cushion reupholstery. This particular individual was a barefoot local who spoke no English. Having selected our new material from a one inch swatch we packed him off in a cab with all our cushions and hoped for the best.

After some weeks and hearing nothing about our solar panels we learned they had come in but we hadn’t gotten the message and they were packed off to storage at Customs. Customs was one place you never wanted to visit in a foreign country. The red tape exceeds one’s imagination. Knowing that, I thought, while Jim worked on the boat, I’d better arm myself with a translator if we expected to retrieve them. There happened to be a Spanish speaking gentleman who for some reason was sleeping in someone’s cockpit. He was an older man and claimed he was an American. He was quite agreeable to helping me which made, I thought, the retrievable a possibility. The day consisted of standing in line outside various offices to get things signed. By the time the offices were to close we still had not completed the required stamps and checks. My companion was by this time getting annoyed and, on spying the head of the Customs unit there he charged up to him, said he was a journalist, thought the Colombian system of doing things was the pits and furthermore, he was going to write about it and tell the world! Of course I knew nothing of what he was saying until he related it to me later on our way back to the marina. At that point I went into shock. I had visions of us never seeing those solar panels again and at the very least feared they’d throw us out of the country.

The next morning I was prepared for the worst when I saw Norman with the very same Customs officer on our dock. Deciding that throwing myself on his mercy was the best recourse, I approached them before he could summon me. To my complete surprise, he and Norman had decided that I was the innocent victim of all this. Then he introduced me to his son who he said would be my translator to finish the process, put us in his chauffeured car and off we went to get our solar panels. When the last official there objected to my signing Jim’s name even the chauffeur got into the act and told him to “bug off.” Then I was driven back to the marina. Meanwhile, Norman had kicked my translator out. Later that evening this gentleman persuaded someone to row him to our boat in the anchorage. He needed a place to sleep and a hand out.

We kept him one night in our cockpit but early the next morning took him ashore quietly and wished him luck. The last thing we needed was for Norman to send US packing. First rule of traveling: one never insults officials of a country while a guest there.

Jim, all this time, was finding more and more motor problems. He decided that having it hauled out and checked over in one of the boat yards while we had the facilities available was the way to go. So we moved into one of the big industrial ones where they did major boat repairs. When finally on the hard, we had to limit our electrical usage as the battery charger stopped working and the wind generator didn't get enough wind. There was a fish processing plant next to us so we begged ice from them for our refrigeration and went to bed early. But not necessarily to sleep. They were also sand blasting freighters and putting on patches next to us. Interesting to watch but messy to live in. Jim wired up the new panels, then threw out our non-functioning hot water heater. Goodbye hot water for the next 9 years. Its spot in the engine room was later to be taken by the reverse osmosis water maker which was an entirely satisfactory trade off.

After the motor was reinstalled and the bottom painted we returned to the anchorage off Club Nautico. It seems that theft there had stepped up so we were obliged to take turns sleeping in the cockpit. That in itself wasn't too bad but the odors from the overflowing sewer on the street in front of the club was getting obvious. All of it floated back into our anchorage water. To the Colombians this apparently wasn't a health hazard. Since our dinghy lines were always in that water I made sure we washed our hands regularly after handling them and managed to avoid Montezuma's Revenge.

We finally left Columbia in early February, this time leaving by the appropriate entry. We met friends in some islands just off shore where a man was training dolphins in cages right on the ocean. After his demonstration he invited us to feed them and then go in the pool to swim with them. I knew he offered this to others so we came prepared with our swim suits under our clothes. It was really quite thrilling to do the swim and they acted just like little puppies. Jim, however, sustained a slap to the head as they were leaping about so was less taken with the experience.

Back on the boat we discovered we had salt water into the engine again. I can't tell you how disgusted I was getting about all this. Try as he could, Jim was not able to figure out why. We purged the engine with diesel again and went back to the ship yard. They did something, but as it was to prove, not enough to stop the problem. At this point I was convinced this engine had suffered terminal damage in the ship wreck and wasn't ever going to be any good. However, we still had good winds so we set off for Panama under sail. That first night out was rough. In the middle of it, while I was asleep in the salon we took an unusually hard wave on our beam. The next thing I knew I was thrown to the cabin sole and the side bunk came down on me. Jim was below in the galley also and both of us were drenched by a wave that broke in our starboard window over the navigation station. Everything on the port side was washed down but the Nav. Station and the single side bad were spared. My stove was to suffer from rust for years from that incident. But at the time I was not worried about any of that. I just wanted to know if we were sinking! Apparently not, as we soon heard the bilge pump kick on as the water drained into the

bilge. No more sleep that night. We had to jerry rig a covering over the window which would thwart any more water coming in. I was far too keyed up to sleep anymore—even if I had had a dry bunk.

With daylight the seas started to calm. We were headed for the San Blas islands off Panama. Two days later we maneuvered our way through the surrounding coral and anchored off one of them. With a decent night's rest we began the process of cleaning up. Jim then siliconed the broken Plexiglas window together. It wouldn't sustain another wave but it kept everything else out. We planned on replacing all the windows with Lexan on the outside when we got to Panama City. In the meantime we did a little wandering among the islands and bought molas from the Indian women and, once again, ran into other old friends.

Before we could move on we discovered salt water in the engine again. Back to the old drill! Our next stop was Puerto Bello—the old Spanish staging port for the Spanish treasure fleets. The large bay is surrounded by 3 low forts near the entrance. They are full of 16th century cannons. The town, once a Spanish enclave, is now an all black village. The bay is half silted in. We went ashore but only stayed the one night. The next day we reached Colon, the canal entrance.

Colon looked like a turn of the century, old town. Which it was. It was built for the workers on the canal in the early 1900s. We stayed in the yacht club there, undoubtedly built for the later American canal workers. It was fenced in and we were warned not to walk the streets but to take cabs everywhere due to the muggings. The city is all black and there was 50% unemployment. Yet, in the midst of all this they have put a huge Free Zone which sells only to foreigners. You could literally get just about anything there from any number of countries. Buyers from around the Caribbean would come to make their large quantity selections. After we checked in, we were driven by the police to the zone as we couldn't find a cab. We bought a hand held VHF radio and a new portable generator—both were replacing ones malfunctioning from the wreck. How I wished we could have bought a new boat motor!

We couldn't go through the canal until we were “measured” which was done by a canal official. Why little sail boats needed this I don't know but the policy is to measure the possible tonnage of all boats using the canal. Once we finished that we were given a date to transit. We had to hire 3 locals to be line handlers and have the proper number of lines and lengths on board as well. The day we transited two of us smaller sailboats were rafted off of a larger sailboat and we were to lock in that way. Obviously tied together that way we didn't need the 9 line handlers but those were the rules. Maneuvering three abreast is not easy, and it created a lot of problems from the wash of the passing tug boats and the big ship in front of us when it started up to leave the locks. The middle guy was not too happy. I was expecting cleats to be ripped out. But we survived without damage the first two sets of locks into Lake Gatun. That's not always the case, however. We separated the boats and motored across the lake to the anchorage which took us till after dark. Our advisor was still on board and he, at least, knew where he was going. This was one of the very few times we were to anchor in the dark. It was a tiny little place right on the edge of the shipping lane. We heard boats moving all night. In the early morning he came back

on board and we transited the last set of locks and took a buoy off the Panama City yacht club. No one was allowed to anchor there as the tides were 15 feet. Also, you could not use your dingy to go ashore; you had to call for the free launch which took it's own sweet time in coming.

Jim got started right away looking up a man who was recommended to us for putting up the Lexan over the windows. It involved lots of traveling around with the man for the materials. Only when he had to travel behind him on a motorcycle was Jim less than enthusiastic. We got the Lexan up but the decorative frame around it was to cause us no end of aggravation. Apparently our man consigned it out to a local and the local operated strictly by tropical time. We never did get his frame; we just left after what we considered a generous amount of time.

Meanwhile, I made regular forays into Panama City for groceries and whatever I needed. I even picked up material to make new window curtains and got them sewed and half hung before we left. I learned how to use the bus to get where I wanted to go tho more than once I had people warn me to look out for muggers. Panama City was not Colon, however. It was quite modern and had most everything you could want in a city. The old "canal zone" area was laid out very nicely, tho under the Panamanians it was slowly deteriorating. We went to the American military post from time to time to mail letters and ate out frequently. A year before there had been an American incursion to remove Noriega, the current dictator. We could see evidence of war damage here and there but everything else had returned to normal

When we decided we had wasted enough time waiting for our window frames we took off. We were expecting to meet up with Jim's son in Costa Rico so we had to get moving. Our first stop was in the Perles islands about 50 miles off Panama. In our first anchorage a couple of black men in a panga, and sporting gold front teeth with a marijuana leaf inscribed in them came to the boat. We were pleasant; they were pleasant. My Spanish was very limited. But I gathered they wanted to sell us something that smoked. To that I replied "No fuma," meaning, that we didn't smoke. They stood in their panga and looked us over and the boat as well, smiled and left. We knew that drugs were reputed to come from this area but we didn't expect to have to buy them. We also didn't know how they took rejection so we quietly left early the next morning. Since we weren't robbed in the night we assumed our boat didn't look like anything worth robbing. Two years later a man was killed with his own gun in that anchorage because he resisted a boarding and was overcome. We earlier figured out that resistance was dumb and for that reason never had a gun on board.

Our next anchorage was in a bay where a German couple was homesteading. We understood this couple had escaped their respective mates and had the big dream to sail the world. I guess they only got as far as Panama because their old steel boat looked a great deal the worse for rust. Meanwhile, now they lived in a hut, grew a lot of their food, she washed clothes in a stream, and captured wild boar for fresh meat, and he occasionally took the old tub back to Panama City for other refreshments. She, I assume, caught up on the wash while he was gone.

After leaving the Perles, we gunk holed up the Panamanian coast. After rounding one cape we no longer had the wind with us. That meant no more sailing as we traveled NW up the central

American coast and no more wind for the wind generator either. Some of those anchorages were truly lovely, especially Bahia Honda, tho any people who lived there were black and poor. Finally near the border of Costa Rica we ran into another homesteading couple from Israel. They, too, lived in a hut but it was a bit more civilized by the presence of some electricity and a cell phone and a motor boat. I wasn't, however, exactly thrilled by the huge snake skin they draped over their door. It was their intention to create some sort of cruisers stop over but I couldn't see how they could earn any money at it. Cruisers were notorious for wanting free anchorages when not in a city.

Finally we arrived at Golfito, Costa Rica for a rest stop. It consisted of unending heat, running into more old friends, a dinghy motor that stopped working, a windlass also acting up, and water in the motor again. What else wasn't new? We managed to get the dinghy motor back in operation but the windlass needed a machine shop. The good news was there were lots of restaurants here and we had mail waiting. Before we left there we also bought a small dinghy motor as a back up from a German man whose wife and child had just left him—a sea story not that uncommon. Another dream trip had just ended for a cruiser.

In due course we arrived in Puntarenas. The anchorage was up a river full of sandbars and I did not have a chart of it. Eventually the presence of a lot of anchored boats told us we were off the “yacht club”. It was a beat up barn of a place with reminders of a hurricane having visited the area. Mostly it was a workshop area with a few couches and a shower. It was right in town so everyone took their dinghies to the thing called a dock there. While there we learned of a real yacht club further up the river. We needed a place to leave the boat when our guests wanted to take a road trip so we checked it out. Theft was endemic in Costa Rica. Often everyone knew who the thief was but you could not prosecute unless you caught him in the act. Boats were a favorite target so if the boat was ever to be left overnight in order to travel ashore you had to hire a cockpit sitter. He probably was a good friend of the thieves but he was being paid so generally your property was still there when you returned. He might even be a thief himself if work was light. We decided that we'd pay the yacht club this time as they had a guard for the place.

We went up to San Jose early so I could check on flights for my own return to the States later after our guests left. Jim was going to stay in Costa Rica and supervise the installation of a new motor while I was away. This item was sort of his guarantee that I'd be back. I was going to supervise the collecting of a whole new batch of things to be brought back to the boat when I returned. But first we had guests for two weeks to entertain. Our first week we cruised the big bay and surrounding islands in the area. The second week we rented a car and visited Monteverde national park and some of the rest of the countryside and a few of the numerous volcanoes in C.R. After they left we hung out at the yacht club a while longer while Jim checked out some of the machine shops in the area and made arrangements for the engine installation when it reached C.R. But we still had time to kill before I flew back and there were no other cruisers in the yacht club so we decided to hang out at Isla Guitana, which was a popular cruiser hangout about 14 miles from Puntarenas. We were also out of sight of the port authorities there.

Costa Rica only allows you 6 months in the country before you must leave. Again, cruisers sometimes hang out indefinitely if they like a place. In our case, we knew that because of our arrival time and because of the hurricane season we would be more than 6 months all told in the country. So we checked in weeks late and, as it turned out, hung around for weeks longer once we had checked out. Isla Guitana was where most of us went when we didn't want to be seen by the port authorities. It made getting fresh food harder but it was a great place for hanging out. It was social, friendly and the 2 couples that ran the rustic resort there encouraged it. Their outdoor bar was the place to be. Other visitors there were 5 dogs, a peccary that thought he was a dog, 2 cats, a spider monkey, 2 cotamundis, and a chicken who had his own bar stool. In the background you could hear the howler monkeys. It seemed like everyone going down the C.R. coast stopped in there. But all of us were pretty much in awe of one boat couple who came. Their particular story had proceeded them via the radio nets on the single side band. It seems while in Mexico they had been terrorized, robbed and vandalized by some thieves in the night. Once they left, the skipper retrieved a hidden gun and shot and killed them as they were rowing away. He still lost everything they had stolen as their boat tipped over. After investigation by Mexican authorities they let the couple leave the country without censure on the basis that the perpetrators were "bad guys" from another country. None of us were quite up to asking them anything about it; they kept to themselves and we did not disturb them.

Before I left I informed Jim that I would be back AFTER the motor was installed. I was not about to be isolated up on deck or below in the heat of the salon while the steps were up and work was going on in the engine room. We moved the boat back to a buoy off Puntarenas and the next day went to San Jose and the airport. I flew out June 1 and Jim went back to the anchorage to wait on the motor's arrival.

Chapter 5

Sept. 1992 --- April 1993

I came back to Costa Rica about 3 months later again loaded down with a bunch of new “toys” from Jim’s wish list—water maker, inverter and GPS among other things. The GPS had just started getting into a reasonable price range and we were thrilled to be done with the old, not too dependable, satellite navigation. There had been lots of interesting happenings among the collected cruisers in Puntarenas while I was gone, not the least being a ship wreck. Jim had the new motor in but it had not yet had its trial run. He had also ordered built some additional cabinetry for the salon and it was awaiting my varnishing skills.

Since the motor was shipped from the States with no instructions, schematic, manual or start up procedures, had only 3 motor mounts, and the wrong prop, Jim had had some interesting times finally getting everything in right. Typically, he was using the expertise of other cruisers, many of whom had significant skills. Some financed their whole sailing life style in this way. Anyway, the shakedown trial was perfect. Finally a dependable engine! No more flushing with diesel fuel and we had a more powerful engine, one more appropriate for our heavy boat.

Jim was anxious to leave the estuary after three months there so we paid off all the bills he had run up and left for Isla Guitana and a quiet place to install the new things. The rainy season and frequent heavy winds and storms were also occurring and we had good shelter there. We were close enough to Puntarenas to go back from time to time for needed supplies or parts or mail, which is what we did for the next two and a half months.

During this time one of the cruisers died of a heart attack. He was one who had “gone island”, meaning he had deserted most of his previous standard of living. He had already been kicked out of Mexico for staying too long illegally and was apparently intending to do the same in Costa Rica. His boat was in shambles and the motor was spread out in parts in his cockpit. Since he believed that changing engine oil was a trick of the oil companies to get rich it was not surprising it stopped working. My only contact near his boat was to stand in our dingy next to it and watch the cockroaches run around. They had invited us to dinner which I politely declined. Anyway, his girl friend, another character in her own right, was left to sell off all their possessions in order to afford the plane ticket home. When the previous owner reclaimed the still unpaid for boat, he cried when he saw its condition. The woman still didn’t have enough money to get home so the cruisers chipped in and so did the “yacht club” just to get her off the premises where she had moved and was sleeping on the old battered couch there.

This was only one of the many “As the Anchor Drags” stories of various characters who for their own reasons wanted to hang out in Costa Rica. Many were already in

illegal status for some time and they ranged from a retired American cop to deserted girl friends. The stories were abundant and the characters were book material. Still, the vast majority of cruisers we met were ships passing through on their way to the Caribbean or up to Mexico and they tended to be solid, committed couples.

Life at Isla Guitana was not all reading and lounging. Although I never worked as long or hard as Jim did I wasn't without responsibility. While he was generally trying to overcome the effects of a salty atmosphere on the electrical systems and mechanical instruments, I frequently had jobs like cleaning the waterline of scum and hard to remove sea grass, knocking off barnacles, varnishing, doing paint repair, breaking down and cleaning the wenches, learning how to use the GPS, and securing all the charts. All this in addition to cleaning, laundry, and food purchases. I also sewed all the covers that we had on the boat as well as most of the courtesy flags. While Jim spent a lot of time in the engine room, at least some of my jobs got me out and about among the other cruisers. And I simply knocked off whenever I was tired. Often the problem Jim was trying to track down kept him at it for days in a very cramped and hot engine room. Jim loved the life style and I was quite content for the most part. I especially enjoyed the diversity of people I met of which ninety-nine percent would pitch in and help you any time you had a need you couldn't handle alone.

When the Pacific typhoon season was over in early November we left for Acapulco, Mexico. Five boats were headed that way. You had a choice of how you wanted to do it: go along the shore, or out to sea. Two of us decided on the sea route as it was shorter and Jim didn't know what his fuel consumption was going to be, thanks to no manual. We hoped we could sail at least part of it, whereas the other way was mostly motoring. One of the features of this leg of the trip was the infamous Gulf of Tehuantepec, a very tempestuous area in lower Mexico. At this point in the country, the land mass narrows and lowers, which allows weather systems from the Gulf of Mexico to cross it and pass their nasty weather into the Pacific side. If taking the shore route, you got lots of wind but no sea build up but you also had fishing boats to contend with. If you went to sea the recommended distance was 350 miles off shore. We were 180 miles off shore when we saw the weather change and proceeded to get hit by all the stuff for which the Tehuantepec was famous—storms, rain, wind and wild seas. We had two miserable days of it. The good part is that the auto pilot kept going the whole time, even tho there was no possibility of a hot meal. But Jim usually got sea sick in those conditions and I was never hungry. In rereading my log for this book I wrote that this would be the last leg I'd be taking with Jim. Ha! Amazing what the return of good weather will do to some decisions! The last three days of this ten day trip were fantastic; calm, with lots of sea life to observe, and magnificent sunsets and little traffic. Balm for the wounded.

We spent about eight days resting up in the new and largely unoccupied marina in Acapulco. We took in a variety of local sights, ate out often and Jim computed from our fuel consumption what we could expect in mileage on our new engine. It was a very economical .4 liters at 1200 rpms. Were we happy! But supervision of all systems is on- going at all times on a sailboat. Jim was always monitoring something while at sea. And in an anchorage where he could get into the water he had things to check too. This time he discovered that the zinc one attaches to the hull as sacrificial metal was badly deteriorated which required him to replace it—underwater, of course. The fuel filter also needed cleaning—not surprising and totally expected when using 3rd world fuel. But the new water maker worked like a charm, and unlike so many other things we had added on, needed no adjustment. For me, who often took the dingy run with empty jerry

cans to fill to shore, it was the end of that aspect of sea life. It had been great for muscle development but a real downer in all that heat.

When ready to leave we took an overnight passage to Zihuatanejo, a place recommended by other cruisers as a good hangout over the Christmas holidays and the bottom of the circuit for those boats who stayed on the western Mexican coast. "Z-what" was an old fishing village in its pre-tourist days and was on a lovely small bay. It was now a mini Acapulco with a developing resort area just another bay away. We came into Z's bay and determined you anchored out as the cement pier was totally occupied by local boats. Then you took your dinghy to shore and pulled it up on the beach in front of a naval detachment. The Pacific swell caused a degree of surf in this bay and it took a while for Jim to get the hang of how to get ashore without drenching us both. No problem unless you had things you didn't want to get wet. You dried off fast in the tropics. Since we were early for the cruiser crush we spent the time familiarizing ourselves with the town and its accommodations. The all important laundry was immediately sought out. We both got a good rest before the bay filled up with boats, a radio net was established, and a group of us women organized a Christmas dinner at one of the local restaurants. We filled the place. The turkey was good but the Mexican idea of stuffing could pass for a brick!

In the meantime, Richard and a guest had once again come for a visit. Richard always brought whatever personal mail that had accumulated as well as any requests of ours. All business mail and our taxes he handled and we never saw. So we were always nice to this man who in a sense, made this lifestyle possible for us. We took them into some of the other near by anchorages but, being a holiday, the area was full of visitors and all of them seemed to have jet skies. It was a case of rocking and rolling until nightfall. After a week everyone took off and we were free to continue our trip up the coast. Some of the boats that had left Costa Rica along the shore caught up with us then and brought us late mail and filled us in on the last of the soap operas going on there.

For those on the Mexican cruising circuit certain coastal towns have developed reputations for certain activities. Z. was the place to be for Xmas. Another place boasted a big St. Pat's day party. Others were famous for a week of races with land crabs! The word gets out and the boats come in. And by the time of the next Pacific typhoon season, most of them headed for the Sea of Cortez, as we were, to sit it out. Our passages now were all day trips, leaving early in the morning before the on-the-nose wind came up. When it did we looked for a secluded bay, headland, island or just big rock to tuck in to or behind; anything that would cut down on the Pacific roll. Since our windlass no longer worked at all we had switched to the nylon rode and its anchor. In one anchorage in Manzanillo, we had quite a time trying to set our anchor as about 4 big dolphins wanted to play with the nylon rode. We learned later they were a fixture of the place.

The coast line from Manzanillo is truly lovely with many miles of sweeping and often unoccupied sand beaches, rock outcroppings or cliffs, large bays and sometimes mountains right down to the water. Behind all of these are more mountains, higher than in Costa Rica. It was very pretty country. Of course, many of the coastal towns had built resorts. Mexico, we found

out on this long coastal trek, had really gone overboard doing it. But not all of them were well built or successful. The rumor was that some used beach sand with salt in it and those we saw starting to crumble.

Finally we rounded into the big Bay of Banderas at whose head lay Puerto Vallarta. We pulled into its relatively new, posh marina this time. It was surrounded by beautiful condos and restaurants and contained numerous big and expensive yachts. It also had a work yard and we needed to haul our boat, clean off the rest of the Costa Rican barnacles and get the boat bottom repainted. Our “industrial strength” anti-fouling paint, done in Columbia, had died on us when the boat was out of the water too long in Costa Rica having work done on it while I was in Michigan. Since we would be leaving the boat further up the coast for an indefinite period of time we needed to find it with a clean, sailable bottom on our return. This time both of us would be going back to the States.

But for the month we spent in Puerto Vallarta in such a five star atmosphere it was a return to civilization. There was the usual cruisers’ radio net every morning and tons of information about where to get what. Some cruisers there even had cars and made the run up to California as they needed to. Often they took orders from any number of boats and came back loaded with supplies. But what we loved were the good supermarkets and numerous American items and the availability of so many cheap restaurants. It was decided to come back to this place prior to crossing the Pacific the next spring.

On the trip from Zihuatanejo our windlass ceased to work, one roller furler came down on the fore stay and the refrigeration was on again-off again. Besides having to chip off giant size barnacles we had to check all the through hull holes for them. Jim had his work cut out for him when we went on the hard so he hired a helper to assist with the grunt work. There were always plenty of locals or Americans hanging around who were looking to build up their cruising kitty. But a week on the hard is about all I tolerated: you had no toilet on board, although you could hook up for electricity and your own propane enabled you to cook there, if you wanted. If you did, you had to wash all your dishes someplace else other than your own sink so as not to spew brown water all over below. But you climbed a ladder to get in and out and usually the yard was so dusty and dirty from the boats cleaning bottoms that you took any opportunity to leave the place. I chose dinner time. And the inside of the boat was its usual chaotic mess from the liberal distribution of Jim’s five tool boxes so work space for me was always a battle.

While in Puerto Vallarta we got word that his daughter, Tanya, was getting married and when could she expect us so she could set the date? I had to determine first where we were going to leave the boat and how long it would take to get there. Jim left everything connected with navigation, chart collection, and ports of call up to me. We had a rough idea how high up in the Sea of Cortez it was safe to be during the next hurricane season and as best we could, we calculated a safe margin of time that still enabled us, after leaving Mexico, to visit some of his other kids on the way to Florida. I had also made the decision to sell my house at this time. So, after the wedding we planned on returned to Holland, Michigan and take care of all that that entailed. Thus, we expected to be gone for some months.

Before we left to continue north, we attended a meeting of those cruisers in the area who were planning to leave that next spring for the south Pacific. I wanted to learn how they prepared themselves and some of their land falls. I also wanted the chance to do some chart copying if I could get it. I found the information I acquired was quite helpful.

In early February we got underway, leaving behind the hot showers, easy shopping, bus service and telephones to head for La Paz in Baja California. We made day trips until it was time to cross the Sea of Cortez, which was a very smooth crossing, and arrived in La Paz ten days later. The anchorage across from town was chock-a-block full of sailboats, mostly from California. This was another cruisers hangout, without a doubt. And it too had a radio net, personal cars and lots of cruiser activities. I was surprised to learn they had even more American products here and, of course, some great information I could use for our further passages. Most helpful of all, I learned of the best place to leave the boat. I really liked it there! But we couldn't stay as long as I would have liked. Before we left, while out to a rare afternoon movie in town, our sailboat took off during the "La Paz Dance." This is a tidal change that caused all the boats to dance around. FREE SPIRIT took the opportunity to dance off! We dragged anchor. Before she could do any damage to any other boats three sets of crew chased her, boarded her and dropped every bit of her chain to stop her. We came back in the dark and it took calling from another boat's radio to the assembled anchorage to find out where she was. This was a bit embarrassing but at least we learned we had not done any damage to anyone else. We paid for our transgressions when we left by having to pull up 200 feet of chain and its anchor without the help of our disabled windlass. Not fun!

We left La Paz after fewer days than I would have liked but we needed to get going. Stops in some of the smaller islands near shore proved to be too windy and we pitched too much. We did our day hops and stayed in coves on the Baja peninsula instead. The country was exceedingly scenic as we headed north. It was like looking at the walls of the Grand Canyon with all their colors and layering. A lot of it was vivid, stark and awesome. We were both very intrigued by it since it came as a big surprise to us.

In Puerto Escondido we entered an enclosed harbor after passing what looked like a hash job on a seawall entrance. A marina had been started but not finished. On the shore, the same thing. Streets were laid out but the job deserted. Obviously stage #1 of a big tourist development that died. But, inside the protected harbor, with a magnificent mountain backdrop, was a real surprise. It looked like a trailer park of sailboats—complete with floating porches tied next to some boats. Obviously a well ensconced group, and probably not at all unhappy with the demise of the development on shore.

Several boaters came over to impart their self imposed rules on us, possibly thinking we might be future squatters. But, overall, everyone was friendly. We stayed a few days and even accepted a ride into Loretto for some shopping and later went canyon climbing with another couple. From one of the more permanent settlers we learned about a good marina on the mainland that was popular with those leaving their boats in Mexico.

As we traveled further north we had to contend with rougher seas and wind on the nose. Seas were always short and choppy in the Sea of Cortez when the wind came from the north. In San Juanico Cove we visited the “Boaters Memorial Tree” a scraggly growth of indeterminate origin. We left our own memento of a large clam shell at its base. Lots of inventiveness went into some of those mementos left by other boaters—driftwood, shell hangings, parts of boats, etched stones, etc. We saw names we recognized. Some of those visitors ultimately ended up laying out a stone lined walk way which made the whole area look something like a shine. Knowing cruisers, it was a shrine to good times.

The next hop north was quite rough as we were getting more middle latitude weather and the Sea of Cortez was like a big lake—not too deep—with the resultant effect of developing short choppy waves. You got wet and it was uncomfortable. When we got to Chivato Point we dropped the hook to wait it out before we crossed over to the mainland. After a day it wasn't much better so we decided to do a night passage when the winds tended to be lower. Once out, things were not much better than before so that we arrived in the early morning with little sleep for either of us and with Jim having succumbed to seasickness. We entered the small, well protected bay at San Carlos above Guaymas and grabbed what space we could. This bay was filled with boats on buoys, most of them with their owners back in the States. It was Easter weekend and we knew nothing in the little town would be open but we could take a rest till they did. Then, I took the dinghy out to see if I could learn some information from any of the resident boaters near us. I got lucky. Not only did I find what I was looking for but the same couple who were so helpful with information also did sail repair as a means of earning their way around. Our sails were badly in need of restitching. They also had a truck and when they learned we were planning on flying back to the States they offered us taxi service to an airport.

When the shops opened we went to a travel agency for tickets as far as Austin, Texas where we were to see the first of our families. Now we had to get the boat ready to leave it so moved out and up to the next bay where Marina Real was located. It was supposed to be another big development but only a few houses were built. The marina was finished, sort of—at least to the point where a lot of Americans were using it to leave their boats during the hurricane season. We spent some busy days clearing our decks, cleaning, sorting and organizing a new list of nautical things to bring back. The young couple came the night before to pick up our perishable food as well as a pile of clothes they could keep or give away. Jim made arrangements with the dock master for a boy who would regularly check our drain holes and keep them clear and at the last minute got the dock connection wiring to work so that we could hook up and HOPEFULLY keep our batteries and bilge pump operational. The next morning we were picked up early and taken to the airport, lugging along with us our heavy windlass, which had to be repaired in the States.

We were in the States from mid-April to late October. During that time we went to three weddings—Jim's daughter, one of his son's, and shortly before returning to the boat, our own in Las Vegas. We had sold my house in Michigan and had driven the car as far as San Diego and eventually back to the boat. We had managed to see all our six kids in the interim. We were

loaded down with new things for the boat, including 5 deep cycle batteries. When we got back, ours were dead, not to our surprise.

CHAPTER 6

Oct. 1993 – Nov. 1994

It took us about 3 weeks to put the boat in shape after our return to Mexico. We had been 6 months off the boat and we were a bit rusty but because we were not bucking the prevailing wind this time we were able to sail some of the time. Of course the boat expressed its displeasure at being abandoned for so long by developing a number of breakdowns—all of which Jim jotted down for his next fax to Richard who was expected again for Xmas. A brief visit back to La Paz and its many American products enabled us to provision and then it was out of the choppy waters of the Bay of Cortez into the ocean swells of the Pacific. Some days later we reentered the Bay of Banderas and settled in again at the posh Marina Vallarta. We had left our car back in the Guaymas area so a week later we took an overnight bus back there to get it. Our souvenir from that little trip was for both of us to pick up horrible colds which lasted us each a month. Nothing like a good Mexican germ!

Richard came once again loaded down with replacement parts and mail. Kurt came in later in January with more parts, discovered to be needed even as we put in the first ones. It would be nice to say we enjoyed our time in Puerto Vallarta but the truth is Jim was working incessantly and after finally getting out of the grip of my cold I did some serious varnishing, painting, courtesy flag making, and canvas work. We took advantage of the many cheap restaurants and used the car for a lot of running around to locate other things---a blessing we would soon be leaving behind for the duration of the trip.

During this time the “Si-Oui” radio net was organized among the boaters planning a spring departure for the Pacific. We were a group of nearly 50 boats. We didn’t realize it at the time but that same radio net was to be in existence and with us all the way around and back to the Caribbean in 2000. A handful in that group stayed together in all the big passages, adding new boats during each passage, happy to be part of a well established radio net. We even had a sort-of meteorologist among us whose weather fax was consulted regularly. His wife was the chief operator of the net during our daily contacts. At first it was done via HAM but changed to single sideband. Not being a HAM, I had my radio adjusted for the latter. It wasn’t exactly legal but I wasn’t too worried about being cited by the FCC—as was true of everyone else doing the same thing.

Boats started moving out of Puerto Vallarta in early March of ’94 heading for the Marquesas Islands. We were being held up by a big delay in finding an adequate mechanic for a job Jim couldn’t do and we still had to go on the hard and get the bottom done. But on April 3 we left the marina and joined the exodus. The car had been turned over to another boater who was taking it to Kurt in San Diego. We were finally free to relax—the usual delusion on embarkation after a rest stop of continuous work.....

We arrived in Hiva Oa, Marquesas Island on our 29th day at sea. It was a slow passage at best, but not a particularly scary one until the last night when we had to tack off shore in strong winds, waiting for dawn in order to see ourselves into the harbor. That said, the qualifier here is: But there were a few exceptions to that easy passage. On the 4th day out we decided to try out our drifter in light winds. We hadn't had time to practice with it before leaving so, naturally, the unexpected was going to happen. In launching it we committed the first in a comedy of errors. Jim pulled the douser line and the sail went into the water and the halyard to it went up the mast. Though not exactly enthusiastic about climbing the swaying mast to retrieve it, he climbed to the spreaders where it was lodged and brought it down, only to find he had brought it down on the wrong side of the mast. He declined a return trip as we watched his arms and legs begin to bruise up. He suggested we try and "flick" the end over to the other side but using the main halyard to do this. His idea of a flick was to jerk the end out of my hand. We both watched the end retreat up the mast, this time to the top of it. At that point we knew we were in deep _____!!!!

The next morning Jim gave me the choice of returning to land or he could rig up the topping lift to act as a halyard for the main. I elected to go on. We double reefed the main, he did his little magic act with the topping lift, and we still had the two foresails. In case we had to bring in the boom he hooked up a pulley on the back stay. Except for changing tacks, we had to use the pulley only one other time. And on we went.

Things went along fine, if slowly, until the 16th day when we discovered our foresail was down and dragging in the water. This had happened on another occasion when the roller furling had failed and we had replaced the little balls in the swivel. Not to be this time. As the sail came down its halyard went up—to the top of the mast. Now we had 3 halyards up the mast!!!

We were now reduced to 2/3 of a main sail on a very tenuous halyard and our small stay-sail. Which is the way we finished the trip on our 29th day. Winds were very light and fluky from 3 degrees north to 7 degrees south. We motored on and off as needed to keep moving. Our last 3 days out were really our roughest and then only because we finally got some southern hemisphere trade winds which we learned are not as dependable as the trades in the northern hemisphere. Not a fast passage, to be sure, but success is not to be disparaged no matter how it arrives!

Those were the eventful things. The rest of the time we read, did some low priority jobs, I did laundry, we took numerous naps, watched a few video tapes, I studied my French, and watched my fingernails grow. Cooking was an adventure at times as we rolled but the gimballed stove managed better than I did. As it got warmer and warmer we shed more and more clothes. Side benefit: less laundry.

Interestingly, you don't eat much on a passage. Your body works isometrically trying to keep balance and your stomach doesn't feel hungry. I still had fresh veggies when we arrived. All our systems—water maker, engine, inverter, etc. worked well. Human error accounted for the other problems which Jim was able to work around. But on any long passage a boat, any boat, usually arrives with something to fix. Boats arriving from the Galapagos, we learned on arrival,

had a few shredded sails. In our own case we chafed through our lazy jacks, but then they were doing double duty helping to hold up the boom. Another boat arrived with a frozen engine. Sea water had gotten in it. They had to sail all the way to Tahiti before they could get it fixed.

My reintroduction to French was only marginally successful. My brain kept substituting Spanish. I decided not to worry about it and use the usual hand signals instead. The Marquesas are lovely, mountainous, magical islands of extreme beauty, only lightly populated with the native Polynesian and his French overlord. The French had given them many 20th century advantages in education and health care but I noticed that all the important jobs were French, reducing the Polynesian to making souvenirs, fishing, and running a few food store operations. Nobody looked poor, however. What seemed to support the economy must have been the French largess—probably a suitable price to pay for their continued policy of colonialism. Only boats were reaching the various islands so there was relatively little tourism

The only fly in the ointment was literally that—insects. The daylight hours were infested with tiny, almost invisible biting creatures called “no-nos” which have a delayed wallop that leaves you itching for days. Jim and I were lumpy with bites. But there was relief on shore in the evenings as they didn’t bit then. I understand that Tahiti once had this same problem but they eradicated them with swamp control. Probably just as well or they’d never have any tourists today.

We stayed in the Marquesas about 4 weeks, visiting several of the islands but found the big bay in Niku Hiva the most convenient, although not necessarily the most beautiful. During this time we had to get elephantiasis pills, free from the French dispensary. We gave them no argument, needless to say. While in Niku Hiva we happened upon the local character who could help you with everything and knew everybody. He happened to be an American from Hawaii who was overstaying his visa for as long as he could get away with it. He picked up French fast, hung out with the locals, and organized the boaters for lots of activities. We’d met his type before back in North American harbors. They go “native” and never want to leave. The French caught on finally and shipped him out sometime after we left.

On to the Tuamotus—numerous coral atolls that in the time before satellite navigation were religiously avoided, especially at night. These are also French and lie between the Marquesas and Tahiti. They are also lightly occupied by a few natives and some pearl farmers. We had made arrangements to connect with FREE SPIRIT—WA—fellow cruisers we knew in Mexico and so we headed for Rangiroa. Approaching coral always makes me apprehensive. Getting through the pass has to be done during slack tide and we were 5 days getting there, slowing down and rolling to gauge our time right. We arrived 45 minutes early. Since the tide was still coming out we had to gun the engine to get through the opening. The anchorage also had its share of coral but nothing like we were to experience later in Fiji or the Red Sea. We remained a few days there, leaving precisely at slack tide when we left, and headed on to Tahiti.

We were getting more wind than we had on our ocean passage to the Marquesas but we were also running into squalls. One storm lasted 3 hours with Jim hand steering through it and the

seas that had come up. The rest of the passage was a mixed bag of fluky wind and contrary wind. The usual.

Richard and Cheryl were flying out to Tahiti to spend their summer break from GM with us. We arrived some days ahead of them and were able to meet up with old cruising friends who had left in advance of us. Checking in with the French was a lot more work than some other countries. We even had to leave a big bond with them to ensure we could be flown out back to the States if we became a nuisance. But that dispensed with we enjoyed being back in civilization again where we could get just about anything we wanted in a store—usually a food store. Everything else was terribly expensive—having come all the way from France, except that wonderful French bread which was abundant and cheap and delicious. Cruisers don't want to spend a lot of money on marinas unless they had no other choice. Tahiti didn't offer much in that department so we were clustered in anchorages in various locations. The worst was down town where river run-off littered the anchorage next to the seawall with plastic and other debris and made holding very tenuous. After we dragged once we looked for better conditions. Finally, we picked up our guests and began island hopping to as far as Bora Bora where they were to fly out.

All the islands were beautiful but, except for Tahiti, the anchorages were very deep. Not surprising as most of the islands were mountains. Our deepest anchorage was 75 feet. Once or twice we got a buoy if we were lucky. But the fleet (that season's fleet of cruising sailors) was also on the move so available buoys with easy dinghy runs was not easy to find. As we traveled further west we noticed each island was getting less developed and quieter and less popular with the tourist. One of the highlights of the island tours we took was a Bastille Day competition on Bora Bora. It was a singing and dancing competition among the 5 villages there and it was authentic (not tourist produced) Polynesian. All ages and sizes competed and the enthusiasm was exciting and infectious.

After our guests left we found a delightful anchorage away from the tourist side of the island and waited out a persistent weather system coming from the south. We got lots of rain and wind but we were inside the coral reef and had less to cope with. It was a good time to get some laundry done. The pails were full of rain water and so was the dinghy. I got out a toilet bowl plunger, soaped up the pails and rinsed everything in the dinghy. The safety lines got the clothes next. Bora Bora was hosting a lot of cruising sailboats, all waiting for the weather to quiet down. Finally, on July 23 a small group of us took off.

It was to take us 11 days to cover the 1100 miles to Samoa. The seas were not especially nice, the wind was inconsistent, and the weather system still seemed to be on our fringes. On the 3rd day we discovered, trying to start the engine, that a jib sheet was hanging in the water. It had unknotted and slipped through a chock and we hadn't caught it. Of course we got an immediate prop wrap. Jim immediately reversed the engine, breaking the sheet. The shortened sheet was bad enough but now we didn't dare use the engine until we inspected the shaft. And the seas were very lumpy and Jim had to be under a lurching stern to inspect it. It was 3 days before it was reasonably safe to do so. I tied a line around him and he was able to stay at the task of

cutting away most of the wrap before he became too cold and exhausted and had to be brought back in. We eventually put the engine to the test and concluded he had cut away enough to safely operate the motor. But we weren't done with our troubles. The auto pilot was giving out. Jim fussed with that until we reached Samoa. Meanwhile we tried to put the seldom used wind vane into operation only to discover the lock had rusted away. The whole passage was one exhausting adjustment after another.

As happy as we were to make land fall, Pago Pago, Samoa as an anchorage site was a anything but idyllic. Rainmaker Mountain, at the entrance of the sheltered harbor, lived up to its name. The harbor itself was an old coaling station and it's bottom was full of junk, a sunken boat, a reef on one side and a cannery on the other, replete with smells. It rained hard and often while we were there that year. The prevailing winds blew straight into the entrance of the bay. We were a miserable lot when it really whipped up—fervently hoping our bow and stern anchors would hold.

The attraction for this place was that in American Samoa we could get American products, at close to American prices with US currency, use the American mail system, speak English, and eat out quite cheaply. There was a laundromat and showers we could use and even a TV station. It was a place to catch up on everything. The Samoans were large, often heavy people, very laid back, friendly and we heard, quite religious, thanks to whomever converted them. Their island is only 20 miles long and considerably narrower. You could see the American influence in their housing when you traveled the local buses outside the bay. They no longer used the native platforms with grass top and roll down sides.

We stayed a little over 2 weeks and when the wind finally decreased the exodus of boats began again—some to head for Australia, some to go south and we went west to visit the island of Western Samoa, an independent country. It was only 80 miles away and we heard it was a pleasant stop where you could pick up a New Zealand visa. Once out of the bay and headed west, we encountered NO wind. We motored all the way to Apia. We didn't have an adequate chart of its harbor so we ended up overshooting it, only to be warned on the radio by a cruiser already in the bay that we were headed for a reef. Whoops. Once in we were fairly astounded by the ambiance there. It was a large, open, sunny harbor with no wind on the lee side of the island. The town was at the head of the bay and mountains behind it. It was the very place where Robert Louis Stevenson ended his days. We pulled into the customs dock where an agent approached us to do our entry work. He also arranged to bring us diesel fuel and we agreed to take a land tour led by his wife.

The town of Apia is a mixture of colonial and modern, thanks to the assistance of some of the wealthier Pacific rim nations erecting buildings or roads. The first thing we did on coming into a new location was to find out from other cruisers how prevalent theft was in the area. We learned that despite their Christian conversion, Samoans tended to retain their inclination to "share" which was culturally part of village life. "Share" in the case of foreigners meant, if they liked what you had they helped themselves to it. It was up to us to protect our property as best we

could. Supposedly, the anchorage we were directed to was not open to the locals which gave us some reassurance—sort of.

Our island tour revealed neat little villages whose platform homes were now constructed of cement instead of wood but the roof was still thatch, the supports were wooden poles and the sides had rolled up woven mats. Actually quite a perfect way to live in a tropical climate. House groupings were by family with a selected leader. Most problems were solved on this level. Family groups were under village groups and some leadership was hereditary. It was the neatest 3rd world country we ever saw. Homes had bordered pathways and lovely plantings around them. The lava lava (wrap around skirt) was worn by both men and women. Their beds were straw mats on the cement. Both Samoans were reputed to be quite religious (in spite of “sharing”) and their church music was some of the most beautiful harmonized singing imaginable. We went to church every Sunday just to listen to it.

One other highlight was our attendance at the musical MY FAIR LADY performed by the girls of an all girl high school. Girls, of course, had all the parts, and they were backed up by the rest of the school singing in chorus. The entertainment was two fold: the singing and the actions of the audience. Audience members would frequently march up on the stage and put money on the singer (while singing) or someplace near her. The stage crasher might or might not mug, do a few dance steps, or sing along before leaving the stage. Between that and near accidents with the stage settings we felt we were very well entertained for the evening.

There was only limited tourism in Western Samoa but we did find some Polynesian entertainment in Apia. Aggie Grey’s Hotel was currently being run by her son. She herself was a well known WWII entertainer to the troops. With a little hunting we also located a Laundromat and adequate provisions. Life was easy and pleasant so we spent about 3 weeks there.

On Sept 8 we headed out for Tonga. It was 300 miles plus to the south and wonder of wonders, we started out with favorable winds. It took us 3 ½ days to reach the small outer islands of the kingdom. We checked into Neiafu on one of them. This was an area very popular with cruising sailors and had great anchorages, nicely identified by the Moorings Boat people who had a sailboat rental company there. The local population was exposed to Western way, thanks to the New Zealanders. Although pigs still roamed the small town there was some electricity, (precariously strung up), some telecommunications, one airport and some beat up taxis and trucks. Having been trained under New Zealand rules we noticed, on checking in, that they impounded a bunch of my fresh staples—probably for their own supper. They obviously did not have any mammals that would be threatened by foreign germs as is the case of N.Z. But you don’t argue with Customs or Immigration. Those boats that were checking in at the same time compared notes later on what kind of a meal the officials had put together from our stocks. Later we ran into an American Army officer walking down the town’s main street. He explained that he was with an army engineering unit that was practicing the building of a road on one of the islands. Earlier, he said,

marines had been there practicing establishing beach heads. You never know what you'll meet when traveling....

We spent a few days visiting some of the anchorage sites pointed out by the Moorings literature. While in them we were visited by Tongans attempting to sell us some of their very attractive basketry, tapa cloth, black coral and whale bone carvings, even coconut shell jewelry. We bought some but it was hard to explain our lack of space on board to them. I could easily have gotten more but for that. We took a tour with a local guide along with another couple. We saw some areas where there were crops growing—mostly vanilla beans and squash, their two principal exports. We even saw the local prison. It contained small houses, a fence but no gate. One guard with no firearm stood outside it. When asked about escape our guide responded, "Where are they going to run to?" A reasonable enough answer. Lunch was included with the tour. He gave us bananas, water melon, and papayas with coconut milk to wash it down. The men were a bit miffed but the women thought it was appropriately "native."

We had one near scare while there. We got word that a tsunami was coming. It was later called off. Meanwhile, Jim went to another cruising boat to get his teeth cleaned by its dentist skipper who used rechargeable portable tools. There was lots of free enterprise among the cruisers. Especially appreciated were those who could repair sails and diesel engines. Right about then I was looking for someone who could fix our single sideband radio which had abruptly ceased to work. I dreaded the thought of no radio contact during the crossing to N.Z. One man looked at it but was unable to make it work. I even heated it up in the oven for a while hoping it just needed drying out.

After about a month we moved on to the Nuku'alofa on the main Tongan island. It was about 135 miles south and the passage was again lumpy. This was the beginning of the gathering of boats for the big passage to N.Z. to escape the monsoon (hurricane) season. We would all wait for a good weather window to leave on. Because we were getting into the higher latitudes we could expect fronts passing through during this passage so watching the weather was important.

While in Nuku'alofa we did our provisioning, refueling, laundry and some touring and lots of eating out. This town was bigger and aspired to some tourism. We even managed to see the king while there. He looked pretty frail but he came out to review his 100 troops that had just returned from Bougainville as peace keepers. We sat on the ground among the locals, some in tapa cloth lava lavas. How they managed to get up and down and sit must be an art learned young. Jim got off his latest list of replacement parts which he sent to Richard and another friend we were expecting to visit us in N.Z. Nobody visited us without bearing replacement parts!

We left Tonga on Oct. 27 in a sort of group exodus after our amateur meteorologist gave us the word there was a weather window opening up. Our boat was the smallest and slowest of the bunch and the only one unable to communicate with the rest because of our disabled radio. We knew we might have to face a possible front during the projected 11 day passage and with no

radio we had no way to anticipate it. As it turned out we had practically no wind and motor sailed most of the time. We passed up stopping at Minerva reef where some others elected to stop, in favor of getting to N.Z. as quickly as possible. On the 10th day out we got our front. The seas and winds started to build and on the 11th day the waves were really impressive and we were beginning to surf down waves but by that time we were in sight of land. We blew into the Bay of Islands very happy to escape from open water when we did.

CHAPTER 7

November 1994 to May 1995

We arrived in Opua, Bay of Islands, New Zealand on Nov. 6. The storm caused all the boats waiting to check in on the customs docks to evacuate for a sheltered anchorage and finish checking in by dinghy the next day. While we were ashore we got a summons that there was a boat that had drifted ashore and the description fit FREE SPIRIT exactly. She had chaffed through her bow lines to a buoy in all the bouncing caused by the weather. There are 8 foot tides in that part of N.Z. so we rushed back to evaluate the situation. There was nothing we could do as the tide was going out and she was gradually careening over on her side. Numerous volunteers came to help but had to wait until the tide was again up. Of course, it had to be at midnight and it had to be a pitch black night! While we had daylight we selected a better located buoy in a private yard but it was the blind leading the halt to get to it that night and tie down in those conditions. In the meantime we had occasion to meet the first of many delightful and friendly "Kiwis" and other helpful boaters.

We stayed and rested up a few days in the Bay of Islands before heading down the east side of North Island to Whangarei where we had made reservations in a boat yard marina. Whangarei is some distance up a long, sand-barred river. We approached with some trepidation but managed to get stuck briefly only once. We had decided on that particular marina and boat yard instead of the city docking area because we had a long list of projects to attend to. Two sails needed replacing, we wanted a hard top dodger built, we had the usual numerous repairs to attend to, charts to buy or copy, things we wanted removed from the boat, our HAM radio repaired, other purchases we wanted to make...a full agenda of things. N.Z. had a terrific rate of exchange so prices were a big savings, which was why boaters found N.Z. so attractive. That, and the fact that the country itself is so beautiful. So we were looking forward to some touring as well. We were also expecting 2 sets of company from the States.

But first we needed transportation. We attended a car auction where we managed to luck in on purchasing quite a reliable Japanese car. It was 10 years old and had 9 previous owners, the last one having done a lot of repair on it. The town and the regular boat basin was a good hike away and we knew carrying groceries from there for 6 months wouldn't be fun. Jim's Michigan license had expired so he had to study the driving rules and take the test with all the 17 year olds. Then we both had to adjust to the many mountainous 2 lane roads driving on the left side. There was only about 50 miles of divided highway in all of N.Z. and that was in the Auckland area. One thing we both concluded was that, though the Kiwis were delightful people, something happened to them when they got behind the wheel of a car. No more Mr. Nice Guy!--especially if our inexperience caused us to make a wrong move, which we did for a while.

We also bought a very expensive 9 inch TV which could be adjusted for all the countries around the world. Frankly, insular Americans that we were, we never realized that different countries operated under different systems. We figured we were now nicely set up—until all the boat work started, at which time it was to be one continuous mess after another. As it happened, a lot of it wasn't completed until the last 3 weeks before we left, the kind of stuff you waited on because you found other things wrong which you had to do first. Or simply because you could get it done there—like cleaning the fuel tank, or paneling our salon and bathroom to lighten the interior.

My job once again was sanding and painting, this time the deck. This was not an easy task with all the work going on but especially all the rain we experienced. I was to “enjoy” both spring and summer rain and lots of weather systems crossing over since N.Z. is really only 2 big islands in the temperate zone of the southern hemisphere where seasons change.

Our guests, a girl friend of mine, and Jim's son and daughter-in-law, lived in our disorganization on the boat and never complained. But their stays were short as they all had touring of their own ahead of them. After we got all our work orders in we did the same some weeks later. After visiting the volcanic area of North Island we took the ferry over to South Island as far as the fiord area. We stayed alternately at B & B's and their version of a motel—usually 2 or more rooms, kitchenette, and a pint of milk with your room key. For your tea, of course! The hosts of the B&B's were incredibly hospitable. I especially liked the sheep ranch people. So we learned a lot about sheep, sheep dogs, and ranching, most paddocks (pastures) of which seemed to be on the side of a mountain.

Further down the island we panned for gold near the shores where it is in suspension in the water having come out of the mountain rivers. A good storm sends some up on the beach where it is quickly mined by people with leases on beach land. As we traveled down the west side of South Island we made a point of picking up hitch hikers as this is quite customary in that country. They were often quite informative. South Island is incredibly scenic and you can find glaciers, mountains, sky diving, bungee jumping, fiords, and all manner of hiking going on in the interior. This is not to put down North Island in any way. It's climate is milder and I especially loved the city where we were docked—a friendlier town you could not find. And they loved the visiting cruisers; we brought in a lot of income and they appreciated it. Before the big exodus north at the end of the cyclone season, the town council of Whangarei give all visiting sailors a big, free barbeque in their riverside park. They had earlier renovated their river shore line and put in big pilings for sailboats to attach to and it was a very nice anchorage area near the downtown.

That anchorage area, however, suffered a flooding following a huge rain storm while we were there which brought down trees, rubbish, docks and other debris from higher up. This loosened those pilings closest to the main current and caused a number of boats to slam into each other. We were located a bit farther down the river in what amounted to an eddy and therefore the main current with all the debris went sailing past us. It made us think twice about docking up rivers in

the future, though, as it turned out we did it twice in Australia, anyway. And yes, in one of them we had flooding again.

Many of our friends were in marinas in Auckland but we found it quite cool and windy as Auckland was built on the narrowest part of the island. It had a good bay, however, and they got to watch lots of sailboat races. Nevertheless, I never regretted being in Whangarei. It was surrounded by low hills and had everything we needed. I could have cheerfully spent more time there but N.Z. is extremely strict about who comes to stay in their country. We had 6 months and that was it. Fortunately, in the Bay of Islands where most of us gathered to leave from, they were generous enough to allow us to wait for a good weather window before taking off.

During our time in N.Z. we had an interesting incident occur. Their legislature passed a naval law that was meant to curtail some of the bad shipping that entered their harbors, sunk in them, or left and then was disabled off shore. N.Z. had to clean up the mess or rescue them. It seemed this law was to discourage some of the rust buckets from Malaysia and Indonesia. So they passed a law full of requirements which in effect paid scant regard to international law on the high seas. The cruising community (we independent sailors from various countries around the world) got caught under its rules.

They required us to have on board all those things N.Z. thought necessary for safe navigation. Great for discouraging rust buckets but unfortunately some of the things were specifically not allowed on board some French and German sailboats which were now also expected to comply, contrary to the rules of their own country. Big brouhaha!!!! The yachties organized and rebelled, called meetings, threatened to sue—and did—and some even threatened to leave the country without their clearance papers. This is a big no-no in serious cruising. No other country has to accept you if you haven't cleared out legally from the previous country. However, word got out that New Caledonia, which is a French possession, would accept any boaters "fleeing" nasty N.Z. without their clearance papers. Some took advantage of it, also leaving behind their fees which they owed N.Z. for bringing animals like cats into the country which were kept on their boats but had to be checked on by officials. By the time of the official exodus north, the government officials were somewhat sobered by the uproar but not enough to change the law just yet. They set up some moderating requirements which every cruiser cheated at and the officials designated to do the checking winked at. Everyone wanted things to run smoothly as the Americans Cup was to be sailed in N. Z. waters that year and tourism would be affected by bad publicity. So would the lack of next year's crop of cruisers affect business. So the rest of us left legally, if still miffed by the law—which was rescinded a couple of years later. As for the rust buckets of the middle East, we found when we arrived in their part of the world they were still out there following nobody's rules but their own. Meanwhile, when the America's Cup race was sailed we cheered for the Kiwis anyway. And they won.

We left the Bay of Islands area on May 7 for the 1075 mile passage to Suva, Fiji. We left with several boats we knew and intended to maintain radio contact with now that our radio was fixed. We started out doing a lot of motoring in light winds but after a couple of days the seas had risen and the wind had gotten strong—the Tasman Sea's usual and more normal tantrum. Sailing was good until it got too rough at which time we used our foresail to keep things under control.

Then, from all the pounding on our beam we discovered there was leaking at the chain plates. The net effect was to completely wet down our bedding in the salon where we slept (when we could) when underway. With all the rough weather we also weren't eating much. Next the belt broke on the autopilot but Jim always carried spares. Seven days out the goose neck on our boom broke from the wave action and the boom with sail furled on it came down. We lashed it to the deck, and at least didn't have to fight trying to retrieve a sail from the water. The seas and wind continued to be rough—seas 2 to 3 meters and the winds gusting at times to 50 mph. We were moving fast but got little sleep. But we managed to stay in radio contact with the other boats on a schedule during the whole passage. They can't help you but at least you know they know what's happening to you. Finally on the 9th day we got into a large passage between an island and the main island and we entered calmer waters. The seas had generously endowed us with her largess on this passage. And because we had stayed cooped up below in the salon for most of it, the boat smelled a bit rancid, we smelled rancid, we had a wet salon and we were wet. After I lost my cool (spell that C R I E D) from being too tired, too cooped up, too uncomfortable from the boat's heeling, and too damp Jim backed the foresails and slowed the boat to a crawl. Once again on a stable platform and protected by the island we unloaded the wet cushions into the cockpit where the now tropical weather could dry them, each of us took showers from the sun shower bag, and I cooked a meal. The boat slowly drifted towards Suva, 70 miles away. That night I got more than 2 hours sleep. We turned the motor on later and arrived in Suva the next morning to a hot sun. After checking in we headed for the anchorage near the Suva Yacht Club. That night, those cruisers who had recently arrived held a big gab fest. The passage "war stories" went on for hours. Most everyone had sustained some sort of damage to their boat. But it was hard to feel sorry for the MacGregor sailboat that had made the passage in 5 days. Nonetheless the little lady first mate claimed it was the worst passage of her life.

CHAPTER 8

May 1995 to November 1995

The anchorage at the Yacht Club was a good rest stop. We had a laundry service and since most of our usable clothing was now salty we made good use of it. And they had showers! Jim, meantime, spent most of his time studying goose necks on other boats before designing one for us. Suva had a number of boatyards and he could get it fabricated to order. After I had the boat dried out (despite daily rain), and things back in order I spent time with other cruising wives going into the main part of town, shopping, looking into plane reservations to the States, and researching into where we wanted to leave the boat while we were gone. Suva received a LOT of rain and I didn't think I could face returning to a green, mildewed boat interior.

We spent about 3 weeks all told in the Suva area. Jim put on the new, sturdier goose neck. Our boom and it's piggyback roller furling attachment which was put on in NZ worked beautifully after wards. We realized too late that the rigger in NZ was really the one responsible for not telling us we needed something stronger. He should have seen this when he assembled everything.

When we left the harbor we had trouble finding the passage—that was to be the story of our lives the whole time we were in Fijian waters! Hurricanes often take out the channel markers and you need sun to see the coral. Instead, you get a lot of overcast with the rain and only sticks in the water—indicating what? Which side? Also, I only had some chart “booklets” for stops we wanted to make on our way over to the west (dry) side of the main island. They proved to be totally inadequate. In my log I wrote “The adrenalin I pump out in this country is going to sustain me for a long time.” Actually, I was a bit of a wreck after a couple of attempts to do any gunk holing. The worst was when we came in and I misdirected Jim and we ended up on the coral. My worst fear realized! He tried to back us off and when he left the wheel I tried. I made copious withdrawals from the prayer bank. Without realizing it, a larger wave must have come in from behind just as I put the boat into reverse and we lifted off. That shook both of us up enough to not want to attempt trying to enter any more harbors mentioned in the booklet. Instead, we considered ourselves lucky to still have an intact boat and settled for a miserable night at sea as we wallowed slowly along the bottom of the island. We didn't dare enter anything again before dawn and the main entrance on the west side. As I recall, we were both sea sick from the slow movement, but better that than shipwrecked.

The west side of the island was entirely different. Seas were calm and it was sunny and dry. We rested up from our recent experience in a cove as soon as we got through the reef. There was a large bay and further west of it were some

smaller islands, one of which was Muscat Cove where we hoped to stay. Fortified with a little sleep we still found getting through that bay was to be another exercise in coral dodging, along with the inevitable sticks. But at least now we had sun so we could finally see the coral. We made our destination and made reservations for a buoy to be claimed before it was time to fly out. This was a big hangout for those cruisers who felt like us, that cruising these waters wasn't much to their liking. Admittedly, there were interesting things to see but I don't need that many adrenalin rushes! We still had some time to kill and I guess we felt we could navigate the sticks well enough back to the west side of the main island and Nadi Bay where there were some resort hotels. We anchored off these for a week for some R & R. We joined another boat, both of us figuring we provided some nautical scenery for the hotel guests. Consequently we did not feel guilty about attending their movie nights, enjoying the coffee and tea that was set out, depositing our boat garbage in their containers, and making reservations for some land tours through them. No one approached us so we considered it an agreeable exchange.

While we were still in Suva I had made our plane reservations for a 2 month return to the States. So, leaving us enough time to prep the boat and for Jim to make out his shopping list of boat parts, we returned to Muscat Cove and on to our buoy. We flew out on a little island hopper to the Nadi airport, flew to Hawaii where we spent 3 days, and then to L.A. We left the end of June, flew around the U.S. to visit all the kids around the country and ended up in Florida where we could get the best purchases for the boat and all the charts we needed for the next years as far as the Mediterranean Sea. We had everything sent to my cousin in L.A. where we packed it all up and returned to Fiji at the end of August.

The boat was still floating, we noticed, as we flew the little island hopper back to Muscat Cove. It groaned a bit more than last time under all our boxes and we noticed that the instrumentation wasn't working any better than before but we arrived without running off the run way into the sea (which happened after we left!)

As we sorted ourselves out back on board and Jim tried to start things up he discovered all the batteries were dead. Our expensive gel-cells that were supposed to last so long! And nothing could revive them. We also had uninvited guests on board—a hoard of Asian cockroaches. I had left some No Pest Strips out but apparently they were too old or too ineffective. What I really needed, judging from the numbers, was a lethal, non-environmentally friendly Mexican bomb. That always worked! Instead I was reduced to sharing our space with roach traps, pills, and boric acid powder strewn around the boat. Boric acid powder takes about 3 weeks to eliminate most of them and then you keep using it for a long time to stymie any reincarnations. I remember thinking at that time that if I ever wrote a book about all this I could title it “Cockroaches I Have Known,” or “Around the World with Vermin.”

Another unforeseen glitch was when we tried to inflate our dinghy and found 2 small holes and a number of abrasions. Our paint and non-skid on the deck was still pretty new and we figured strong winds could have shifted the rolled up dinghy. We never figured out the holes. But at least we had a kit to repair the damage. We bummed rides to get to shore till the patches set up but we were forced to buy 4 new wet cell batteries which took some time before they arrived via the inter island barge. That meant no power on the boat until it did. Oh well, we were used to going to bed at sunset and getting up at sunrise. With no refrigeration it also meant we ate ashore, which I didn't mind at all.

There was quite a collection of boats now in the anchorage, as most were preparing to leave for New Caledonia or Vanuatu. The latter was going to be skipped by us as it did not have too many good anchorages and the more that went there the less space would be available. It was also liberally endowed with coral and was even more 3rd world than Fiji. More sticks? Our intention was to head straight to New Caledonia and spend more time. Meanwhile, while waiting for the usual weather windows a lot of activities were planned on shore and even a boat race. Any excuse for some partying with the cruisers, though

often it was centered around American holidays. The Europeans always joined right in with us.

We left Muscat Cover on Sept 22 for Lacota on the main island where we needed to find someone to scrape the green stuff off of our bottom, do a little provisioning of food, and check out. Then we headed for the western exit in the reef where the winds immediately proceeded to die down. For the 7 day passage we had fluky winds and rain—but at least it wasn't a repeat of the passage from NZ to Fiji. We arrived at the opening in the reef around New Caledonia with the tide against us. Not much fun. After we got in we headed straight for a cove on the charts to rest up, where we found people we know. The French are very fussy about checking in right away on entering their waters. But we were tired. So, the next morning we started out only to run into fog and then my GPS wasn't giving me a proper reading so we headed back into the cove. We tried again the next day and made Noumea in 6 hours of motoring. We had a lot of trouble coming in on the dock as the wind was kicking up but boaters valued their property enough to give us lots of help. Once again we saw old friends, using the dock to work on their boats.

Dock living is always a lot more convenient and our dock was near the famous food trucks that served yummy meals. The French also insist on civilizing all their island natives with modern conveniences so we had a Laundromat again, good available food, easy access to things, and even mail if we had arranged for it. But the French are also strict and we didn't know how long they'd let us stay on the dock. Meanwhile, after a couple of days there, our new batteries were dead. We knew we had a power drain from something so it had to be run down. All the men on the dock had a hand in trying to solve the puzzle. Jim finally figured out the culprit was our refrigeration. He was unsuccessful at getting the old compressor on line and there wasn't time to get one shipped out to us before leaving for Australia. So, he ordered it to be shipped there instead, which meant we would be without refrigeration on the passage and until we reached our final destination to ride out the cyclone season. That decided, we used our time to tackle other little projects, watch movies at night on boats that had tapes, take some tours and wait for a weather window. We also picked up colds that were making the rounds. One of the prices you pay when mixing with people again.

While we were still waiting, we heard someone had gotten fined by the French for spending a night in the cover before reporting in. (And we had spent 2 nights there!) When our compressor had died we gave it to a local who seemed to want it. Then we heard the French also don't allow any selling or giving of things off of boats. Customs fines for that too. Whoops! We were very glad when a weather window was finally announced via the radio net. Dodging two bullets is pressing your luck. So about 3 weeks after we arrived we were again under way, out through the opening in the western reef and headed for Aussie land.

Of course, once at sea it was more motor sailing than sailing. We also saw a lot more shipping in this part of the ocean. But after a week we saw the large island we were

looking for behind which we hoped to rest before moving on. The seas always get rougher as you near a continent and there always seems to be wind as well. Our last day and a half out got rough, thanks to that and strong tidal currents.

Behind the island lay a very large bay, full of sand bars but at least the route to the mainland was well marked. We took it to the Customs station at the mouth of the river that led to Brisbane. We just had time that day to see Customs but had to wait for the next morning to be inspected by Agriculture and Quarantine. Australia is VERY thorough, just like NZ. I knew what they were looking for and one thing was pork. So, I took my cans of cooked pork, tore off the label and marked it "Chicken." These people are used to seeing rusted cans without labels on cruising boats. I also did a fast wipe down of all my pills, powders, and traps to hide the evidence of any cockroaches before anyone came on board. Who knows, he might have had the boat condemned! Since we didn't have any refrigeration his bag of our offerings wasn't too full by the time he allowed us to move on up the river. These little maneuvers were part and parcel of lots of previous experience entering a new country. Always have something for them but nothing that invades your food locker too much.

CHAPTER 9

November 1995 to April 1996

We were pleasantly surprised at how lovely it was to be located in the heart of Brisbane. As we had passed up the river we compared the industrialization and more elaborate homes to pastoral N.Z. Brisbane itself had so much more going on and we loved our spot, despite the fact Jim got nervous at the thought we might be asked to leave. Seems all the poles there were already rented. But we thought we'd chance it till the renter returned. One of the boats near us was a Frenchman who was anxious for some sympathy. Seems he had had rocks thrown at his boat, probably due to the atomic explosions conducted by the French on an atoll that year. He didn't want to leave either so he took his French flag off the stern.

We spent a week on our piling and enjoyed it thoroughly. The city was clean, modern mixed with refurbished, vital, full of restaurants, not too big or confusing, had good transportation, and always seemed to have something going on in its parks and malls. The malls were built on existing streets in the downtown and had lots of ethnic restaurants, a better offering than existed in N.Z. And with no refrigeration we, of course, were out every day. We saw a lot of bag piping at park events and even weddings. Jim checked out some better solar panels than we currently had which were dying, as well as looked into a stronger autopilot. I picked up some RR tickets which we planned to take in December into the Queensland outback. Then our dinghy motor died, which took care of going ashore.

Much as we hated to leave we had an agenda of things to do and wanted to activate our reservations at a marina in Mooloolaba, about 30 miles up the coast. We were expecting our new refrigeration to have arrived from the States, so we descended the river, trod our way back through the channels in the bay, and arrived in Mooloolaba 2 days later. We went up another river and into a canal and found our new home for the next 6 months. A number of our American friends stayed at a Yacht Club on the main river but we remembered the flooding in N.Z. and felt more comfortable here. We also had easy walking access to a mall, grocery store, hardware, medical, etc. Our marina was largely occupied by locals, whom we enjoyed getting to know.

As usual most major projects got stalled—like our refrigeration, however that gave Jim lots of time to re-insulated the refrigerator box and paint it. We ordered the solar panels and autopilot and then traded in our dinghy motor for a new one. In order to get to the Yacht Club we still needed the dinghy to get there as it was on the other side of the main river. Thanksgiving was spent there along with a batch of “honorary Americans” who joined us for the party and were subsequently to be companions on a good part of our journey ahead. Following that, many Americans

flew back to the States for awhile or did some touring. We stayed put with our projects. As it started to get hotter (the seasons are reversed from us) I made daily trips to the mall which was air conditioned. And since I had to carry it all back by foot, I began stockpiling non-perishables. Browsing used book stores, I found an Australian series of detective stories that gave a very graphic picture of life in the Outback. They were from the 1930s but that didn't matter. Much of Australian life seems years behind us anyway.

We took our train trip into the outback on Dec. 5, foolishly going coach. The train only traveled at 30 mph because the rails weren't too smooth from the buckling caused by the summer heat. It was a day's trip. The terrain overall was flat with varying degrees of sparseness and bush. We were traveling off season. A lot of the area was dry and looked like it was still suffering from the 5 year drought which had just broken. Here and there little towns had sprung up where it was greener. Their crops were usually some vegetables, coal, and gemstones. Looking at a map of this part of the outback I was surprised to find it had as many settlements as it did. All were dependent on the great artesian basin for deep well water which was essentially brackish. The whole area could get seasonal rain but there were periodic droughts and occasional floods!

At our furthest destination we visited the offices of The School of Distant Education and learned how they conduct classes via single sideband radio. We also visited a stockmen's museum and the Flying Doctors offices. The hotels in the outback were rustic to say the least. Still, it was another view of the country. I also learned that Australia still has bona fide cowboys out there riding, roping, and mending that famous fence. We took a sleeper car on our journey back and because there were few passengers we enjoyed talking to whatever locals came on board and getting more insights into the country.

Around Christmas our marina residents really loosened up and I finally met one American couple and lots of locals. We organized some dinners and other get-togethers. And, finally around that same time we got our refrigeration back on line. I had been using the club house refrigerator for my few perishables. The phone was just outside the clubhouse door and we called all our kids during the holidays.

I connected later with some of the Americans at the Yacht Club marina and we brainstormed the route we'd all be taking in the next year. We decided to join the "Over the Top Rally" from Gove to Darwin. The rest of the time was spent sharing ideas, charts, departure times, and possible rest stops and places to get mail. That enabled me to map out a pretty good itinerary for right up to the Mediterranean Sea. I informed all my correspondents back home, hoping for a gift of mail on arrival at these various pauses in our passage. It didn't always work that way but we were never loathe receiving Christmas mail in July!

Then we made train reservations for a bigger trip around the southern part of Australia. At that time every state in the country had their own train system, largely due to the fact the railways weren't all the same size when each state started their lines. It was being corrected now and some of the trains were pretty good. We were gone 3 weeks and I hoped at the end of it that Jim had a surfeit of train travel! A sleeper car bed is still not the rocking cradle of a boat.

Instead of Coober Pedy and Alice Springs we thought Broken Hill would give us the flavor of the outback mining scene, without all the other tourists. We visited open opal

fields in a place called White Cliffs and it's true, they live in those mine tunnels. The locals were the most individualistic people we ever met. Nothing was too strange to use, build with or surround themselves with. The landscape was a series of rubble-ringed holes and most of the homes were built into the sides of cliffs or hills. Unquestionably heat was the prime consideration.

Back in Broken Hill we did a mine tour of one that mined lead, zinc, silver, and gold. An old miner was our guide as we descended 500 feet and viewed the old shafts. He was amazingly candid about practices back in those days, none of which would pass inspection in the U.S. Australia is incredibly rich in a wide variety of minerals but they ship most of it out of the country to be processed. There is lots of room for industry but the country only had 18 million people at the time. They also had a fair share of unemployment.

We visited Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney. The latter was our favorite and we spent 8 days there. I don't know how any one can beat that incredible extended water front of theirs. Every finger of every bay was full of boats on buoys. With a 3 ½ million population they had only one marina that we saw. The Olympics were to be held there in a couple of years so there was a vast refurbishing program going on in the city. We took time to see some movies and even some stage plays but had to move on long before we were sated.

Our hotels were all in the inner cities and therefore convenient to everything. Only one proved to be a bit less than we hoped. It was in that lovely staid city of Adelaide. It seems we picked the local "sin street" complete with sex shops, all night clubs, street sleepers, and a motor cycle club across from us. It even had a double killing 2 days before we arrived. So much for relying on Lonely Planet books! Two blocks away the rest of the city was more old fashioned than threatening.

Then it was back to any unfinished jobs to still do on the boat, in order to make it withstand about 8500 miles of passages and a lot of it motoring in the coming year. It was going to be our most demanding year, but we were comfortable with all the changes we had made on the boat in both N.Z. and Australia. I didn't look forward to dealing with all the coastal currents and tides and higher up, all the coral. However, I figured if all the sailors from the Middle Ages could do it with 99.8% less than we used to navigate, I guess we could too. About the only thing we didn't have was night vision goggles and that became available about the time our circumnavigation was completed.

On returning from our trip we settled back into a work routine. When it didn't rain, I varnished and if it wasn't too hot in the cabin I played around with a small PC Jim's son had sent me. When the heat got too much I escaped to the mall and read there. Jim toiled on. This time he was doing some work on the engine. When friends drove up from the Manley marina near Brisbane we set to work trying to coordinate our departures, and if that didn't work, our rest stops up the east coast.

We went on the hard in late March to get anti-fouling on our boat bottom, more caulking around the cap rails, did some provisioning and refueling and on April 12 left our happy home in the marina. We had enjoyed the new friends we made but it was time to make the trek up the east coast, most of which would be day trips due to all the sand bars and coral.

CHAPTER 10

April 1996 to June 1996

Our plan was to follow a passage behind Fraser Island further up the coast. We had to wait until we saw another sailboat in order to locate the opening to the pass. Then we discovered it had lots of sand bars which didn't make us any too comfortable. We next experienced wind on the nose and after it died, lots of sand flies. (All this to avoid going out to sea around the island.) We cautiously kept moving only anchoring at night until we came to the town of Orangan where we declined trying to fit into the man-made harbor. But we hung around for 3 days because the winds were against us again. We had friends in the harbor, one of which accompanied us when we started moving up to Bundaberg.

Bundaberg was up another river and it was low tide. However our friends were eager to start so we followed. Our buddy got stuck, we got stuck, and so did someone trying to lead us. No problem. When the tide goes down it has to come back up. By evening we were all nicely settled in a marina of sorts, more a big dock out into the river. Bundaberg was a place where some cruisers spent the cyclone season. The town overall wasn't a bad place to hang out. We ended up staying a week there, doing some sight seeing, observing one of their holiday parades, visited a rum factory and relaxing. The weather was fluky but we eventually had to move on. This time 4 boats left at high tide and anchored in a spot near the mouth of the river where weather continued to hold us up. When we got word of really bad weather coming some of us hightailed it back to Bundaberg where we waited out a few more days. When we finally got back to the ocean we had flat seas. We were way behind our schedule but at least we hadn't suffered through a storm.

We motored for a couple of days, stopping for a few days in the resort area of Arlie Beach and then moved on to Townsville. This was another resort area but we went into a marina this time where we hooked up with a German couple we knew. While there they helped Jim rig our boat to better sail down wind, the prevailing winds now coming from behind. After a few days we began island hopping until we made Cairns on May 19 where there was quite a gathering of old friends. Most were getting ready to leave but a few hung out with us a day or two longer. We wanted to stay long enough to get in some touring and provisioning before we left. That satisfied, we left after a week there.

Next we moved up to the Daintree area where we got delayed by fog, rain and strong winds off shore. While there I borrowed some charts from another cruiser which I needed and set off to get them copied. It took me 5 stops before I found some place that would do it. I guess even in the "back country" they knew it was technically illegal.

Under way again we arrived at Lizard Island after 4 days. Getting there, however, was not fun. We had bad conditions near Cape Flattery and were grateful to be able to duck in, as the weather overtook us. When we arrived at Lizard part of our friends were still hanging around, as the snorkeling was outstanding. I did a little and among other impressive things saw a giant sea scallop that really impressed me. We hiked the island and then took off behind a squall. The next anchorage was unprotected which means losing lots of sleep. We waited for another squall to pass and took off for the Flinders Group and some shelter again. It went like that for days. If the weather and conditions weren't exciting enough, then some of the anchorages were. We got real close and friendly with shallow water, windy conditions and "bullets" (wind bursts off of cliffs). The coral was more abundant the further north we went and dragging at anchor in a squall was always a fear. Another thing was the close passage of freighters. The reefs were much closer to shore now and the space in between was used by boats of all sizes. At one narrow passage we were approaching a bend in the shipping lane with a freighter behind us and one coming towards us just beyond the bend. And we were wing and wing—sails out on either side of our mast meaning we were not very maneuverable. The boat behind us passed within yards of us. It is a memory I will long have of that coast line!

On one of our really good sails we put out some fishing line and some monster managed to take the hook, leader, swivel and weights. He broke a 200 lb. fishing line! Another time we caught a shark but Jim didn't intend to eat it and neither of us wanted the job of taking it off the line. He finally came off by himself. In Portland Roads where we were taking a rest day, we went ashore to a small village which had 2 phone booths on the beach. Jim called home to learn about his latest grandchild. I wandered around and saw a house advertising "Water". It was a come-on, actually. In talking to the lady we learned she distributed her "holy, heavenly healing cloths"—scraps of old cotton sheets which she blessed—to all comers. We took some. Any port or blessing in a storm!

In two more days on June 11 we were "over the top" of York Peninsula. Another cruiser and us elected to go a bit further on to Red Island for our anchorage. As we passed over the top at Albany Pass we flew through at high tide. We got in early enough to make arrangements ashore for a tour later to Thursday Island—at the top of the pass. Then we got together on their boat for champagne. We celebrated leaving that part of the Pacific, the Coral Sea, all the rough weather, and Torres Strait. A milestone!!

We spend a few days at Red Island, one of which was the tour to Thursday Island by island boat. We were curious about what the 4000 souls did there. Apparently not an awful lot in all that heat. Then it was time to cross the Gulf of Carpentaria to the town of Gove for the "Over the Top Rally" which we were joining. In order not to arrive in the dark we slowed our passage down making it a 3 day run. Again, it was a mixed bag of seas and wind. The price of slowing down in those conditions is the sacrifice of our comfort and stomachs. We did it many times.... But at first sight of the fairway buoy into the anchorage we forgot it all. We pulled in among the many friends we had been playing hopscotch with along the Australian east coast. We were to enjoy 13 delightful days of rest and visiting. Of course it was celebration time again, which we did at the Yacht Club there. What more could we ask for-- we had showers, a bar, restaurant,

laundry and mail waiting for us! The closest town was 10 miles away. No buses, but you could either hitch hike or take a taxi. It was a great stop for the women on the boats. We had many a luncheon together where we talked and laughed over all the anxiety attacks we had experienced just getting here.

To my surprise it was possible to take tours in that area. We had a free tour sponsored by a local bauxite company that was both amusing, thanks to the humor of the tour guide, and informative. Seems that, after sending aborigines out to gather seeds from the plants in the area, the company then removes the top soil and saves it. Then they strip mine 3.7 meters of the subsoil for mining bauxite. Afterwards they put the top soil back, send out the abos with their collected seeds and have them scatter them. A nice bit of conservation plus the abos get money for the use of their land. This money, I learned, is banked. When an abo has an idea for something he wants to do, he can request it from the bank. However, I seldom saw any of them do anything but sit outside their houses on the ground. The houses were little used but I guess the Australian government felt compelled to build them anyway. Those abos in the north still were wanderers and gatherers for the most part. Those closer to civilization often worked on ranches. I saw some later in Darwin but have no idea how they fit into the society.

All of Arnhem Land in the north seemed to be aborigine property. Our rally people had to secure permission for us to make some of the stops we made. I also learned that they considered the crocodile sacred. I was perfectly willing to honor that request including not swimming in crocodile waters which seemed to be the whole of the northern and part of eastern Australia. Beautiful beaches---all of it totally unsafe. However on one tour to a crocodile farm, we learned that if you raised them from eggs on, you could harvest them for their skins. They also had a 23 footer on displace which they used to demonstrate their prowess at leaping after food. It certainly reinforced my disinclination to leap into Australian waters for a swim!

The 35 boat regatta got underway the end of June following a champagne "brecky" (breakfast) and numerous other get togethers for instructions and fun. It was all very well organized and we had boats from numerous countries. We were one of the three smallest, and consequently slowest, in the group. One other American couple was on a 27 foot sailboat and only used a sextant to navigate. I was slightly in awe of their daring especially since we daily were given our way points to follow and all the rest of us had GPSs. We were going to navigate through a number of islands that had strong currents and tides. And two of our passages were going to be overnights. But intrepid sailors have been around since man figured out how to move a carved out log with a sail so I shouldn't have been too surprised to find a few individualists still out there.

We started out with a lot of wind and for the bulk of the trip we did a lot of sailing. On our first overnight we popped a screw at the base of a winch while going wing and wing, which effectively took that winch out of commission for the duration. Following that we turned more conservative in our sailing. We also didn't enjoy sailing in tight packs so we tended to hang back from the others.

Evenings in the anchorages always saw the Aussies in the group setting up their Barbies (BBQs) on shore and staying up till the wee hours. The circumnavigators in the group were more inclined to crash at dusk and be up at dawn. A few parties were sponsored by the group leaders and there were contests via radio regularly. Our last passage was an overnight. Winds were calm for a change and the current was with us. We had 12 way points to follow and in spite of that the 27 footer with the sextant made it just fine, even if being last. I shouldn't have been so surprised by them because later I learned that they delivered their baby on board on some island chain in the Indian Ocean with only a mid-wife to help.

We arrived in Darwin about mid day and had a long wait to get through the locks to the marina. The other choice was to anchor way out and be ruled by the tides as to when you could dinghy in or get back out. The mud flats off shore were extensive in those 25 foot tidal areas. Our rally passage had taken about 2 fast moving weeks and I was ready to kick back for a good rest stop. We would probably have not moved as quickly on our own but for something different it was interesting to be part of a big group.

Once in, we had another list of repair jobs to do as well as get our Indonesian cruising permit, locate some additional charts, reprovision, and visit the Kakadu National Park. Some of our group was already planning on joining another regatta—this one to Ambon, Indonesia. Our itinerary called for us to enter the country at Bali, which gave us about a month to hang out in Darwin. Before the others left we went to the Kakadu and stayed at the somewhat famous Crocodile Hotel while we toured the park. It was mildly interesting with all its bird life and aborigine drawings. Mid-June we were again under way for a new country.

CHAPTER 11

June 1996 to January 1997

Our passage from Darwin to Bali was one of those rare, non-stressful ones. It was 8 days of calm seas, light breezes, virtually no traffic, open space all around us, and meals able to be cooked at night. Although we could motor about a 1000 miles in good conditions when necessary, we never really wanted to motor that much as the sound gets tiresome. But sometimes, like this trip, we had the motor on part of every day. We stopped at no islands on the way, not even the famous Komodo Island where the dragons live. I guess the lure of a long, quiet passage was too enticing. Once within sight of Bali we got held up by a contrary tide and when it finally released us we opted for another island anchorage that was nearer. It too was so relaxing we decided to hang out there a few days. We realized later we were anchored over some one's seaweed patch. Everything below us was marked into squares and there was seaweed drying on the shore. But no one asked us to move. We enjoyed watching the funny little colorful tri-sail sailboats with their spider-like outrigger legs go out in the evenings for fishing.

The Bali marina docks, when we came in, were not too encouraging. But it was that or anchor up the river. Later we learned from those who elected to anchor that there was more than one carcass that floated down after a rain. Meanwhile, slanting, rotting docks or not, we went it. Off to one side we noticed there was the beginnings of a new marina that seemed to have been abandoned. Fortunately, what the old docks lacked the shore had; namely a restaurant. They also had an agent there and we quite happily employed him to take care of our entry, take our laundry, arrange for water, schedule a tour of the island, and arrange for some repair work. (The inevitable "after-the-passage-repair work!") We then enjoyed our usual welcoming party with cruisers already in.

After some rest and local touring we made arrangements to fly to Jogjakarta on the island of Java. The plane trip over was fascinating as we flew over a whole string of both extinct and still smoking volcanoes. Since everything was so cheap in Indonesia we went to a first class hotel, which we absolutely loved! Besides the view we had English speaking channels on the TV which occupied us every evening. Catch up time! Shopping along the streets was a test in sales resistance. There were hoards of people selling things, pedicabs to peddle you everywhere, and touts advertising their batik schools. Finally we went to one and eventually we did buy some. Although the streets were full of humanity we found the ordinary people on the street were friendly to us, some even wanting to take our picture with them. There were plenty of vehicles also on the streets with the pedicabs but I saw little impatience or irritation. Before we left there we spent some time visiting the 9th century Hindu monuments of Borobudur and Prambanan which were near the city.

Then we flew to the city of Surabaya. We got up in the middle of the night and were driven up Mt. Bruno where we mounted horses in the dark to travel through a caldera to the lip of a small fumarole so as to watch the sun come up standing on its edge—complete with sulfuric fumes. This seems to be some sort of highlight for visiting Japanese who were there in abundance, having walked where we rode. When the sun finally came up, behind clouds, I was chilled to the bone but at least I could see what we had ridden through. It was a huge flat caldera and off in the distance was some sort of walled, Hindu monastery. The atmosphere was dusty and bleak. On returning to the lip of the caldera I saw where I had almost gone over the horse's head as it descended in the dark. We returned to a restaurant to warm my frozen, sandaled feet and get something to eat. All part of the tour! The drive down the mountain was also quite different. There was extensive terracing all the way down. How the locals managed to farm it must have been an exercise learned over centuries, with one leg developing shorter than the other!

Back in Bali I needed to borrow and copy some charts and that involved a ride into Denpasar which was big, confusing, and full of traffic. Not the best part of Bali. That done we prepared to leave, having made arrangements to meet up in the Riau Islands with a group of others. We only had a 2 month visa for Indonesia and the clock was ticking.

I found Indonesia fascinating. It was so very different from what we had already seen. A little history is helpful to understand the country. It is made up of a series of 13,000 large and small islands covering an area larger than the U.S. It has been populated by diverse peoples for millennia. The ancient Chinese and Indian civilizations knew about it and traded here. Because it straddles the equator it has a marvelous growing season and its diversity of crops is remarkable. By the same token so are its indigenous people who are technically even more diverse. It has so many dialects that the present government imposed a new, uniting language on the whole country. It was molded culturally by waves of religious influences starting with the Hindus and progressing through Buddhists, Muslims and Christians. The last big influence were Europeans—mostly Portuguese and Dutch. The Dutch ended up controlling a large section of the islands and ran it like big plantations with the natives virtually slaves. Remember the Indies that Columbus was heading for when he found the new world instead? Those Indies had spices he wanted to bring back. The heart of that spice area was Ambon in the eastern part of this country.

The Dutch ended up there. Their business in Indonesia was so lucrative that the Dutch government paid off their national debt, built railways, and could even afford a war with Belgium. Since Indonesians were treated as 3rd class citizens they weren't too opposed to the Japanese in W.W.II, whom they mistakenly assumed would free them from servitude. That proved to be wrong too. When the Dutch returned after the war and tried to reassert their authority the whole nationalism movement blossomed and by 1949 they had to back out of the country. For a while two families exercised virtual dictatorship although technically Indonesia is a republic.

This country is more ethnically diverse than the U.S., has every Asian culture that exists, every shade of skin coloring. It has been said that if it didn't already exist, nobody would ever

dream of inventing it. It's strongest ties are the common language they must all learn and a lot of intermarriage. Some islands are still quite primitive; others have had civilization for millennia. We were shortly to learn that the Java Sea, for so long the undisturbed private fishing grounds of the Indonesians, was not used to all the small cruising boats cutting through their country's waters. Yes, they had freighters of their own but small ones. What we often referred to as rust buckets. They had fishing fleets too—all sizes. The one common denominator to them all was that they invented their own lighting system used on the boats—or had no lighting. To those of us who knew something about international lights and signals this was a rude awakening, especially when traveling their waters at night. The other thing that we were not prepared for was the superstition of the fishermen. Often they drove good size motorized fishing boats but the lure of “getting ride of evil spirits from their boat to another boat” was accomplished in a highly dangerous fashion. Once they saw you, a slow moving often encumbered by sails sailboat, they would race towards you from every conceivable direction and pass directly in front of you as you frantically tried to avoid them. This was theoretically to impose their evil spirits on your boat. The international rule of avoidance? Never heard of it! It could be very nerve wracking until THEY decided to stop and leave us alone.

At night if we were in passage you might be lucky not to be in a fishing area but if you were you could expect the horizon to be covered with small, wooden fishing boats that only at the last minute lit a flashlight as you bore down on them. To avoid them you often had to steer far off course before you saw the last of the lights. On one occasion, this time during daylight, a large fishing boat aimed directly at us before turning off and then got directly in front of us and dropped its nets. Try as we could, we were never able to fathom the purpose of that. But ours was not to wonder why but to practice self preservation! And en route I learned a few tricks of my own. Once I turned the spot light directly into the cabin of the boat harassing us, blinding the guy. Another time I pointed my fingers like I had a gun in my hand at the skipper of a tug boat coming at us and, suspecting I had put the hex on him, he made an abrupt U-turn! Like I said, it was self survival. Jim was sleeping the first time and on the bow the second time when I broke these nautical rules. The closer we got to the Singapore area where there was international traffic the less we were bothered.

Meanwhile, our first anchorage was at Bawean Island after a few days out. It was a popular cruising stop. After a few days we moved on to Serutu Island. The passage there was seasoned with annoying Indonesian fishing boats coming too close to us and winds on the stern. When others came into the anchorage they reported similar encounters with fishing boats. One of the anchored boats got a mess of fish, from fishing off their stern, which they shared. One boat that joined us had a better than average horror story; they were almost cut in two by a freighter. The sleeping skipper of the sail boat was called up at the last minute by the crew member who panicked and he managed to turn quick enough so only their steel railing in the stern was hit and the VHF antenna taken out. We spent less time in this bay than usual as a large local wooden boat joined us. They were there to pick up the logs from all the illegal cutting done in the forests. The wind piped up and after drifting down on us twice the whole cruising group upped anchor and left them to their mischief. Their own anchoring procedures were to plow in where

ever they felt like it and anchor with what looked like a string and a Muslim chant. There would be no compensation from them if they damaged any of us.

As we were just above the equator it was getting hotter. The night passages continued to vex us no end with unwelcome visits from Indonesian boats but we were in close proximity with 4 other cruisers. We all compared notes in our next anchorage at Pantar Island during the usual happy hour on someone's boat. But at one point we took off on our own. We visited one village and were immediately approached by a young man who wanted to be our guide. Before we left he even climbed a coconut tree for us to give us some coconuts. It was a lovely island setting with most homes over the water and other stick homes out farther, apparently for fishing. Then we proceeded towards Batam Island where we were going to live it up at a real marina again. Gratefully, the tide was with us in that strait. We entered Nongsa Point Marina on Batam and headed for their swimming pool. Hot does not describe how we felt. We were located in a position directly across the straits from Singapore. We could see it all. Our marina was a nautical playground and condo for the wealthy mostly from Singapore who owned boats there. It was really first class and not very full. Just off our dock was a public phone, there was a shuttle to a newly built shopping center, and you could cab to the town of Nygoya City.

Some of our friends wanted more life so challenged the busy straits to stay in Raffles Marina in Singapore. It was so cheap staying where we were we decided to delay leaving. Later we took the ferry to Singapore, met some of our friends at Raffles, shopped, picked up a boat order from West Marine, and enjoyed that beautiful city for a few days. We left Batam Island after 3 weeks. We crossed the traffic lanes with a degree of fear and trepidation. Anchoring in the Straits of Malacca was also less than delightful. No one felt comfortable traveling at night so you put up with the nightly storms, and rolling and bouncing; sort of the story for most of the nights we traveled up the Straits. The days were overcast which helped some with the heat. Lots of sleep lost. We made Port Klang in Malaysia after 4 days but the anchorage up the river, the Port Selangor Yacht Club, was in a river that reminded me of the river by Puntarenas in Costa Rica---fast currents, muddy, floating garbage, etc. But the Yacht Club here was first class with a great dining room. Fortunately we got a buoy to tie to as the place was popular and full of passing cruisers. A group of us made arrangements to spend a few days in Kuala Lumpur. But before that happened we had afternoon winds come up several times and it was fun and games in the anchorage! Some boats broke loose and the rest of us "sailed" with just our masts. Someone announced we should all turn our rudders to port which worked in stabilizing us in those winds.

The trip into Kuala Lumpur was via a very modern, fast train. I was expecting Malaysia to be another 3rd world country. Although there were certainly enough hovels where we were up the river I was amazed at the many different areas in which Malaysia seemed to be galloping into the 21st century, not the least of which were the twin towers in Kuala Lumpur which we visited and were then the tallest towers in the world. The rest of the city was suffering from traffic growing pains. The down town was largely developed under the British and not designed for the automobile. Grid lock—especially with all the high rises going up. A public transit system was badly needed. I liked the Malaysian batiks even better than the Indonesian batiks. We stayed in

the down town area so as to be able to get around better and really enjoyed the night markets. We did some local touring, visited a smaller version of the Blue Mosque of Istanbul, and the city of Malacca.

Our next longer stop was to be in Penang Island . The passage up there was equally as uncomfortable in the Straits, this time with wind along with the overcast, rain, and storms. Our anchorage this time was between the island and mainland in an area of houses on stilts with a background of a modern city. The island, we learned later while on tour, was pretty much dedicated to tourist facilities, especially on the side facing the straits, which at this point were very wide. Our anchorage was typically Asian. We had strong currents, debris in the water and had to take a water taxi to even get to shore. After a few days, and after getting hit by some of the debris we moved on along with some of our friends.

A group of us discovered a delightful anchorage off Langkawi Island which was between 2 islands with high peaks. There were monkeys and hornbills everywhere in the trees and sea otter on the shore. A short way inland was a fresh water lake in a limestone sink where we spent afternoons soaking off our grime or our clothes. We spent 4 days there. This upper part of the Straits of Malacca was becoming quite scenic and all the different islands offered shelter. When we moved on we went to a marina in Kuah Town on the same island for the usual necessary purchases. This place was also a ferry terminal for Thailand and therefore a free port. It was relatively modern and so it was stock up time again. The men got together to locate the cheapest place to find beer. When we left we headed for another delightful anchorage on this same island. After a few more days we moved on.

This time we were again between islands and it was Thanksgiving Day. It had been warm and muggy for some time but so very, very pretty among those high peaks and silent anchorages. I still had canned turkey and cranberries, potatoes, and some canned pumpkin. Our friends baked a pumpkin and apple pie, and a new American boat that came into the anchorage was invited to join us. It was a delightful evening of sharing. Interestingly, the lady from the new boat was a doctor so, of course, we pumped her full of questions. She was also newly pregnant. She said she had been “doctoring” others since they’d been on their boat, from blood poisoning to serious falls.

Two of us then continued gunkholing various exotic anchorages until we came to popular Phi Phi Don. Preparing to anchor in a crowded bay, the plastic supporting the gear shift broke and I couldn’t put the boat into reverse. Jim dropped the anchor and I shut off the motor and after we stopped moving around we appear to be in a position we could live with. Jim started right in on the repair work since we weren’t going to go anywhere until it was fixed. He epoxied a piece of aluminum on to the plastic housing and created a new screw hole. I was most impressed by his resources and knowing what to do, this in spite of years, now, of knowing he fixed things. There certainly wasn’t anything available on this tourist island he could have used. He worked at it parts of 2 days, we did some shore browsing, and then left for mainland Phuket and the Yacht Basin there. Not a nice trip in. First we waited for the tide to come up and then followed sticks in the water. Very shallow. The complex wasn’t completed yet so, of course, all was not

totally in operation. But the marina part was almost full, thanks to the migrating cruisers. We were with lots of old friends. And there was a very convenient restaurant in use.

Other cruisers who came in earlier helped us find a tour agency in Phuket City. Also the bank, places to eat, supermarket, and other helpful places we would be using during our expected month long stay. Phuket City was booming, with lots of development going on. We got in a week of touring Bangkok, Chiang Rai, and Chiang Mai by flying everywhere. It was nice to get away from the heat and rain. Bangkok was a mixed bag of dirty, too much traffic, pollution, and extensive modernization. The former king's dwelling palace was mind boggling. Such opulence and so much gold!

Chiang Rai was relaxing. Saw the Golden triangle area. Chiang Mai, the old "capitol of the North" was even more interesting. Good hotels, a great night market, elephants... Both the Chiangs had lots of ruins from previous civilizations which we saw in the country side while on tours.

When we got back none of Jim's projects had been started yet. So, just before Xmas Jim got them moving on some fiberglass repair, beefing up the broken gear holder, and sewing on the sails and bimini. Christmas Eve we attended a party at a restaurant along with a number of other boaters where we had gag gifts and a good meal. On Christmas Day, with the repairs done, we decided to leave for some gunkholing in the area. The marina facilities (johns and showers) were starting to break down and we found the manager getting defensive about everything. So we paid up and left, back through the sticks in the water to Phang Nga Bay above the boat lagoon. The islands there were so spectacular with their tall, steep sides. At our first anchorage we put on some Christmas music and then went skinny dipping. Inside those islands were hollowed out places called honggs which you could enter in. We spent 6 days touring these type islands and the Krabi area. Krabi was too touristy. By this time we seem to have passed through the rainy season. Eventually on New Years day we went to a Nai Harn anchorage on the west side of the peninsula. We hung around there for about a week waiting for friends to deliver parts for our radar and wind speed indicator to us from Langkawi. The winter winds had been strong of late. Great for sailing but not when you're at anchor. Some of the boats had started leaving for the passage into the Indian Ocean to Sri Lanka. Finally, on January 8 we did too.

CHAPTER 12

January 1997 to mid-April 1997

We left on 8 January and technically we were in the Andaman Sea and still in the upper reaches of the Straits of Malacca. We had good winds but our wind speed/direction indicator parts were not yet installed, radar was out, and our Autohelm 6000 not working obliging us to use the 3000 which is less strong and yaws in strong winds. Nonetheless, we moved fast, even with the inconveniences. But the freighter traffic was heavy and there was no moon initially. After that we moved north of what appeared to be the traffic lanes which was a huge relief. But it was back into them later to get around the bottom of Sri Lanka and into the port of Galle 9 days later. Part of the discomfort of this passage was having to slow down in order to arrive at the right time of the day. I always hated that; it usually meant a rolling boat and slapping sails.

We ended up Med moored out in the farthest part of the inner harbor—next to a hemp rope that crossed it. Since there had been a sporadic civil war going on between the government and Tamil Tigers this was their way of keeping terrorist boats out. A guard house was just above us and a gun emplacement on the other side. During our stay we had the pleasure of experiencing their other precaution: setting off some sort of stun bomb under water during the night. Lying at virtually the water line in our V berth, it got your attention!

As an agent was available in the port we used him to set up a city tour and a 4 day island tour with friends. But we hauled our own diesel containers and laundry as well as shopping bags. Have to stay in shape! But they would deliver bulk items—at least as far as the dinghy dock.

I guess we got a taste of India on our 4 day tour, the people being of similar stock, although Buddhist. The roads, fairly narrow, are the stream of life. EVERYTHING travels on them: cars, trucks, people, bikes, cows, dogs, ox carts, push carts..... Our driver apparently felt our minibus deserved special consideration as he simply put hand to horn and plowed through. If it was in the evening it was enough to give you a heart attack as you couldn't make out well all these objects. After one stint in the front, our friends opted for the back seat, permanently! We saw no dead bodies, however, in spite of passing mere inches from some of them.

Tourism isn't really that big in Sri Lanka. Known formerly as Ceylon, the Portuguese and Dutch used this island on their trade routes. Later, the British simply stayed and made a colony of them. They left them something enduring on their departure: established tea plantations which extensively covered the hill country in the interior. We drove about 1100 Km while on our circuit and one of our stops was the ancient city of Kandy. While there we went into the temple that contained the Buddha's tooth, which

was a highly revered and visited place. (A few years later the Tamils tried to bomb the place.)

Also on our itinerary were ruins of some ancient cities and an elephant orphanage as well as an evening of folk dancing and fire walking. The drives through the country side were equally interesting watching the people. We learned that since Buddhism is the dominant religion of the country it is also the state religion—one of the problems causing the Hindu Tamils to rebel. Through both groups are of Indian descent, the Buddhist Sinhalese came from N. India; the Tamils from S. India. Both are immigrants, but the Sinhalese came as conquerors first, and the Tamils as laborers later. Reminded me of the Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland and their warfare.

The people were very calm, never wore hats in all that heat, there was still traditional clothing in the back country, and begging was extensive for any slight service. Not too surprising considering their meager wages. It cost each of us \$130 for the 4 days. It cost the boat \$136 to enter the country—one of our most expensive countries to enter. Most are free.

We left after 10 days for the passage around the bottom of India and up to Oman. The first 2 days were very rough—very typical for the bottom of a continent—and the traffic lanes were busy. Once we left that, seas and winds were mild. The further north we went the quieter it got. A regulator and the head went out on us on this passage. On our 16th day we arrived in Mina Raysut, Oman. Jim started immediately to fix the regular and rebuild the toilet before we went to bed that night.

The anchorage represented quite an international group: U.S., Japan, Sweden, France, Australia, Switzerland, Canada, and South Africa. Everyone who dealt with the Omani military in this port raved about their helpfulness. A group of us hired a military truck and driver and loaded it with diesel containers to be driven to a gas station on the highway outside the base to get fuel. Jim and I took a cab into town to get groceries earlier and to get money. The bank was closed. When we looked unhappy a stranger directed us to the back of the bank and told us to go in and they'd help us. I was expecting us to be accused of trying to rob the place but the man was right. A regular business was going on in the back while the front was closed. After we did grocery shopping the shop keeper drove us back to the base. What a country! Later, while listening to FM radio out of Muscat I heard an announcer say in English that it was Valentine's Day. Arabs celebrating Valentine's Day?!! The remaining days we spent getting prepared for the haul up the Red Sea by changing filters, cleaning winches and the like. We pulled out of port after a week and coasted along the desert coast. Amazing to think that the Omani once had an empire from Africa to India.

Five days later we cruised into the port of Adan, Yemen, a dirty, damaged town. A few years earlier there had been fighting here between north and south Yemen. The results were still around. I think the place might have looked better under the British

when it was a busy coaling station. And, since this country didn't have any oil reserves as an independent country now, nothing new was taking place here. It looked depressed and desolate. However, it is still a fuel stop. We had to pay to get the man to do the paper work to tell the fuel man to give us fuel. I guessed this to be the beginning of "Baksheesh." After 4 days we were happy to leave although we now had an inverter problem and a windlass that stopped working. It would have to wait for repairs at the next stop.

We made one stop along the coast before entering the Straits of Bab el Mandeb to go up the Red Sea. Then, with a strong wind behind us we entered the straits in the evening, along with freighters. We had to avoid the handy passage between an island and the mainland because it was in a land dispute and boy soldiers shot at you if you got near. Once in we also had to avoid the Hanish Islands further up which would have been a terrific rest stop. Instead, we labored on in big seas and strong winds at our stern. The 3000 autohelm couldn't handle it from that direction so we ended up hand steering for 20 hours. That night was one unforgettable experience, especially since I estimated we only had 10 degrees of compass to steer between in order to clear the islands and the mainland. We did one hour on, one hour off all that time. And, of course there was no moon. The next day we attempted to use the spinnaker pole to reef the jib only to have the shackle break. End result was the halyard got wrapped into the jib furling and we hesitated to use the jib for fear of not being able to refurl it again. The following day the wind switched as we were trying to make an anchorage. We were both exhausted and didn't need the wind change. As we neared the island anchorage another boat radioed us to help direct us in. The next day a member of their crew went up our mast and untangled the halyard wrapped up in the jib. When we left them we had no more wind and had to tack, and motor sail until we reached the entrance to Massawa, Eritrea. It took us two times to approach the dock as there was a big freighter taking up most of it. On the second try we crunched the dinghy's motor's blade even with the help of friends on the shore. We paid our \$50 fees and gratefully headed for the anchorage.

We were both ready to stay put for a few days as Jim had repairs to attend to. He started in on the windlass—an all day job and got it running again. What a relief that was! We also picked up fuel with our dinghy and jerry cans. Massawa wasn't much and was definitely 3rd world. It, too, just ended a war and the building damage was still evident. But it was independent now and very welcoming. We ate ashore each night. But we learned that most cruisers in the anchorage were getting intestinal problems. We shared our Lomotil and never did develop a problem. Lots of container ships came—mostly to unload, not to take on. The anchorage was full of local derelict boats. We checked out in the evening after 3 nights, after paying an addition \$5 a day to anchor and returned to calm seas. Now we were going to travel when there was no wind, whether night or day, as whatever wind came up would be on our nose. We'd be doing a great deal of motoring during the remaining 2/3 of the Red Sea.

Our Si-Oui radio net reported a boarding of a sailboard at the Sudan-Eritrea boarder at 11 miles out. We adjusted our waypoint to go out further and after 2 days arrived in exclusively Sudanese waters. We consulted the Red Sea Pilot for anchorages, most of which were now in reef areas. A new bilge pump started giving us trouble about that time. At our second anchorage we joined some other boats also headed for Suakin, Sudan. We were delighted to let them lead the way as we were now in an extensive coral area and the charts for the Red Sea were never updated to the 20th century. Our 12th day in the Red Sea saw us 30 miles shy of the half way point, which was Port Sudan.

The entry into the bay to Suakin went past what looked like a city that had been deserted some time in the past. Most of the buildings were fairly in tact but nobody lived in them. For some reason we never learned why, maybe because we weren't there long enough. Our main reason for stopping was to refuel and rest up a bit. When we went to the main dock area there was a boat loading up pilgrims for a trip to Mecca and officials weren't exactly delighted to have to bother with us. But a local passed himself off as an agent and after checking in we made arrangements for a local tour. He loaded about 6 of us into the back of a Toyota pickup truck and took us to the market place and a "museum." Both were highly unimpressive, but the market place was at least a glimpse into life there. It was also very primitive. Try as we might, we couldn't really find anything we wanted to buy. It was just a place for some food and recycled things—mostly all kinds of bottles. I had the feeling that no doubt our own garbage would be gone through after we left and felt sort of guilty because it would contain our used toilet paper, which we never ran through the head. Everyone was very friendly and approached us with smiles, especially when they learned we were from the U.S. Again, we were sort of apprehensive since Pres. Clinton had recently bombed some factory in another part of the country suspecting terrorists were brewing something there. But the coastal locals had apparently not heard about it. My last thought on leaving there was that this was by far one of the poorest countries we'd seen. Everyone looked scrawny, including the camels.

After a few days we were on our way again. We were in the company of 2 other boats at this time. Both of them were much faster than Free Spirit. When they decided on a longer day of travel than we wanted they pulled ahead and we opted to stop in an opening listed in the book as an acceptable site. It turned out to be a military base and on entry we were directed by a kid soldier to a location which turned out to be on coral! And, on it we went. In order to get off we ended up with half the base trying to help, many of whom were happy to just get on the boat and look around. Nothing helped get us off including their small motor boat. The wind was keeping us snugly in place. We were about 4 miles north of Port Sudan at this point which was a very big port. So a tug was called for. It came but had no rope to pull us off. Fortunately, we had a long nylon line we had gotten to use in the Panama Canal. With me indicating the direction to pull, and Jim on the wheel we watched that nylon stretch out but very quickly it did the trick and got us off. It was dusk by then. The tug captain (a European, I believe) said he had to take us back to Port Sudan to do the paper work. So we accompanied him and dropped

anchor there in the dark. Port Sudan was usually avoided by the cruisers as its port fees were high but we were so grateful to have been rescued intact we didn't really care what it cost. Jim was estimating the rescue would also cost us something. Much to our surprise the tug captain said we were so small that he could get our rescue fees forgiven—which he did. Jim then asked about the crew's daily wages and when an agent came aboard to begin the charges on the port fees, he gave him money for the crew. We ended up paying about \$200 for one thing or another and could only hope the crew actually got their gift. We were traveling with American money and using it all through the Red Sea. In fact, that's all officials wanted for some reason. And they wanted used money. Apparently, someone had slipped in some counterfeit in the past.

All this time we were in radio contact with the two boats we had been traveling with earlier. They agreed to spend 2 nights where they were in order for us to catch up with them. We took off at midnight the following night in the expectation we could rendezvous with them about dawn when they would be taking off again. We knew that the long reef that paralleled the shore was about 4 miles off, more or less. Since we were doing this in the dark I spent the night doing fixes every 15 minutes to make sure we stayed in the channel. We met up as expected.

The list of breakdowns on the boat now included a voltmeter which died on us (very important for Jim's electrical work) and a starboard winch which was damaged and a piece of plastic broken on the electric winch from our efforts to get off the coral. We had also recently done fixes on a foot pump to our water supply and a solenoid on our propane gas. We were getting low on spare parts but so was everyone else. Still, we were all still sharing when someone else had a greater need.

We were experiencing lots of wind on the nose. Only at night and for a while in the A.M. did they moderate. Therefore we started leaving in the early morning and quitting before noon. Some of the anchorages were behind islands, some in breaks in the reef, many near coral. The Red Sea Pilot listed a lot of possibilities but they weren't all universally good. Sometimes fishermen came out to beg from us. Had I known I could have prepared something but I simply needed all our food and didn't know what else they wanted. We didn't want to give up the cigarettes we had bought to give as baksheesh in Egypt which we knew about. I didn't figure they wanted my clothes and Jim needed his. Sometimes they were still clinging to the boat when we left.

The radio net kept us pretty well informed about favorable weather in which to travel. And the 3 of us, at least, would follow their advice. We had one very long haul of 180 miles which included crossing Foul Bay and in which we had good traveling weather except for the last 20 miles. Those 20 miles were a miserable beat to windward but we had no choice but to continue as the only anchorage available was ahead of us. We all decided on a lay day and a potluck to celebrate. It turned into 2 and Jim tackled some boat work.. The boat, especially after that last beating, was a mess. Our caulking was dried out and allowing leaks to appear.

We planned on leaving that evening. In the afternoon a medical call came over the radio net. One in our group was going to leave medication at the police station on the shore for the boat due to come in. While there she ran into a camping group that contained a doctor. He said to tell the skipper with the sick party to go directly to Port Berenice where there was a medical hospital and an airfield that could take the sick party to Cairo. (We were by this time in Egypt.) The skipper on the boat was already a volunteer skipper, having come on board to help the wife who couldn't cope with both illness and sailing. Another boat with a doctor as skipper was much further back and had been trying to prescribe as best he could over the air.

We left as scheduled. It took 2 nights and a day to reach Safaga, an Egyptian resort area for divers. There was a lot of run-around about checking in at the official wharf. We had to come twice, the second time we got covered with chaff from the mill milling wheat next to us. It was a rotten location as we were also bouncing around in the wind next to a cement wall. Eventually, after 3 days it all got done, partly by land. We ended up anchored off a resort hotel where there were other shops as well. One of our small traveling group had kept on going towards Port Suez but there were plenty of other boaters at anchor. Once in I was so tired I wasn't even tempted to go ashore to eat, which was usually a pretty good incentive for me. When I surfaced the next day I heard about a local that was willing to accommodate cruisers and run errands for them. I sent laundry out and we started organizing for a fuel run. We also located a tourist office and along with some others we planned a tour to Luxor.

There were 6 of us who took a minibus to Luxor. But first we had to assemble in convoy with a whole train of cars and buses. One guard in the beginning and one in the end. Crazy peaked, conical sand dunes were part of the trip to the Nile River and I couldn't help but wonder how 2 isolated guards were going to protect the whole convoy. But, this was Egypt's way of protecting from terrorism, something that occurred on and off there at that time.

Our hotel was a 3 star. We got an English speaking guide we all grew to dislike but the antiquities were, of course, worth the trip. But everyone hustled—kids, cab drivers, waiters, merchants. We found western food thanks to all the Germans who vacationed in Egypt. But over all, we tended to weary of the Arabic mind. The port and how they operated was equally as tiresome and their treatment of sailboaters was more than annoying. So, after a week of needed rest in Safaga we took off.

We arrived at the Suez Yacht Club on April 9 having spent 3 days underway, with 2 night anchorages which were tolerable. Once in the Gulf of Suez it was calmer but getting colder. It was spring but we were used to the tropics. We got into the Y.C. basin with help from friends and just before a front passed through. At last, we tied down to a buoy. But a few days of the cold winds and with no heat in the boat I was soon freezing.

On top of that, after 6 days of sneezing I concluded that I must be suffering from an allergy rather than a cold. And the reason was obvious: DUST, DUST, DUST. So I took pills, pills, pills as my nose ran, ran, ran. The wind lasted days and all sailboat traffic was held up from moving up the canal. We decided to spend a few days in Cairo as long as we were stalled there. Did I mention the flies? You can thank the open garbage areas that are so extensive around their cities for that.

Liking centrally located hotels we opted for the Cleopatra Hotel in Cairo. It was a 3 star hotel. We learned a valuable lesson here. Never stay in a 3 start hotel in a Muslim country! We were relishing some TV coverage—too bad, the TV didn't work. But when we couldn't get water as well, we had to DEMAND another room. Why there was even an argument over it surprised us. But Jim prevailed and we got to a lower floor where there was water pressure. We took a tour of "old Cairo" and had pointed out to us the spot where the Holy Family had lived waiting out King Herod's death. Apparently our tour guide wasn't aware that Cairo wasn't even founded until 1000 years later. I was nice; I kept my mouth shut. Then we saw the pyramids and had an impressive visit to the Cairo Museum. Like the trip in, we took a local bus back to Suez City. This one wasn't falling apart like the one we took to get to Cairo. Nothing like local color!

Before we were to leave our anchorage in Suez we experience a warm day, a sand storm, and strong winds. A very large yacht broke away from it's moorings on the dock there and threatened to wipe out a bunch of us on buoys before it was contained. And the flies continued to fly.....But a day later we had clearance to go up the Canal. We picked up our pilot and proceeded with a number of other cruisers for a day traveling that big ditch in the desert. We stopped for the night in one of the lakes about mid-way. Then, most of another day with a new pilot through the rest of the canal where we dropped off the second pilot with his gift (cigarettes and \$5) and declined a third pilot to take us to a marina because we said we weren't stopping anymore but going out into the Mediterranean Sea. It was evening and the hop over to Ashkelon, Israel would be an overnight. To say we were happy to exit Egypt is an understatement.

This long haul—from Australia to Israel had taken a toll of our replacement parts. Jim had been able to repair everything except the Autohelm 5000 and the radar. In Israel we expected mail service to help us with that. The boat, at this point, was heavily salt and dust encrusted from the Red Sea so we anticipated a lengthy clean up and rest stay. We were looking forward to civilization, as we knew it, again.

CHAPTER 13

MID-APRIL, 1997 TO MID-OCTOBER 1997

The Israelis wanted to be notified as you approached their shores so about 25 miles out I called them and gave them our position. When it got light we were approached by a gun boat whose members unsmilingly looked us over. I waved; they still didn't smile. We gave our destination as Ashkelon and were given permission to proceed. Once in, we were obliged to submit to an inspection and some divers checked out our hull for terrorist bombs that might be attached. When we cleared that, everyone now smiled broadly and we were told "Welcome to your 51st state!" (I got out and kissed the ground.) The marina manager assured me I wasn't the first one to do that. They then took us by car to check in at the port of Ashdod as the Ashkelon marina was not yet completed. What a novelty. Never had any country provided us with a driver in order to check in! I loved the drive. Everything was so green after Egypt. The marina manager apologized because there would be limited service in the marina due to the Passover holidays. We were so happy to be out of the 3rd world it was hardly an inconvenience. We joined some of our friends to celebrate our safe deliverance from the Red Sea, a common occurrence on arrival. Ashkelon had become the port of choice for most cruisers coming out from Egypt.

On the actual day of Passover all the cruisers were invited by the management to an event in which he explained the significant of their holiday and we had some wine and refreshments. The marina was not yet well known as the apartments attached to it were still in a building stage. We had lots of room to side-tie—something that was going to come to a halt once we started traveling again as all would then be Med-mooring—bow or stern in. And, we had tons of water! Our boats were so filthy from a year of transiting that we all spent days cleaning them. Our lines were so encrusted with salt and dirt that the ends could stand straight up by themselves. Jim started at the top of the mast with the hose and the run off was pure brown. We soaked all our lines in pails of water.

Jim got cracking with his area of replacement parts and I went into town and looked into some appointments and food shopping. On May 2 we went into Jerusalem by bus to do some sightseeing. We stayed at a hostel and our friends went to the Sheraton and we met for meals. Meanwhile, we saw a lot of the sights within the walled city, actually walked some of the walls, and visited the Holocaust and other museums. Our legs were not used to such extensive walking so after 3 days we needed a rest. Back to the boat to attend to our dental appointments and a dermatologist for Jim. He had to have regular checkups for skin cancer thanks to his current life style.

Next followed 3 days of touring with a rented car along with another couple. We saw a number of their national parks (small and historic), and visited a kibbutz on the Dead Sea. This is such a small country that it is easy to see a lot by car. Their largest area is the Negev desert. Then back to boat projects. I had varnishing and painting to do; Jim found a new alternator problem but the Autohelm was fixed. Best of all for me was

friends helping me get on line with e-mail. What a thrill! Mail on demand instead of twice yearly. I quickly learned how to find phone connections where ever I went.

The weather was warming up so on May 25 we left for Cyprus. It was an easy passage but not much fun in the outer harbor. The inner harbor was, of course, very popular but hard to get a slip there, which only occurred when someone else left. Many cruisers winter in Larnaca. I liked the proximity of the town and you could e-mail easily. We took a local tour of the Greek side of the island. The Turkish side is unavailable unless you go there first. But then you can't visit the Greek side.... Another "Berlin wall" exists on this island and has for many years following a civil war finally mediated by the U.N. And, although Cyprus is an independent country, they fly either Turkish or Greek flags on their respective sides. Only the cruisers fly Cypriot courtesy flags from what I could see.

We left on June 9 for Antalya, Turkey. It took us 2 nights and 2 days due to currents around the island and then we encountered no wind but when we started entering the huge bay of Antalya it was really spectacular. Mountains ring the whole area. We went into a marina and made arrangements to take a tour to Cappadocia. But first we wandered the town and did some rug shopping. We tried to attend a ballet in the Roman amphitheater there but there was little interest in the marina so they canceled the bus that was to take us.

We took a van to Cappadocia which was in the interior. For some reason I didn't write a lot about this trip in my log. From what I can remember the most memorable things were the well known caves of volcanic tufa. They had been occupied down the ages by many humans going back to pre-historic times. Since this part of Turkey was very early Christianized, we saw evidence that some of the caves sheltered a form of monastic life. Today, some were still occupied and in one we went to a night club one evening. Everyone in the area weaves rugs so after a lot of browsing we bought one for each of our children. We also saw another area of underground caves with many different levels. At one point in history it was the hiding place of local Christians who were fleeing Crusaders. The Crusaders, in their infinite ignorance, obviously thought they alone were Christians so set out to slaughter them. Another area we went through was the city of Konya where the Whirling Dervishes lived. We did not see them but we did visit a religious site where whiskers from the beard of Mohammed were being revered. So now we've seen a tooth from Buddha and the 5 o'clock shadow of Mohammed! And while on tour in Israel our guide pointed out a rock on which the Virgin Mary sat while she rested on her way to Egypt fleeing King Harod. The first two, undoubtedly, had more validity than the latter.

We spent about 2 weeks in Antalya and it was getting hotter by the day. So we spent a couple of days exiting the bay, first anchoring out near Phaeselis, old Greco/Roman ruins. Near Kemer we were virtually driven out by the disco music which went on half the night. We were in the part of the bay where Alexander the Great's movements were recorded. After him came the Romans, pirates, Byzantines, more pirates, and finally about 1500 a general collapse took place in this area. Ruins were everywhere.

We came out of the bay and headed for Finike and on to Kekova Roads and tucked into a bay. The “roads” were behind an island. This whole area had suffered a collapse from an earthquake centuries ago. We anchored among ruins, and not for the first time. We spend a few days there and saw what we were going to see for the rest of the summer—Turkish charter boats called “gulets,” made of wood, looking like sailboats, but never sailing. They took out charters for about a week at a time. Being bigger than most of the cruising sailboats, they muscled their way into the best anchorages and felt no compunction at squeezing everyone else out. Good anchoring manners they did not have.

The area contained enough places to anchor and where ever you were you had outstanding scenery with the mountains and all the ruins. Near Kas we came to the first islands that were still Greek. Back in 1922 when the Greeks and Turks made their final land agreements the Greeks got all the off shore islands near Turkey. In exchange all the Turks left the islands and all Asia Minor was now declared to be Turkey. Technically, we cruisers were expected to check in and out every time we visited the other country but in actuality, we never did. We simply went to a bay less frequented and left early in the morning before any officials noticed us. As for all the people in these two countries, we found them remarkably similar, though the Greeks were insulted at the idea. But after centuries of occupation, how could the Greeks not have married among, and picked up Turkish ways? I saw no difference in their music, their drinking, their dancing. All that seemed to separate them was religion.

On to Fethiye where there was a sizable, sheltered bay. It was a big hangout for cruisers who wanted to spend the winter there. If anchored, they spent little money but had relatively good weather. When we got there it was stifling hot as it was summer. It was a big gulet port so they took up all the dock space. Along with German cruising friends we headed for a town at the other end of the bay where there was some breeze. After some R & R we pulled up anchor and headed for Marmaris. We learned you have to get your traveling in early in the day as the winds came on your nose in the late morning. We also had some experience with the meltemi winds off the mountains. Not much fun when you are anchored. When our windlass packed up we went into the marina there while it was being fixed. Since we spent some time there we got to know the town quite well. It is full of rug stores. But we bought 4 new batteries instead.

When we left we headed for the Karaburun peninsula. The area was ancient Loryma. It had a citadel on the western entrance. The ruins were Hellenistic and huge. Evidence of faint terracing of the mountains could still be seen. Earthquakes undoubtedly decimated the area and erosion did the rest. I was quite impressed with the place as it wasn't surrounded by other civilization. I could almost feel the ghosts of the past—just the way I like my history.

The Greek island of Simi was nearby so we selected a minor bay away from the port captain's bay, then took a bus into Simi town for lunch. Then on up the coast again. Where ever there was evidence of tourism, there inevitably appeared the hated disco. We

were perfectly content to stay in secluded anchorages but sometimes the wind off the mountains required a better spot. Otherwise we would rock and roll or drag anchor.

The windlass was acting up from time to time again and we never knew if it would be dependable or not. Pulling up 200 feet of chain and the anchor took two of us and that soon got tiresome. When the wind came up from the wrong direction we didn't dare leave the boat. We were now obliged to use the nylon rode and 35 lb. anchor along with a weight to hold the rode down. I always felt more secure on chain after many unhappy experiences with dragging. We made a stop in Bodrum—as far from the disco as we could get and still walk into the city. It had an old Teutonic Knights castle which was now a museum. There were many ship wreck artifacts from ancient times in there. When we left there it was back into the headwinds.

Two days later we were anchored, literally, in the ancient port of Iassus, having passed through its narrow entrance. There was limited activity there and it was peaceful and calm. We walked the ruins once again. Later that day an Australian boat came in and we discovered we had passaged with them on the Over The Top Rally. We enjoyed sundowners together that evening and watched KISMET, the first Turkish boat to circumnavigate, anchor near us. It was a rare quiet anchorage and we had blessed relief from the discos.

The next anchorage was Altinkum—an old fishing village now a booming, swinging, crowded resort. The boom boxes were in full force but we hung out a couple of days anyway. An interesting feature of Turkish resort life is the little, white box like homes, all in a row, that they build near beaches. In places, they covered the hills. It was about as unattractive as it sounds and really spoiled the beauty of coastal Turkey.

At the Greek island of Samos outer harbor we ran into German friends again and spent 3 days with them touring the island and attending the island's celebration of liberation from Turkey in the 20s. We were still getting strong winds and as fire works were part of the activities we had to keep an eye on our boats just under all that activity. We enjoyed our time there and attended a number of their festivities. Then, it was a short passage over to mainland Turkey and the town of Kusadasi where we planned on a longer stay.

First thing to attend to was our windlass (again). Then we signed up for a month in the marina in order to do some land touring. The wind could do all the blowing it wanted now; we were firmly attached to the land. Our first touring was relatively local: we took a bus (dolmus) up to the ruins of Ephesus just above us. It had been further excavated and some buildings built up since I had last seen it. Jim was quite impressed with it as there were many explanations of what we were seeing, unlike the many ruins we had wandered around by ourselves coming up the coast. We also saw the reputed "home of Mary" where she was supposed to have lived with St. John. That's the second place I'd visited that made a claim on her. But we also saw the ruins of a large cathedral and the empty tomb where St. John was reputed to have been buried. I'm more inclined to believe the last than the first. In any event, the Turks aren't loathe to tout the place. Religion isn't so controversial if the principals are already dead and it brings in tourists.

We spent some time shopping Kusadasi and picking up things to bring back with us to the States for family. Then, we made reservations for Istanbul. We went by ferry overnight from Izmir to Istanbul. Unfortunately, we were going to pass during the night the very area I most wanted to see. This was the Dardanelles and the Sea of Marmara. We stayed in a hotel in the old part of Istanbul—very convenient to the Topkapi palace, Hagia Sophia, Blue Mosque, etc. No good place to eat, however, but Burger King and the Golden Arches were close which made Jim happy. We made a special trip out to the old walls of Constantinople which I found interesting, and then also saw an underground water reservoir from that age which had recently been opened to the public. Its ceiling was held up by Roman and Greek column from around the Mediterranean. Next, the covered bazaar had to be seen and browsed. After 6 days we were leg weary and ready to fly back to Ismir where the tour company picked us up and returned us to Kusadasi. After another week of relaxation and last minute shopping we were ready to leave. The weather was cooler, and the meltemi, if it was still blowing, would be at our backs. We expected an easier passage going down than coming up.

We left on Sept. 7 and spent 4 nights in a little bay at the top of Samos Island. Jim cleaned the prop and I attacked the water line, after wards we read and relaxed. Then, we went back into the main harbor at Pythagorean to check in officially into Greece. We planned on visiting mostly Greek islands on our way back to Israel. We stocked up at all the markets we had used from our last visit there and on Sept 15 left Samos island for Patmos island. As we island hopped down the coast of Turkey, we kept bumping into old friends in various anchorages. We all seemed to be doing the Greek islands about the same time. We also got a lot more weather and some real sailing for the first time all summer. But the reunions in the anchorages were fun. The winds less so.

From Ios Island where we went into a marina, we took an inter-island ferry to Santorini, that volcanic rim that is so popular. We spent a couple of nights enjoying the view of the caldera-bay, and then a tour of the excavated village that lies at the edge of what's left of the rim. Weather was getting colder so we needed to move on south. When we got back to Ios we learned it was a back packers' mecca. During the height of the summer season one doesn't want to be older than 19 and still be there. It catered a lot to nude beaches and a lot of drunkenness. How the natives stood it I couldn't imagine but it helped explain the rudeness of some of the waiters in their restaurants.

We left our marina in the evening and motored the 83 miles to the port of Iraklion, Crete, arriving mid morning on Sept. 25. All we could find was a spot on a wall of the inner harbor and weren't sure it was even legal. If they were going to run us off we felt we'd best quickly get in our visit to the ruins of Knossos. It, too, was improved since I was last there. Jim found it very interesting, especially after I gave him the history. The next day we visited the archeological museum and viewed the old walls and fortress from Venetian times. And, of course, the souvenir stores before Jim was sated. The following day we took a land tour to the western end of the island. The Island scenery was spectacular with all their mountains but about the only tree you saw were olive trees. Back at the boat we found our second almost-frayed-through line to shore. We left the

next morning. Got to Spinalonga on the eastern end of the island about mid afternoon and tucked into a bay with a couple of other boats.

We spend a week in that bay and it was delightful. We visited the old leper colony ruins and several of the towns in the vicinity with our dinghy. It was completely relaxing. When it was time to leave we did another overnight which took us to Lindos on Rhodes Island and another lovely bay. Above us was a big medieval fortress which had Greek and Roman history attached to it as well. The tourist season was over so we got to enjoy what we wanted to see without crowds, same as in Crete. We visited with an editor from Readers Digest on their boat while there. They spend part of every year in that bay.

By October 13 we had moved on to Rhodes City, the capital of the island. We spend a night in the wrong location with a bad swell to contend with. We moved as soon as we discovered our mistake. We both needed a good night's sleep and the weather was fluky enough to concern us. Once settled in the right place we could leave the boat safely in order to do some touring. We went to the old castle there which had gone through many transitions, most notably the Knights Templar and the Ottomans. The old city within the walls was also interesting. On returning to the boat we found we had dragged. A fellow boater told us of a better holding place so we moved again. Dragging always made me apprehensive so as soon as we felt a gentle north breeze we started the procedure to check out of the country. We were on our way by evening and had a nice sail for about 10 miles. Then the wind switched and we rolled all night. Jim got nauseous and I got no sleep. That was about par for the beginning of a new passage.

We had 3 days of lumpy seas but the further south we went the less threatening. We rolled a lot, largely because we slowed down in order to arrive in daylight. The harbor at Tel Aviv had a sand bar near its entrance and they were never fun to get around. The last 15 miles we went through a squall with winds and raised seas. Just what you don't want to happen! But by the time we came through the breakwalls at 9:30 am. it had moderated. It was Oct. 20 and we would again tie to a dock for the duration. This time for 6 months.

Our coastal cruising of Turkey was really great, despite the head winds. No where else was there such an impressive array of ruins and history and so readily available to cruisers. Having a little knowledge of Greek History made it especially meaningful.

CHAPTER 14

NOVEMBER 1997 TO MAY 1998

Returning to a country other than 3rd world means you can get lots of things fixed, Jim started right in on that. I, on the other hand, began to familiarize myself with Tel Aviv so we could find things. One of the first things I got was a step ladder. We were, of course, Med-moored with the bow sprit in. Getting up and over that bow sprit was no picnic, thus the ladder. Even then it was tricky not tripping on anything. My computer had stopped working and I wanted that looked into as well. We discovered that our slip was where ever someone else had pulled their boat out of the water for bottom work. As a result we met an interesting variety of people who lived on their boats as we moved around to new slips. But I hated the actual moving as it was so tight in there and our boat didn't maneuver that easily in tight places.

After a couple of weeks we went back to Jerusalem and took some of the local tours while we stayed in another hostel inside the city walls. One evening all the outside lights went out and we wanted to eat in a restaurant outside the walls. We finally made it out through winding lanes by following voices. I asked a local at a store we went to in order to buy a flashlight if wandering like we did was dangerous and was assured that tourists were safe; they only tried to kill soldiers or the Orthodox! Overall, both the Israelis and the Muslims living inside the city walls were friendly so I guess what was said about tourists was true.

A few weeks later we took a regular tour to the south of Israel (Eliat) and Jordan. Saw Petra and Amman among other things. Saw my first Decapolis city (Jeresh) and Mt. Nebo where Moses saw the "promised land" but couldn't enter it. It was an enjoyable, informative trip with both Israeli and Jordanian guides.

On returning I bought another PC from an American Jew in the marina. He was a former diamond dealer from Brooklyn but now was investing in the market via his computer. He and his friend tried to help me understand more about the computer but, frankly, all I really cared about was to be able to do my e-mail. We were scheduled to have Richard and Cheryll visit us again around Christmas time, after which they would go on to Egypt. But then a local terrorist shot up some Japanese tourists outside the Egyptian Museum and so the Detroit Odendahls canceled out. When I thought about all the countries WE were in where there was terrorist activity..... But maybe that's how complacent you get when you know you are going to go there anyway.

Tel Aviv was not particularly dangerous from what I could see, though the bus depot and mall had been bombed in the past. We tended to take local buses when we wanted to see some of the museums or go some distance away. I also saw the little bomb robot doing his job. But I never felt unsafe anywhere. The local Arabs, I'm sure, didn't feel

the same way. They were constantly having ID checked and the border guards were none too gentle.

Since Rich and Cheryl didn't make it to Israel we agreed to meet in Rome the week before Christmas. They took a tour and we made our own arrangements. We actually only saw them a few times as their tour moved on. But we took a number of local tours ourselves and saw quite a bit, including a day in the rain at Pompeii, Tivoli gardens, Hadrian's summer palace, the Vatican museum, St Angelo's citadel, and St. Paul outside the Walls. At the latter church, Jim proceeded to wander off and the tour guide on the bus would not wait for him. There he was—someplace, with no wallet and not knowing the language. But Jim is ever resourceful. He happened to have a book of matches from the hotel. He started walking (in the dark) until he got to a place where he asked some people where he could get a taxi. I don't know how he did it but he got one. Since that time Jim has been very careful about staying with the group when we do tours!

In January we flew with our American Jewish friend and his girl friend for a week in London to take in the boat show there, among other things. Jim and I did a day there while he checked out winches. After that it was a whirlwind of activity taking in the sights and 3 evening shows—all via the tube or walking. We hardly saw our Jewish friends. If I thought my feet were tired from Rome they got a double dose in London.

At the end of January we left for three weeks in the U.S. We had planned an Odendahl family reunion. Jay didn't come but my JoAnne did. We got housing near Disney. We also had time to visit some of my family and friends while in Florida. It was fun but a lot of moving around and, of course, I had caught a cold from the flight over. Brought back a new GPS which thankfully is easier to understand than the old Garmin 50, which I sold to an Israeli.

After some more boat work following our return we took a local tour through the Galilee which I liked—especially Capharnaum which is almost untouched by tourist development. In fact, it's mostly buried. Any place they didn't build a monstrous church over some historic site appeals to me. But the church over Peter's mother-in-law's compound is elevated so you can see the ruins underneath. The hill where Christ did the Sermon on the Mount has a chapel built by, of all people, Mussolini the dictator! But it is small and you can see the landscape clearly. The loaves and fishes site has a church over it and only a bit of the rock shows under the altar. Nazareth is a large city now—mostly Arabs. The Sea of Galilee is quite commercial. The Jordan River is not very wide. No surprise; a lot of its water is siphoned off to water this dry land.

In mid-April we moved the boat to Ashkelon to have the bottom painted. We were in time to meet some of the year's arrivals from the Red Sea. I developed some back pain, enough to see a chiropractor a couple of times. (He went to school at Mich. State.) We were delighted by a young Jewish boy from Florida who worked on our boat. He was a new immigrant and told us all about his decision to come here. Very idealistic. Wonder how long he retains it in this country. While in Ashkelon Israel celebrated their 50th anniversary as a nation and once back in the water we decorated our boat as did all the other foreigners in the marina. We used old courtesy flags to run up the mast. Very colorful. We didn't go into the city for the festivities as my back was still not 100 percent and walking was not easy.

We were in Ashkelon about a month and I, in particular, enjoyed the camaraderie, although Jim chased down several boat glitches that cropped up which kept him occupied.

We left May 14 and weren't 2 hours out when a fitting below our roller furling basket on the stay-sail broke. We took down the sail and secured the cable. We changed course and headed for Larnaca in Cyprus where we knew we could get it fixed. Then 10 hours shy of Larnaca the motor started to sound funny. We had no wind so we were motoring. Then it started banging and Jim said we'd better not turn off the motor or it would not start again. We also could go forward but not put the boat in reverse. That meant land fall was going to be tricky. When we got to the outer harbor gas dock in Larnaca we creep in as slowly as possible, loudly banging the whole time. Fortunately we made so much noise someone was on the dock to throw us a line. But before that happened I almost got jerked off the boat trying to snag a tire with the boat hook. But the relief of arriving safely and tied to a dock was enormous. We spend the weekend on the outer harbor wall until the wind came up. The inner harbor marina looked full but they considered us an emergency case and found us a spot where workmen could take care of the motor—meaning, we had a side dock, not a bow-in slip.

Workmen removed part of the motor. We had 2 valves and a head gasket go. Later we found out we had a safety feature not working which Jim though was working. While we were so nicely ensconced on a side dock I spent the time visiting all the boaters that had helped us get into our slip, many of them old friends. And, of course, the city of Larnaca was just outside the marina. Good e-mail coverage and good eating! They returned the rebuilt part of the motor in five days. We hung around for a few more days but since the seas were calm we needed to be off. I really hated to leave but the summer cruise was ahead of us. We headed for Kekova Roads at the bottom of Turkey—a favorite anchorage of ours from last summer. After a short stay the roosters off shore woke us up to continue our journey.

While still working our way along the western bottom of Turkey we discovered our batteries were draining. We needed to head for Rhodes Island as quickly as the weather permitted as they had good naval stores there. The only battery working was an old gel cell from Michigan we used to start the engine. The ones we bought in Turkey last year were our house cells and they died every night when the engine was off. The old harbor of Rhodes is quite famous in history but also very small and usually crowded. We had avoided it last year. As we were early in the season there were a number of openings into which I could head the boat while Jim pushed boats aside from the bow. Once in Rhodes we bought 4 new expensive gels from Germany. Since we had dared to enter the small inner harbor and things were so convenient we ended up spending three days there. But Jim was anxious to get to Athens as we had another meeting set up with Richard and Cheryl to do a little cruising together.

What a lot of breakdown we had to repair this past season: motor, stay-sail, batteries, toilet, my computer, propane, bilge pump.... Fortunately, the Med is an area where we could do something about it. Better here than the Indian Ocean or the Red Sea.

CHAPTER 15

JUNE 1998 TO OCTOBER 1998

Once underway again through the Aegean Sea our route was north easterly which later in the day meant strong winds on the nose. We left most days at dawn and stayed out extra long if the winds weren't too bad or until reaching a suitable anchorage. We stopped in Kos and Phenoussa Island. Since we had pushed so hard we took a rest day at the latter anchorage. At Mykonos we stayed long enough to take a ferry to Delos to view the historic parts. While there we met people we knew in the S. Pacific. Later, we met others in a restaurant and had more reunions. (If nothing else, you can always recognize a yachtie—by the wrinkles in their clothes!) Two more days of hard passage and we were in the marina nearest to Athens. The anchorage was full of Aussies we knew! When we went ashore to get information on where to locate things we saw a Japanese couple we last saw in Oman and in the marina itself were American friends from previous passages. Old home week in Greece!

It took a few days but we finally located gas for the dinghy motor, a laundry, a food market and how to get into Athens proper by bus and metro. We were anchored near Zea Marina which was some distance from the downtown. With the time left over before our company arrived, we “did” ancient Athens. While there Jim almost had his camera snatched out of his backpack by gypsies, at the same time that we ran into our Jewish friend Ben from the Tel Aviv marina. It was another pleasant reunion. As for the pickpockets, when we stopped being so angry we had to admire their slick system. They almost got away with it. Meanwhile, for sometime now I had insisted on carrying Jim's wallet in my purse which has a shoulder strap which I put around my neck and which is always carried in front of me. I was a bit big to snatch since I'd NEVER give up the purse!

Richard and Cheryll arrived on time and we took advantage of the cheap taxi prices to return to our position in the bay. The next morning it was off for the Corinth canal. It cost \$112 to go the 3 ½ narrow miles through it. This in turn saved us going all the way around the Peloponnese to get to the west side of Greece and the Ionian Sea. Rich did most of the sailing/driving which was fine with me. Any time he showed up was vacation time from the helm for me. By noon we were in the Corinth yacht harbor. Rich and Cheryll spent the afternoon touring their ruins; Dee and Jim cleaning out the last of the sewage piping system before reattaching it. This consisted of beating on the plastic to loosen the salt encrustation which was lining it and blocking up things. Dinner was always out when we had company.

Next stop in the Gulf of Corinth was Itea where we could visit the ruins of Delphi. On to Trizonia Island where we once again ran into our Aussie friends. My favorite stop was Nafpaktos (ancient Lepanto). It was from this small, ancient harbor that the Ottoman

Turks sailed their fleet into battle with the fleet organized by the western European Christian nations. The Turks lost and their westward movement was forever stopped. Can you believe, I still remember my history teacher in high school telling us about it! We decided to go into the harbor and Med-moor while we visited the fortifications overlooking the harbor. On our return a breeze came up and it seemed wise to put out a stern anchor. We couldn't get the anchor to hold and with all the fussing around the chain went overboard. Richard dove over to retrieve but couldn't find it in all the muck. Goodbye Danforth anchor and 30 feet of chain! We decided to take the boat and anchor outside the harbor where we could swing if the breeze got stronger. Actually it was far more pleasant out there. An Australian boat in the area approached us and asked if we might have some idea where they could find a mechanic as one in their party had blown a head gasket. We suggested Patras, about 10 miles further down. Since it had earlier happened to us I guess they now considered us veterans at this sort of information.

Next on Richard and Cheryll's list of things they wanted to see were the islands of Zakynthos and Kefallinia, off shore of the western side of Greece. These islands are entirely different than those in the Aegean. Far fewer tourists and lots of normal village life. We toured the latter and they rented a scooter. They left us moored in Eufimia harbor to return to the States. We tied off in front of a restaurant in the harbor waiting out a weather system. One night we woke up to feel our bow sprit banging on the cement sea wall. Two men from the restaurant were trying to fend us off the wall. It seems on the week ends big cruise ships come near enough to the harbor entrance to send their wake into the harbor and with our overhanging bow sprit we did some serious bouncing. We only observed minor damage at the time but were to discover later we had a more serious problem.

On to Lefkas Island by motor. The east side is quite beautiful with many other islands to the east, including Skorprios of Onassis and Jackie Kennedy fame. That whole area is like an inland lake and the scenery is beautiful. The little town of Nidri had many hotels and charterers. We enjoyed watching the activity and scenery without leaving our anchorage in Tranquil Bay. While anchored we were greeted by sailors we knew and made arrangements to travel up to Paxos with them the next day. Out of curiosity we partially circled Skorprios as we left. I thought this whole area of Greece was delightful.

We over nighted at Paxos and then went on to Govion Marina on Corfu Island. It was under new ownership and as far as we were concerned, the service was great. I even spent considerable time with one of the office workers trying to figure out why I couldn't get my e-mail out. We actually phoned the States for some new access numbers and at long last my problems of many weeks standing was solved. It was great to get mail again. Once again we ran into cruisers we knew, most of whom were not going up the Adriatic as we were. They were headed for Italy. The passage up to Corfu had been equally as pretty as the days before. We stayed in the marina for 3 days before feeling we had to move on.

Because of rather suspicious traffic between Albania and Italy, it was recommended we go close to Italy before turning towards Dubrovnik, Croatia. We started out with that idea but ended up only going 20 miles off shore. Sure enough, there was curious activity. We saw a very large black dinghy with 2 men dressed in black on our passage. We circled them and then took off. Jim had led me to believe it was only a loose dinghy he saw floating. We quickly decided we didn't need to hang around to find out anything different. We arrived at the city dock near Dubrovnik a day and a half later where an Australian we know greeted us and took our lines. The setting was lovely. We were near a busy road but across from a park and nearby was an open air market and other shops.

We spent 6 days there. Jim lost his wallet (can't remember why he was even carrying it anymore) but the port captain was most solicitous in trying to help us find it. I suspect it dropped out of his pocket into the water while getting out of the boat. But the port captain put a notice on the radio and even called the bus company. He had to make a trip inland while we were still in the harbor but he came to say goodbye to us and asked us to send him postcards! While there

we wandered the old city of Dubrovnik, viewing some of the war damage from earlier. We attended a Haydn concert in one of its churches, took a tour to Medugorje in Bosnia and visited with other cruisers. The Croatians were VERY happy to have tourists again, especially since air lines service had not yet been resumed to their country following the Bosnian war.

On Aug. 19 we started up the Dalmatian coast. On Kekova Island we visited the old walled town from which Marco Polo left on his epic journey to ancient Cathay (China) in the 1100s. It was one of the many places controlled by Venice in their vast trading empire back when she ruled the waters of the Med.. Marco's old home was a tall empty shell but marked and located for all the tourists.

Next stop was the small bay in Hvar on Hvar Island. There was a castle fortification here which we had to skip. We weren't anchored long before the wind came up and the bay, full of boats, all started swinging around each other. In fact, one managed to drag past us before we even noticed its new location. We left the next day to seek out a new location outside the bay.

Via the radio net we had made arrangements with American cruising friends to meet up in the big bay outside Trogir. We were just nicely anchored and visiting on our boat enjoying the reunion when we got hit by a BORA—a quick rising, severe, NE wind infamous in these parts of the Adriatic. Our anchor was holding but a nearby motor boat with two clueless women on board dragged past us and was on a direct path to our friends' sailboat. They and Jim flew in our dinghy to intercept them. I stayed on board Free Spirit to start our engine in order to help our anchor as by that time our chain snubber had broken. The waves were rising and our friends' boat and the shore weren't far behind. Meanwhile, the motor boat's anchor had entangled with the sailboat's anchor rode. The husbands of the women had returned by then and everybody was trying to untangle things. As soon as he could Jim struggled through the waves to get back to me. Just as he reached for the cap rail his dingy motor died. I couldn't leave the helm even to help him. He finally got on board and struggled to get our anchor up in the 40 kt. winds. Somehow, both sailboats slowly got underway and over to the other side of the bay under the protection of some hills where waves and wind were mild. The motor boat meanwhile had flipped their dingy and then rode over it before escaping. This wind storm was followed by an electrical storm which started 3 separate brush fires on the hills around us. But by mid-afternoon we sat again in calm waters and sunshine watching 2 planes and a helicopter scooping water with large buckets to put out the fires. What a day!

The next day I insisted we look for a spot in Trogir which we found along their quay. We were right down town, we could eat out and I could walk to the phone center and retrieve my e-mail. The town was a warren of lovely, narrow, smooth cobbled streets that were centuries old. Most of the buildings were now shops or restaurants but the equally old churches were still being used as such, or for musical programs. There was a good out door market, meat market, and even a supermarket. We had all the water we wanted on the quay. I loved the place!

While so nicely located we took a bus to Split where a Roman Emperor had built a sea side, majestic mausoleum for himself. He was the last emperor to persecute Christians. It seemed like

poetic justice that the building was now a Christian chapel. And, of course, a city built up around the old imperial grounds.

After a week Jim said we had to move on. So we stopped and stayed briefly in Rogoznica, Zadar, Rab Island, Pag and Mali Losinj. We used mostly anchorages with buoys. These were maintained by the different towns for a reasonable fee. After our BORA experience we were glad to use them. Along the way we became more aware of increasing nudity in the anchorages. The prize exhibit was a dinghy with 2 nude males leisurely riding through the anchorage enjoying looking at all the boats. Second place went to a bent over nude woman on a boat in near us. I saw her rear end immediately on coming up into our cockpit. Haven't figured out how to rate the sex on the beach scene.....These couldn't ALL have been northern Europeans going crazy over their day in the sun!

While in Zadar we finally discovered the real effects of the pounding of the bow sprit on the cement dock while still in Greece. Jim was reassembling our cranky windlass with his hand on the tip of the wooden bow sprit when he felt it loosen. He discovered it was broken completely through in the middle of the metal ring that encircled it. This ring supported the bow stay. Panic. What to do and where to get it in these parts? We could lose our bow stay! But like all the other mishaps we had encountered, ever resourceful Jim had a lot of spare parts and backups. These he found among his supply of rusting materials. He had a long drill and he had some fairly long rods. He first glued the piece in place, then drilled 2 holes through it all and pounded in the rods. It never gave us any trouble after that.

We had one more stop on the Istrian Peninsula before reaching Venice on Aug. 23. We stayed in Santa Elena marina, coming in on a blowy day and having our hearts in our throats trying to find our slip in those narrow marina isles. We managed not to take out anything. The marina didn't offer much but the neighborhood was quiet. We had vaporetos (water buses) to get around the city which was convenient and cheap. Besides the usual tourist attractions around San Marco Square Jim wanted to get to Murano Island where they do all the glass blowing. Naturally he had to have a souvenir. So we got the heaviest usable vase I've ever lifted! Storage being what it is on a boat, we used it at the foot of the V berth and it was so heavy it actually kept our blankets down.

My most interesting place was to travel through and see the old warehouse area of the Venetian navy. Each huge warehouse contained something different to keep the ships supplied. That the buildings still stand I found amazing. We stayed in Venice a week and Jim really enjoyed it. Even I found it more to my liking than the first time I had seen the place after I graduated from college.

Since we were so far north the weather was beginning to feel like fall. Our first days after leaving were windy and the seas were up. As we traveled down the Adriatic we stayed in anchorages which were more exposed than I liked in that weather. I was very happy to get back to nicely protected Trogir again. But we only stayed a few days as this time we were parked next to a motor boat that kept it's generator on and we got all the fumes. On down to Hvar again to

meet up with friends. I guess our first experience with boats dragging in that crowded bay wasn't enough lesson for us. This time we did a Med-moor on the quay. We had one good night and then the winds came up again. All the boats on the quay were rocking and swaying. Spreaders were just missing each other. The sailboat next to us was swaying at least 60 degrees before it finally pulled out. We spent the rest of the night sleepless again and pulled out at dawn. It was squally weather for the next few days but we hung out around the island until it passed. Finally we set out for Korcula and this time stayed in its marina which had lost most of its summer traffic. We caught up on our sleep there before moving on. When we ventured out again we had a high over us and good sailing winds. After a few stops we made it back to the Gruz dock near Dubrovnik. A few days of rest and some fuel and we were underway on Sept 23 heading for our winter anchorage.

The Adriatic was roly until we passed Otranto near the heel of Italy. But the Med had its own disagreeableness to offer as we plowed along. We ran into heavy freighter traffic exiting and entering the Straits of Messina between the toe of Italy and Sicily. What a night! Freighter after freighter and our watches were nerve wracking. Once again I was dead tired when we arrived in Syracuse, Sicily at noon after a 3 day passage. We tied up on their cement quay but we were warned that we had to watch for a wind change. We could leave the boat only briefly. But we needed sleep so spent only one night there. Someone told us about an anchorage further out in the bay which we left for the next morning. It was too far back to the city for a comfortable dinghy ride so we gave up on the idea of seeing much of Syracuse. Drat! Where did all those Greek and Roman fleets stay when THEY were here?

We weren't too far from Malta now. The winds were usually quieter at night so we decided to do the rest of the distance then and get into the bay there in daylight. We arrived in Malta on 1 October. A lot of boats were coming in for the winter season by this time. We managed to get a slip for boats intending to get hauled for the season at the Manoel Island yacht yard. While still on the customs dock we picked up a LOT of thin, floating poly line with our prop. There was nothing to do but have Jim go overboard and cut it away in the dirty, oily water. His least favorite job in the world! I stood on deck trying to retrieve the cut pieces with a boat pole and in between badgering the assigning office for our slip.

Lots of boats we knew were wintering here. One arriving boat even had mail for us sent to Israel. Some of the cruisers were going to get apartments. Malta was a great place with lots of history as well as a good place to do boat work or get parts. After a couple of days in our slip we made arrangements to haul out and be put in the boat yard. This was done by a crane which lifted us out and over a fence and deposited us on a stand in the yard. Normally I intensely dislike living on the hard. But the accommodations in the slip were not good, whereas, the yard was eminently better than being in a storm while at sea. So with that rationalization in mind I figured I could stick it out. At least the boat wasn't all torn up like it usually was when we were pulled. Also we had local touring to do, maybe a trip to Paris, and then in November a trip to Florida and our 5th wheel for the winter.

We toured Mdina, the citadel we could see from the marina. It was a famous Knights Templar fort. There was tons of history on that island, especially from the Middle ages and even WWII when the Nazis tried to bomb the hell out of this port because it was used by the British. That the fort still stands has got to be a testimony to its strength. We also toured around the island and saw where St. Paul had been ship wrecked and living in a cave. (Thankfully, no one had built a church over it.) He later converted the Roman governor, which in turn meant everyone else was converted too.

There was even a site that went back thousands of years to a people who erected stone monuments similar to the Celts. We also learned a weird custom of the current locals was to capture wild song birds, cage them and take them home. I couldn't help but wonder why they couldn't find a better pet to keep.

We made reservations to go home on Nov. 1 and then tried to get some sort of tour to Paris. Sorry, no more tours going to Paris. It was the wrong season and Malta didn't offer it. I suppose we could have just flown there but we were in a want-to-be-taken-care-of mode and weren't up to all the research necessary to find our way around. (This was before web sites made it easy.) So, we decided to take a short tour back to Sicily. It was only a ferry ride away.

We first went to Taormina which is up a mountain and very popular during the tourist season. It too had a lot of history that went back centuries to all the various invasions of the island. It was very pretty up there and the food was terrific. When we went to check up on the ferry we learned the weather was too rough for it to run just then. So we extended our trip and took tours to Mt. Etna and back to Syracuse to visit the very extensive ruins there. I was especially intrigued by the temple built first by the Greeks and dedicated to Athena. A thousand years later the Romans had taken over these parts and the temple was rededicated to Minerva. Now this charming temple with its Doric columns still intact was incorporated into a Catholic Church and dedicated to Mary. Sitting there pondering those 4000 years of history was a bit awesome. If those columns could only talk..... To get back to Malta we had to fly.

Both Sicily and Malta (the latter is an independent country) are places who have seen civilizations come and go. Greeks, Phoenicians, Romans, Norsemen, Arabs have all come and established themselves here. The Sicilians don't think of themselves as Italian and the Maltese are only recently a country. They are both uniquely themselves, despite the strong Catholic and Italian influence in both countries.

We left for Florida on Nov. 1 and stayed in our 5th wheel in Palmetto until April 28. It was going to be our new home after we returned permanently. While there on this visit we had time to see relatives who also wintered in Florida and collect charts and supplies for our next passage back to North America.

Chapter 16

APRIL 1999 TO SEPTEMBER 1999

On April 28 we flew to the Netherlands, rented a car and visited first a relative of mine and then went on to Stade, Germany to see old cruising friends who had ended their circumnavigation the previous year. On May 4 we flew back to Malta and the boat and a very unwelcome surprise

---the strong smell of diesel fuel indicating a tank leak. Little did we realize what a long, frustrating, disagreeable 52 days we had ahead of us. The floor boards of the boat had to be torn up which meant we couldn't live on the boat. We found a room at a small hotel not far from the boat yard used frequently by island visitors but it certainly didn't fit in the resort category. We got breakfast there but had to eat the rest of our meals out.

We had arrived when a good many of the sailboats on the hard were waiting for their turn to be lifted back into the water. That meant that the yard people would get to us last for the repair work. Jim started right in on removing the benches and table in the salon and then the floor boards. My only alternative was to read a lot and visit those people we knew. By May 20 we had the water tanks out. Jim had decided that he might as well replace them too. The new ones he wanted to have made with baffles and some way to see inside them. These were going to be fabricated, along with the fuel tank by a place here on the island. At that point someone fire bombed the rather ramshackle yard office. It wouldn't have affected us at all except we needed the yard people to help get the fuel tank out and put the new ones back in. We also had hoped they might give Jim a hand with some of the clean up. But it didn't happen. They were spending all their time trying to put the place back together. At this point it should be noted that the yard was going to be taken over some time in the future and developed into a resort area. So the fence that surrounded it was left to deteriorate, had holes in it, and theft from the boats was going on. No boaters was happy with this situation but at least most of them could leave when ready. We weren't ready.

After numerous promises of "yes, yes we'll be with you tomorrow" I finally decided to follow one of the owners around the yard until he gave me what we needed at the time. That's how we finally got the barrel we needed into which to siphon the rest of the diesel out of the tank. Jim can display a fierce temper when he has to so to keep that in check I took it upon myself to be the yard pest. The Maltese are just chauvinistic enough to not know how to handle a pesky woman. When they finally, after weeks of pestering, gave us some idea of cost estimates I remember looking at all the expenses mounting up and thinking—"all this money and I don't even like this country!" Well, I did in the beginning but having to work with and depend on them changed my mind. An ex-pat English couple we became acquainted with there summed it up quite well. Pete described the Maltese as "Arabs with shoes." He was so tired of the place he decided to buy a sailboat and follow us on our trip back to North America.

The fuel tank had to be cut into 4 pieces in order to get it out and that was done by May 16. Then the 2 of us had to dig out 6 inches of oily beach sand from the bilge which no doubt was acquired from the Bonaire ship wreck. No help from the yard people so Jim just shoveled it into a plastic bag and I threw it over the side of the boat into the yard. Not a nice thing to do but they could have supplied us with something to put it in. After that job, Jim threw the clothes he was wearing away. Then he had to fix the bilge pump before he could wash the inside down.

Now for some local color about the “resort hotel” we were living in. The owners were nice but the location was on a busy main road and the evening and night noise was continuous. Our first room had a balcony but we stayed so long we had to give it up to someone who had reservations. Our new room, despite 2 fans, was getting too hot as the season got warmer to keep the windows closed. So many a night we were treated to a lot of unwanted entertainment. A bingo parlor was also across the street and it, too, had open windows. Then, there were the 2 evenings we heard and observed a parade of garbage trucks with blaring horns led by 2 motorcycle cops. A parade of garbage trucks....? Nor did we understand why cops didn't come for 1 ½ hours to the scene of an accident below our window when a man was injured. Another time we watched one car hit another and then leave the scene of the accident. When something more serious wasn't happening we could always depend on squealing brakes and racing cars.

By June 2 our two water tanks had been fabricated. To celebrate, and restore some normalcy back in our lives, we took a short trip to Gozo, a small island that is part of Malta. When we got back Jim didn't like something about the tanks so they were sent back. They were done to his satisfaction and installed on the 6th and that evening our British ex-pat friends organized a “feed” on the quay by his boat. It was a nice party attended by those boaters still hanging around and even the yard owners. We all acted nicely towards each other. This was more like what we were used to—a boaters' party.

The fuel tank was in by the 9th and we filled the water tanks. Jim then finished hooking up what was necessary to hook up and ultimately the new floor boards got put down and the salon pieces reattached. The boat was was filthy and not entirely due to the repairs. The yard was always so very dusty. But once he was done with his part of things I had to clean up the insides.

On the 20th Jim found the windlass shorting out. The ex-pats knew everybody after living there 9 years, so Pete found someone to repair it. They were in the process of buying a cruising boat and expected to be on the Atlantic crossing with us. He was pretty handy so we hoped he could join us before too long, some place along the way.

Next we had the boat bottom painted, had another go-around with the yard people, experienced a sand storm, and filled our fuel tank from a fuel truck. By June 24 we were lifted over the fence—the last boat of the day. We motored out into Lazaretto Creek in front of us, dropped the anchor and Jim slept like a log. I had to adjust to the new sounds from a new location.

The next day we did some last minute shopping, exchanged an old chart for some reading material with another cruiser and Jim rebuilt a leaking raw water pump from his supply of spare

parts. After fond goodbyes to helpful cruising friends we motored out the bay at 7:30 pm. for an overnight to Licata, Sicily, 75 miles away. We made 3 coastal stops getting around Sicily, all day hops. During one of them we were stopped by an Italian marine patrol so we handed over our passports and ships papers. But they kept saying “separation” to us. They spoke no English and we no Italian and we kept looking puzzled at them. It was a stalemate. Finally after looking at what we gave them they must have decided we weren’t any threat and sent us on our way. Rereading my log there was nothing in it about checking out of Malta so maybe we may have forgotten to do it. It had been so long since we had done that sort of thing. Oh well, we were now in the EU countries and could wander at will without that infernal checking in and out.

After our last stop we did an overnight to the SE corner of Sardinia. It took 30 hours of mostly rolly motoring. We anchored among friends we knew also bound like us for the island of Minorca, off Spain. When underway we maintained contact with the morning radio net and learned there was quite a gathering going on there. We had left Malta so late in the season that we had to give up some of the sailing to other locations we had originally planned to see. Underway again we had a terrific sail across the Gulf of Cagliari and again to Carloforte where wind on our nose stopped us. We had really become rusty in the months we hadn’t been sailing and it proved to be quite a work out. We spent 4 days in Carloforte, wandered the island and I even made 2 courtesy flags while in the bay.

When we took off again it was 38 hours of discomfort in following seas. The Med doesn’t have those long gaps between the waves like the ocean does. When we entered the Mahon Bay it was like joining a fleet of cruising sailors. They had all wintered in different places: Italy, Sicily, Tunisia, Malta, Turkey.....it was great to see so many familiar faces. And it was not too surprising they were there. It was the only free anchorage left in Minorca. The only problem was the town was a long dinghy ride away and that was the only place to get my e-mail. A friend had acquired a new satellite phone and she offered to download my mail. I was really embarrassed when I saw how much came through. But shock followed that when one of the messages was from a sister informing me that another sister was terminally ill. No one had any idea she was even sick.

After 5 days we lifted the hook and after a brief overnight in the bay of Mallorca headed across to Barcelona. This time we went into the marina as it was close to the old town, groceries, P.O., Laundromat, good showers and I could get e-mail. I learned the details of my sister’s illness and that there was no hope. We spent 2 weeks there taking in the things Barcelona is known for. We also did a trip up to Andorra, the independent little country in the mountains between Spain and France. It used to be a smugglers’ paradise. Today it still has an abundance of imported stuff (legally, this time) and attracts skiers and shoppers.

Barcelona also has another feature in common with the larger cities of Europe—pick pockets. Even as we got word about it we spread it on to newly arriving cruisers to be aware of it. We also exchanged books, magazines and charts to those going in the opposite direction. I unloaded quite a few of my used charts that way.

When we left on Aug. 6 we planned on at least an overnight getting around the SE bend of Spain. Unfortunately we developed southerlies and by midnight had to change course towards the island of Ibiza's wide mouthed bay. We were coming in on a pitch black night and I had no detailed map of the harbor. This was something we never liked to do and seldom did. The only thing we could do is feel our way in slowly. We dropped the hook in 16' of water and called it a night. If we were in the wrong location for traffic we'd move at dawn, which we did. We spent the day there resting up and attending to some mechanical things that needed attention. Then took off for Alicante on the coast but it turned out to be another night of wind on the nose and bouncing. Alicante didn't like moored boats cluttering up their harbor so we had to take a slip which turned out to be okay. We saw familiar faces and went out to dinner with them. We spent 4 days there and left with another cruiser heading for Gibraltar. This time we did day hops on mostly flat seas with variable breezes. We passed miles and miles of plastic sheeting covering the ground. The book we had on Spain said it was hydroponics. Our last day passage was to Andra. En route we saw our first real sea life in the Med—pods of pilot whales and dolphins, probably coming from the Straits of Gibraltar. We decided to cover the last miles at night so as to arrive in Gibraltar in the morning hours. At dawn we entered fog—on the third time in our circumnavigation—and felt a current that slowed us right down. We were warned about the wind that swept around Europa Point and right on cue we got hit by 30 kts. Had we had all sails up it would have been panicsville! Eventually we wended our way through the assorted traffic to Queensway Marina near the town of Gibraltar. We fueled up before taking a slip and then it was collapse time after a night's sleep of one hour. It was Aug. 16.

We spent the next two weeks familiarizing ourselves with the town of Gibraltar. We took a tour of the "Rock". It was really quite interesting as it was a veritable warren of tunnels. The most recent had been created to hide British gun emplacements during WWII. And, yes, the apes still inhabited the place. Remembering the ones we had encountered in Malaysia, we didn't feel it was necessary to get up close and friendly. The town was not too large. The whole place consisted largely of the town, the rock, and an airport. The main road to Spain crossed the airport runway and cars and airplanes took turns. Our marina location was closest to the down town. Another marina, where the bulk of those we had been traveling with went, was closer to the airport. But we tended to like being nearer the amenities. That included e-mail. It was during this time that I got word of my sister's death. My only consolation was her illness had lasted only 5 weeks.

On Aug. 29 we took a 6 day trip to Morocco with cruising friends. The coastal areas, including Tangiers, were very familiar with European traffic and English was quite common. Our tour visited 5 of the largest cities and lots of the country side under extensive cultivation. The burro and the mule existed right along side the tractor. We got into some of the foot hills but not into the Atlas range. We saw both Berber and Arab cultures and visited in Casablanca the biggest, richest mosque we had seen thus far. It had a retractable roof and had just been completed. We noticed, from our stays in hotels, that, typical of a lot of Arabic countries, new buildings were never maintained well after they were built. With all the unemployment in Arabic countries I could well envision a new career field for maintenance people.

The female member of the couple we were traveling with was somewhat of a character. She had a habit of getting into difficulties with her impatience to get things done. It probably served her well enough in her career field at home but in an Arabic country it only got her in trouble. In Tunisia, where they had wintered the boat, she lost patience with a cab driver over his refusal to move his cab and when he got out she stepped in and was going to move it herself. Big no-no! That was probably his sole possession and means of livelihood and, after all she was only a woman, so he grabbed her. She in turn slugged him. After the dust had settled and the police left, they were ordered out of the country---which they were planning on doing anyway, but not quite that abruptly. Then, in Morocco while we were traveling on the tour bus through a busy city, she suddenly yelled out, "Stop the bus!" The bus driver was, of course, concerned but wanted to know why. She announced that she had seen a kitten huddling in the middle of a traffic circle and she wanted to rescue it. He looked at her like she was crazy and kept going. I suspect she wasn't too up on the Arabic view of cats and dogs as vermin. But this same woman had kept a pet lab rat on her boat for 2/3 of the way around the world. When flying to the States she just tucked him inside her blouse. Her love of animals aside, she provided us with a lot of laughs although I don't think that was her intention.

On our return from Morocco we all found we had the "trots" and Jim and I had something else that made us ache all over. I recovered much quicker than he did because he became quite sick. So were a lot of people in both marinas. Apparently we were all victims of that year's flu. After we were all more or less recovered we organized a dinner meeting of those who made up the Si-Oui radio net to discuss maneuvers to get through the 40 miles of currents to the Straits of Gibraltar. We also wanted to discuss departure times which depended on the weather.

While waiting out a favorable weather window Gibraltar observed their 6th anniversary of autonomy from Great Britain. The populace created lots of noise as they marched around. It was really kind of quaint considering their size. Finally on Sept 15 we got underway with several other boats with whom we had started out on many a passage. We were on our way to conquer the tricky currents of the Straits and head for the Canary Islands out in the Atlantic.

CHAPTER 17

SEPTEMBER 1999 TO DECEMBER 1999

At the beginning of a new ocean passage my stomach would go through some anticipatory fluttering. This departure was no different. We had done our homework: researched all the various ways to use the eddies and currents, when to leave, how far from the shore to travel, etc. But when we got out there in a favorable current we had no real problems for the next 37 miles. We just watched the currents and I guess got lucky. When we approached the 9 mile wide entrance to the Atlantic ocean it was all calm. No complaints there except calm meant no wind. We just kept motoring westward in an attempt to pick up something off shore before we turned south. We had fishing boats off shore we had to watch out for and it was starting to get dark. We didn't learn till later but one of the sailboats that followed us picked up a fishing net in her prop and the first mate had to go in the water and cut it away. Then she started getting tangled in the net which, fortunately, she was able to extricate herself from. On that boat it was the female who did a lot of the grunt work. You saw that kind of arrangement every now and then and they were usually exceptional women.

We had a good sail the next day but after that it was a mixed bag of motor and sail. There was a lot of freighter and other traffic coming up the African coast headed towards the Straits. We stayed well off from them. Our last day out we had to beat into the wind resulting in all our little cap rail leaks generously endowing our salon and bed with water. On Sept. 20 we were talked into the anchorage on the island of Lanzarote by friends who had preceded us in. We were 60 miles off the African coast, wet but glad to be anchored to the bottom again.

It wasn't a great anchorage and it was noisy and smelly. The island itself was dry and barren with lots of volcanic cones and mountains in the distance. Despite that we could see new resort housing in evidence along the shore. We went into the local town and took a tour of the island and learned that about 250 years ago there were 32 active volcanoes on this island alone. We visited one hot spot, watched them cook something in a hole and rode some camels. These had been brought from Africa sometime in the past. We also saw grape vines in scooped out holes in the volcanic soil which had low walls built around one side to act as a wind break. Cacti were also being grown there for their fruit. The main source of water seemed to be the winter rains which were cached—a pretty common thing on a lot of islands. This part of the island didn't have a very cheerful aspect. Black landscape isn't my favorite color. Reminded me of how I felt about Aden in Yemen.

After a week we moved about 10 miles down the coast to a lovely modern marina—Puerto Colera and a taxi ride away from a sizable town. Jim needed to do some boat work and I never turn down a Laundromat or a restaurant. Then it was catch up on e-mail, read, and relax. Although it was cloudy and windy weather the boat was still. After a couple of weeks we went further down the coast to Playa Blanca where we anchored out before taking an overnight to

Gran Canaria's big bay near the city of Las Palmas. It was October 15. We couldn't get into the marina as all the slips were reserved for various boats involved in regattas or races across the Atlantic. And they were a mixed bag of everything from single handers to ARC boats. The bay was big and there were lots of cruising sailboats already in it also waiting for the end of the hurricane season so they could cross the Atlantic. The racers, on the other hand, were due to leave before we did. So if you still wanted a slip you had to wait until they left. Meanwhile, we were fairly close the big city of Las Palmas and we went to shore by simply taking out dinghy there and leaving it. The city had everything. We only had to lug it back to the dinghy if there was anything we wanted. We took a tour of the interior of the island and it was certainly a much more attractive place than Lanzarote. The interior had mountains and deep barrancas and was quite spectacular. The museum in the city tracked the history of the island from the time of the first European explorers that settled there about 400 years earlier.

My computer had been acting up for some time so I had another cruiser who knew something about them diagnose my problem. He said I had a cracked motherboard. Bummer. This was my communication life line. From now on it was going to have to be internet cafes if I wanted any news.

In the time we spent in the bay we had a number of lows pass over us so that life in the bay was not perfect. And dragging was not unheard of. Boat work was also a lot harder to do when at anchor. In early November Jim took our head apart (again). This time it was the choker valve. Our replacement cache was nearly depleted but after a call over the morning radio net another cruiser said he could spare one of theirs—also a spare spring for the foot pedal to our water tank which had broken weeks before. Then, when cleaning up some of the mess that was created, I forgot I had another part soaking in the water and threw the part in the dirty water overboard. Without it the toilet still couldn't work. I wanted to die when I realized what I had done! Jim stayed calm, went into his meditative state and came out figuring he could make the piece, a large circle with a hole in the middle, out of Lexan we still had aboard. Another boat supplied a longer screw and measuring tools. It took Jim all day and into the evening but he did it! We had a working head again. Lexan is HARD and it was ½ thick.

Our British friends from Malta let us know they were now in Spain and still hoped to catch up with us in the Canaries. We hoped so but they had had a lot of breakdown and the ocean was going to be a new experience for them. We were tentatively expecting to leave at the beginning of December. Our net control from the Si-Oui radio net was planning on leaving earlier and they were taking the radio net with them in the company of another group of cruisers. There were still a lot of others in the area who planned on a later departure date like us. A New Zealander and several Americans decided to create a new radio net which was dubbed the "Big Fish" net. We eventually had a group of about 40 boats that joined in and made daily radio contact during the passage. And it proved to be a really good, informative net.

As roly as the bay could get, I rather liked the proximity to the city and all its advantages. But other friends told us it was sunnier in the southern part of the island where they were in a slip. They talked us into coming down by bus to see them and when we got there they had somehow pulled some strings to get us a slip. The owner was out with his boat and we could have it until about the time for us to leave for the crossing.

Before we left the bay a dismayed boat came into the harbor. They had been sideswiped by a freighter with damage fortunately limited to the mast. They had learned the hard way what every cruising sailor must learn: the Law of Gross Tonnage: He's bigger, probably can't see you, and so YOU move and move EARLY.

We left for the tip of the island and the little town of Puerto Rico on Nov 11. The town was a typical resort village, sunny and pretty. There was a beautiful long lane of blooming bougainvilleas in all colors on the walk into the downtown. Unfortunately, we were the only Big Fish member down there and our friends who got us the slip left early after we were there 2

days. We learned over the net that there were a bunch of Aussies we know in the next town and we went to visit them via the local bus. They too were part of the new radio net.

We were following the hurricanes in the Caribbean very closely now. Those we knew who had left early were our chief concern. There was a weather net out of Canada which advised passing sailors and directed them around troublesome spots and was especially helpful to those crossing the Atlantic at this time. Anybody with a short wave radio listened to him as did our radio net people. For those already out there it was proving to be a bumpy ride.

The latest on our British couple from Malta was they had made it to Gibraltar and were headed directly to the Canaries. At this time we were expecting a German couple we knew to come to the Canaries but to the next island. Unfortunately, between waiting on a weather window to leave and not wanting to leave our slip, and no ferry that we knew of, we had to pass on the reunion. On Nov. 26 we heard the British couple would be in Lanzarote the next day. They planned on being there 3-4 days, probably for repair work and to recover from their first Atlantic experience.

On Dec. 5, after long days of waiting and numerous lows giving us rough water, rain and cold, those in the Big Fish net got underway from their various locations around Gran Canaria and set off to cross the rest of the Atlantic to the Caribbean.

CHAPTER 18

DECEMBER 1999 TO JANUARY 25, 1000

We left on a rhumb line recommended by the Canadian weather net operator. The seas were rough and we had force 5 winds on our rear quarter. We never really saw any of the others who we knew were out there but that was usually the case. You couldn't see more than 3 miles from deck level. Our first 5 days were good sailing. But it was too rough to do much cooking and sleeping had to be done on the salon floor, which wasn't all that bad as you couldn't roll very far. I had an old 3 lb. sleeping bag that served the purpose nicely. As for eating, Jim was usually nauseous for a few days and I had little appetite in those seas. We followed the bulge of the African continent aiming towards the Cape Verde islands but expected to be westing before we got that far down. As long as we were following that contour we could smell Africa. And, after 5 days, mostly below, we could also smell ourselves! When the wind got too far behind us we had to change our point of sail to keep the boom from slamming from side to side. This was not apparently going to be an enjoyable sail getting across this body of water. When the wind went down we rolled.

On our 6th day out we learned the British couple trying to catch up with us had left Gran Canaria and was now behind us. In those seas, this must have been a rude baptism for them. By degrees, the wind and seas moderated at our location. We were putting on the motor 3 hours a day in order to make amps and keep the electrical system running. At the same time we turned the refrigeration off 8 hours a day. One day we learned via the net that there was a heart attack victim on a boat ahead of us. Behind us I knew was a boat with 3 doctors aboard. If it could be done the net would figure out a way for contact to be made between them.

By Dec. 11 we were NW of the Cape Verde's and winds were such that we could spend time on deck. Seas were lumpy but we set the sun shower bag out and both of cleaned up in the cockpit. Two and half gallons of water relief! The next day we "turned the corner" and set our GPS for Barbados. Then the winds died down and we spent a night of rolling. It was miserable. We had to aim southward to get a better angle. Eventually we went wing and wing under light winds but our boat was not set up well for that.

The fleet was all spread out now. Alternate sailing and motoring was now the name of the game. We could now use the salon table area as a bed to sleep but the head once again acted up. The intake valve was taking on water so we had to keep it closed except when flushing. The good news was we were headed west again.

Our British friends called into the net that they were north of the Cape Verde's in gale force winds with a broken shroud and a motor that wouldn't start and Pete was hand steering. He said they were both exhausted. I had no doubt of that. But different members of the net offered advice to get him through this crisis. Pete was most concerned about his shroud. He had jury rigged it but the seas were such he couldn't be out long enough to fix it more securely. All the

net listeners were feeling for him, I was sure, but he was also going to be regularly contacted by the net leaders to keep his morale up.

On Dec. 17 after motoring all night we passed our halfway mark. Boats ahead of us reported picking up the NE trade winds. Those of us in our pack were motoring or just sailing slowly. The British couple behind us now had lessening seas and wind and they had managed to get their motor started. The next day those front runners in our group reported they went through a trough with rain and wind during the night. We hit it that next night and in the morning flew under furling jib. We had ominous skies and then it cleared and we motored. The next day it was a lot of sails up, sails down, motor on, motor off and in between rolling and slamming. People reporting in on the net all had different stories. The Brits behind us reported dreary skies but were moving better.

During this time the net reported that a boat that was passing had been abandoned. There were 3 persons on board. They had panicked for some reason and talked into boarding a freighter. A lot of speculation went on as to why they left their boat but nobody had any details. We also had a visitor to our net one morning. He had been listening for some time to us and reported that he was on his third circumnavigation. I guess we all had our own ideas about that announcement... We had met a couple of cruising boats back when we were in the Pacific and both were on their second trip around.

More days of mixed sailing and motoring but now we had frequent squalls. Pete reported he had trouble with a main sail and a break in his exhaust hose which resulted in taking on some water. We added to our own list of breakdowns. Neither the radar or the wind speed indicator worked anymore.

The trough we seemed to be moving through was hundreds of miles wide. On Christmas day 5 of the faster boats in the group were expecting to make Antigua within 24 hours. We still had 668 miles to reach Barbados which was further on.

The next 2 days we got a lot of information over the net that was pretty disturbing. A different British boat than we knew reported to our net that he was dismasted and disabled and wallowing in the waves. He was attempting to join a rally in Antigua where they were waiting for him. As it turned out, when he gave his location, our net leader was the closest in location to him. He turned back and was going to attempt to get him a whisker pole so he could jerry rig a sail. Other boats joined in the conversation with advice. One boat gave the skipper explicit instructions on how to get compression on the engine and get his motor started. Then we learned that he wasn't very young or strong and he didn't have the strength to do it.

We also learned that same day that the 3 who had abandoned their sailboat and boarded a freighter had been hit by the freighter and holed. They had asked for help for some reason and the freighter, in coming in close to them in the waves, had struck and holed them. And the breakdown went on; another net member reported they had lost engine power but were not declaring an emergency yet. That was the boat with the 3 doctors on board. The day ended with a good sailing wind and we caught a 35" wahoo!

On the next day's net we were all waiting to learn how successful our net leader was in assisting the disabled British boat. It turned out it was too rough to get a whisker pole to the skipper. But he managed to float a line down to him and get him in tow. The tow line next tangled in the disabled boat's rudder and took out his Aries wind vane and almost capsized him. But finally they were both stabilized enough and were underway, moving slowly. Meanwhile, the rally leader in Antigua had been informed and had dispatched a sea going motor rescue boat and they expected to rendezvous the next day. It had been interesting listening to all exchanges. I also realized from my Coast Guard Auxiliary training just how difficult it was for one sailboat to get a line to another sailboat and tow in less than smooth seas. Our net leader deserved a medal for his efforts. He was one good sailor.

The next night our topping lift came down. We had a broken block. Jim, as usual, jerry rigged something until we could get a replacement. Winds were still variable, we were heading down wind and we still had roll. But landfall arrival now had to be considered and we never wanted to arrive at night, especially since we had no radar. So as we got really close it wasn't exactly a joy to slow down and roll. But after 3 weeks of it, it now seemed a part of our lives which you took for granted—like the mess in the boat, our body odor and having to always hang on to something even when cooking. It was very different from our Pacific passage which was even longer.

On Dec. 30, after 24 days at sea, we saw land shortly before dawn. All things considered it could be called a good passage. Safe arrival is never to be disparaged. But on the other hand, it was certainly one of our most uncomfortable passages. The Pacific, a longer trip, was far less stressful. By afternoon we had checked in and were in an anchorage. A handful of Big Net cruisers were in ahead of us, though the bulk seemed to have opted for Antigua. We went to bed—our real bed—at 5:00 pm.

The next day we went into the town of Bridgeport along with some of the other cruisers, got my e-mail, ate a real lunch out but the food stores were closed for the holidays. We planned on having some bubbly with them that evening on shore but by mid-afternoon we were both too tired. Our bodies were still on passage time and every 4-5 hours we sort of collapsed. There was supposed to be a celebration going on around the bay that night for the "Millennium." But we were tucked away in sleep hearing nothing except the occasional boom. The music and fireworks was totally wasted on us. We had our bubbly the next afternoon.

While the stores were closed Jim started in on restoring some of the boat breakdown and I had a chance to clean up things. And there was the return of hot showers on shore!. Some joys are very simple in the cruising life. Then we took an island tour before we left on Jan. 6. Our anchorage tended to get quite rolly and we were anxious to move on. Our British friends had not arrived yet but were very close. We suggested via the radio that they aim for Tobago and meet us in King's bay there. It was only a short hop over for us but it proved to be squally and with uncomfortable seas right on our beam. The anchorage, however, was flat calm. We hoped they might arrive while it was still daylight but didn't see them by the time we went to bed. When we woke in the morning, there they were, anchored behind us.

We were so delighted to see them at long last. Imagine them making a night entrance in a strange harbor! As it turned out, they had done what we seldom did. But they paid a price for it. As they entered, an unlit big green buoy was not where it was indicated on their chart. They sideswiped it and snapped their port shroud. This was their second one!

We went into the little town on the bay to check in with them and at the same time check out. This is allowed if you are only there briefly. The town was mostly black, quite primitive but unspoiled by tourism. We celebrated Pete's birthday with a meal out and he told us about their passage experiences. He said 20 of his 26 days at sea he had wind, high seas, or squalls. At one point he was dragging a drogue. He had had lots of experience on boats and boat repair but his actual sailing time was very limited and, of course, sailing an ocean was different than being in the Med. So this passage was a pretty big thing in their lives and I'm sure he never experienced anything like it. I could understand their fear.

We spent a few days in King's Bay giving Pete and Anne time to rest up and fix his stay. We left for the 61 mile crossing to Trinidad in the early morning and had a calm passage until the squalls started. Then we got a good dose of rain, adverse current and waves. As we headed toward the entry between 2 island we saw a ferry coming out and crashing its way towards us. It took him a while to see 2 sail boats right in his path but he managed to veer off before we dove in the water. This was our last passage to complete our circumnavigation and what an ending that would have been!

Once anchored in Chaguaramas Bay at the end of the island with a slew of other cruising boats, we celebrated with the Brits the closing of our circle and their safe arrival in what they hoped to be their new home. And we were all happy to be attached to land again. But a peaceful night in bed was not to be. We were tucked under a big cliff and about midnight the wind came up, swooped down and sent the poorly anchored boats dragged through the anchorage. We watched a catamaran go past us with a lot of yelling on board. Jim decided to stay up and sort of anchor watch from the salon. I suspect he fell asleep after the wind died down. At 4:00a.m. it started in again and I could see a boat passing us through a port window. This time we got hit a glancing blow on our stern by a dragging schooner. At that point I suggested that we make arrangements to go on the hard before anything else happened.

The next morning we completed arrangements for being pulled, got plane tickets for Florida, and that night I slept like a log. Pete and Anne located a marina for themselves and prepared to get settled in. We had a lot of stuff to get rid of, since after the boat was painted and some repairs done, it was going up for sale. Pete was going to supervise all the work and handle any prospective buyers and sell off any of the items not sold before we left. We spent the next 5 days cleaning the boat, removing items for storage, giving things away, and selling some. Finally we could pack up for ourselves.

On Jan. 24 we left Trinidad for Florida and our RV in Palmetto. Our life of transiting the globe was now over. As it turned, out the last chapter had not yet been written.

CHAPTER 19

FEBRUARY 2000 TO SEPTEMBER 2001

We spent the next year RVing around the U.S. and I loved it. In so many ways it was like the freedom of a boat but without some of the weather induced terror. We had no legal address except a mail box service in Florida. We went north in the hot months and south in the cold ones. Jim found his level of repair work was virtually nonexistent.

However, we had no nibbles on the boat and it wasn't a good idea to leave it on the hard much longer. Pete and Anne had decided that maybe Trinidad was not where they wanted to settle, so we were going to lose them as overseers of our boat. So we decided that it was best to bring the newly refurbished Free Spirit back to the States and sell it there.

In all the time we had been at sea no one except Jim's son Richard and wife had sailed with us. And when they came they had only limited vacation time. But my cousin Tom in Georgia, himself a sailor, had expressed an interest in sailing off shore. Bringing the boat back to Florida would be a good opportunity for him. So we arranged to have him meet us in Puerto Rico when we got there.

We moved the boat in stages from Trinidad up the island chain in the spring of 2001, then called Tom when and where to meet us. Tom indicated he had about a week free which, if everything went all right, would be sufficient time to get from Puerto Rico to Ft. Pierce, FL. Unfortunately Tom made the novice's mistake no seasoned sailor ever commits to. He told his wife exactly where he would call her from on the way up and when we would arrive in Ft. Pierce.

Arrival time anywhere is WHEN you get there—not when you want to get there.

We set out from P.R. following a low, anticipating good winds in the high we assumed was behind it. Before we left we had tried to get some sort of weather forecast but the marina didn't have a lot to offer in that department. Tom had to get back so we left behind the only low we knew of. All was fine for a day or so until we got hit by a new low. This one came complete with an electrical storm which almost sent Tom into orbit. He was used to sailing on lakes and when a storm came up everyone went to shore and got off their boats. I tried calming him down by telling him about all the sailors from centuries ago who lived through these conditions. Besides we were no place near an island and wouldn't have gone in anyway without a chart and probably not even then in our current shallow seas. We got him through that and then he discovered we were being blown off from San Salvador where he had told his wife he would phone her. The first time he said, "Oh boy, I hope she doesn't call the Coast Guard when she doesn't hear from me" I sort of poopooed the idea and forgot it.

The weather stayed rough but the storms passed. Tom proved to be a reliable sailor and even asked to do the navigation. So we “gifted” him with the middle of the night watch which he handled just fine. He also plotted our course perfectly.

During this time meals were, of course, infrequent due to the seas. We also weren't doing much bathing. But the sun was out again and we could be in the cockpit and we were moving fine. Finally, we entered the channel in the Bahamas and found a good sheltered anchorage. Interestingly, we saw only one other boat out. Tom tried to contact the Bahamian phone operator repeatedly and got no response. Again we heard, “I hope she hasn't called the Coast Guard.”

Once the hook was down and while the men were up on deck sharing the sun shower bag I started cooking a decent meal. When finally we had all eaten and were clean it was a pleasure to relax on a still deck and turn in for a good night's uninterrupted sleep. Still only one boat out there.

We headed out early in the morning, motoring with no wind. Finally we saw other boats appearing. We kept going overnight and arrived in Ft. Pierce the next morning. Tom finally got reception with his cell phone and reached his frantic wife. Did she call the Coast Guard? She sure did! In fact, the CG called Jim's son and put out an alert on us. It seems that while we were making our passage it was the 2nd week of stormy weather in the Bahamas and most all boats there had stayed in port. Thus the lack of traffic when we got there. The best outcome of all: Tom finally had his off shore experience. He had the perfect stories to relate making him a bit of a celebrity at his lakeside yacht club.

After he left we slowly made our way up the Intracoastal Waterway to St. Augustine where we had parked our 5th wheel. Along the way Jim inquired of other boaters who they thought did the best boat marketing in the St. Augustine area. Most recommended a woman. We looked her up and she sold our boat within 3 months.

And then it was back to our RVing life style. In 2003 we decided that it was time to establish roots. We bought a home in Leesburg, Florida but kept our 5th wheel for a few years, then downsized to a truck camper. When we sold that we returned to taking overseas trips as the wanderlust was still strong. But now we self indulged a bit due to age and enjoyed some of the first class stuff. As I write this we have well passed the century mark for countries visited.

Epilogue

Jim suggested that I may have left the impression that all our adventures would come across as MISadventures. The latter are certainly a lot more exciting to write about and probably entertains the reader most. However, he's right; not all that we did in those 10 years was hairy. The passages could be rough or not—still we always managed to arrive. What was most exciting was to arrive and find familiar boats in an anchorage, since we were usually one of the last to arrive as Free Spirit was solid and safe but not fast. Those familiar boats contained long time friends with whom we had many a “sundowner” or with whom we took land tours or just spent time with. Also in any new anchorage was the distinct possibility of meeting new cruisers, many of whom came from other parts of the world. We all had one thing in common: an unusual life style in which in an emergency or just in need, these people would help you out. It was understood. In all those years we could count on one hand the number of cruisers who selfishly only considered themselves.

We were asked often which countries we liked the most and that's hard to really say. Jim liked New Zealand but I found Australia more to my liking because it was warmer. But we spent many months in both countries and had more to judge by. I loved the chance to spend time in Israel. We were fortunate to be there before the various uprisings. Turkey was another place where it was thrilling to see all the antiquities from the shore perspective where all those cities were founded. My love of history was thoroughly indulged. We seemed to have liked a lot of countries for different reasons.

I could say Yemen was not a favorite, and Malta made it hard to like because we wanted to be underway and the yard people weren't helpful there. Yet it was an island full of history. I could say Egypt was full of flies and touts but still it had its wonderful antiquities. Sudan was the most poverty stricken. Sad to see. But saying that only points out what we didn't like about some places. Suffice it to say we were privileged to see and enjoy aspects of many countries which, if questioned about, I could recite a lot of good things. The experience of being in all the countries we visited was really a privilege which I am grateful to have had.

We could still laugh with friends over some of the foibles we experienced and, like all cruisers, we could pass on information that could help the boats coming behind us. In that regard I wrote several articles for the Seven Seas Cruising Association which had a monthly news letter sent to its members. It was full of cruising experiences and tips that were invaluable. All cruisers looked forward to receiving their copy no matter where they were in the world.

Sad to say there are now areas like The Arabian Sea and, consequently, the Red Sea that are off limits to cruisers at present. The pirates have effectively discouraged sailboat cruising in these areas. Until that is defused their only alternative to complete a

circumnavigation will be to go around Africa to reach the Mediterranean Sea. It will be a longer trip but African ports will also be well worth seeing.

The short wave radio network was a huge asset in our passages and even in port for shore side news. I was never more aware of that than when our radio wasn't working. It went into the repair shop more than once in our circumnavigation. GPS also developed extensively during this time in the 1990s. Without it I seriously doubt I could say I would have done this trip. Jim had a Sat Nav system when I joined him but it was quickly mothballed once we got our first GPS.

I made numerous references to repair work in our passages. Understand that electronic and electrical systems are not overly fond of a salty atmosphere. Our boat's hatch was always open except when we were off the boat or moving in very rough weather. The radio, especially, didn't like that. Also, we did a fair amount of motoring with our 50 hp. Diesel engine. It took us the bulk of our trip. That it failed in Cyprus was due to a safety feature that did not register or else Jim would have caught the problem before it happened. He was practically married to that machine! As for the electric windlass—it was frequently bathed in salt water. I don't know how many miles we traveled all told but it was considerable. Parts wearing out and breakage and the need for replacement parts was an important part of a cruiser's budget. His biggest part. It was our home and our safety.

As I was the assigned navigator my responsibility was to also secure all needed charts. Jim's main job was to keep the boat operable and this entailed an awful lot of time in a cramped engine compartment keeping all systems enclosed there working. I was also the helmsperson and Jim operated the pesky electric windlass and handled the anchors and chain. Not infrequently I had to assist in getting the anchor and chain up when the windlass wouldn't, then run back and flake the chain in the chain locker as he fed it down, and make a last dash to the helm while he cleaned up the deck and secured things.

Night watches, for us, were strictly on demand. If one person was too tired the other was called. Or was called to help out at any time if the sail change couldn't be done alone or there was a question about ships in the distance. Jim could nap any time, day or night. I, on the other hand, had to be exhausted by lack of sleep to get any real rest. Only then, when I went off watch, could I depend on falling asleep. The first nights of a passage were my most sleep deprived. After that it was just ordinary minimum sleep. During the day Jim would be napping and I'd usually be reading. I read whatever was exchanged with other cruisers; he read maintenance manuals!

We always had left over food after a passage. Jim usually had a bout of sea sickness in the beginning and if seas were rough I barely ate. In those conditions we made ourselves eat snacks and peanut butter sandwiches. We had no shortage of water as the water maker kept our tanks pretty well topped off. If conditions were mild or we could get off the wind for a short time, I cooked a hot meal. We never starved but we usually lost weight during a

passage. Landfall meant I could forego some of the cooking. Our usual routine on arriving was to find an ATM or bank, markets, laundry facilities, and restaurants.

We each had a debt card from well known securities banks and these enabled us to get money around the world. Jim's son handled all our mail, paid any State side bill that might occur for boat parts, did our income taxes, and forwarded 1st class mail when we were in a long port stay. On his many visits to us around the world he also brought in spare parts. His job alone was one of our biggest assets that enabled us to cruise. And for that he got to sleep on a lowered salon table in a cramped boat, when he came!

My greatest thrill was the day I got hooked up to e-mail in Israel. And while my computer worked it sent and received a bundle of messages. After that I had to be content to find and use internet cafes where ever we found them. This life line was a real boon after years of very, very infrequent mail, although we would make phone call when ever we could.

I also sent out a long newsy letter several times a year which was copied in the States by one person and sent out to a number of family and friends. Nobody seemed to want to be dropped from my list, although I threatened to if I didn't get mail in return. True to my word, I did that a few times.

Bottom line to all this: it was a unique life style. Certainly this style is not for everybody but for anyone who craves seeing the world, it was fulfilling in a way no airplane or cruise ship can meet. It was a challenge to one's courage and endurance and an advanced degree in one's education. And the fraternity of friends would last long after all boats came home.