



By Captain Jean Levine

Chapter 2 APRIL Cruising Journal

We enjoyed Hatchet Bay's safe comfortable anchorage and meeting new friends. Magic and Manana had departed ahead of the front and rode the southerly winds north to Royal Island on their journey back to New England. Jeff was feeling the urge to get moving so we finally pulled up anchor and headed south with easterly winds at 20 knots. Sailing close to the shoreline of Eleuthra there were no seas but that strong breeze made for a jib only sail and in a fast two hours we arrived at Balara Bay just one mile north of Governors Harbor. The semicircular bay has a high ridge on both ends and a low white sand beach in the middle with a small island (Known as Levi Island) in the middle. It was too windy to launch the dingy so we waited until morning. Overnight the wind calmed down so in the morning we set up the dingy and headed off. Jeff motored us past the Cliffside homes so we could get a closer look at the beautiful landscaping and the 2500 square foot homes on the hilltop. There was a shout from the hill "hey would you like some grapefruit?" and I responded, "Sure we'd love some". So we tied the dingy up to the dock and introduced ourselves to Linda who introduced us to husband Dave. We sat and talked for a few hours they have an annual party for April fools day were they swim out to Levi island and back about a one mile swim round trip. They have a motor yacht and a second home back in Tennessee. They were very friendly and helpful but we needed to get going and excused ourselves to go off to town and do our chores. Governor's Harbor the next bay to the south had all the necessary facilities.

First gas for the dingy, then a stop at the library for Internet access, and finally the grocery store. The point of land that sticks out just past the library is known as Cupids Cay and is the port for receiving small ships for provisions. The library is a two-story colonial style house painted pink with green shutters and was the fifth established in the Bahamas in 1830.

After our chores we stopped to check out a new boat in the anchorage named "Alcid" a Saga 43 and met Frank and Gail along with their pet a skipper key (small black dog like a mini-husky) named Bosun. Later that evening we enjoyed trading sailing stories.

April 3rd we brought our camera to town, took our daily walk and then set sail for the next settlement south. We had a comfortable close reach down the coast and anchored off a two mile long white sand beach with the village of Tarpum point three miles to the south. We got up early so that we would arrive with high tide and good light to navigate Davis Channel an unmarked channel dotted with sand bores and coral heads. I was on the bow with the walkie-talkie as Jeff steered us though the five-mile long channel. As it turned out about halfway down the channel Jeff spotted the marker off the port side and realized that we were not in the channel but found our own deep path. I guess we should name it Grossman's Short Cut. Around noon we cleared Powell point the last tip of Eleuthra and headed off on a reach for Warderick Wells Exuma. It was a fast jib and mizzen sail in four to six foot seas. Jeff hailed the Park on the radio and made our



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reservations for a mooring. We arrived at the half-mile wide cut in choppy seas with an inbound tide against the wind, which made for another rolling surfing ride. Once through the pass Jeff turned south and I got my first look at a shallow sand bank with a narrow blue streak along the shoreline. There were about eight boats on mooring balls lined up on the deep blue strip and Jeff steered between them and the coast. We were so close to the beach that I could have jumped off the boat without getting wet. Our mooring was the deepest available and was located around a small turning buoy in front of the ranger station. I hooked the mooring on the first try; once secure Jeff wanted to snorkel the bottom to make sure that it would hold in a blow. He got in the dingy and noticed something move below so he peeked into the water to find that a big lemon shark was hiding in the shade of our boat. Hello! I guess maybe a look from the dingy instead of a swim. The next day we checked in with the rangers and signed up to do a half-day each of volunteer work. We raked the seaweed off the beach and then assisted in installing a hardtop on the park rangers boat. We hiked the island and snorkeled the reefs. I checked off almost every fish on by reef fish I.D. card plus saw the biggest lobster (20lbs) I have ever seen swimming/walking along the bottom. The rangers had names for the four-foot barracuda (Bu Bu) and the lemon shark (Harbormaster) since they feed them around 5pm. The wind howled for four days Jeff and I walked to the top of the highest peak on the island to see the "Blow hole". A hole in the coral about a foot in diameter, when the waves crash on the rocks below the cliff the air is forced up and out. It blew Jeff's hat right off. The seas were up and we needed to get moving so Jeff asked for a little local knowledge from the rangers and found another route we could take to head south down the leeward side of the island chain. So we said goodbye to Warderick Wells and headed for Blackpoint about 20 miles south. We had to motor sail since our course was straight upwind and it was blowing 25knots with higher gusts. As we passed Dotham Cut Jeff handed me the binoculars and showed me what is called a "Rage". The waves were breaking all the way across the pass half way up the cliffs that marked the ¼ mile break in the island. Thank goodness we had no intention of exiting today. Instead we continued a little south of the settlement and anchored in a cove called 'Lil Bay". The wind backed way down during the night.

When morning came we motored back to the north to exit Dotham Cut in what was flat calm conditions at null or slack tide. I got to choose our next stop south another 20 miles closer to Georgetown in a place called Galliot Cay. It offered good protection from the next approaching front easy access into deep water with the island of Galliot cay to the west another high rocky island to the east with sand banks to the north and south. We arrived around 3pm to one other boat at anchor a trimiran. We got lucky and the heavy weather seemed to skirt around us we barely got a fresh water rinse. By Friday the front had passed and we headed the last 50 miles south to Georgetown. Out the pass we set the main and poled out the jib for a down wind sail in light wind. The boat was so comfortable that our cat Sarge the queasy one came out on deck to lay out in the cockpit



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with us. We got a big kick out of hearing that the special of the day was pizza and the local restaurant was taking orders over the radio on VHF 16. (Which the universal hailing channel not meant for conversation, but hey this is the Bahamas mon.)

We arrive at Great Exuma around 5pm anchor down. The island is bordered by a small chain of smaller islands one of which is called Stocking island and forms Elizabeth sound about 1/2mile wide and 10 miles long allowing for good protection from all wind directions. There are four anchoring areas on the leeward side of Stocking island; Hamburger beach known for the brightly colored grill shack; Monument because of the obelisk on the crest of the 100 foot hilltop; Volleyball beach for the continuous volleyball game and Sand dollar beach for its white sand beach and of course sand dollars.

Polyphonic was anchored off Sand dollar near the picnic tables.

The town of Georgetown on Great Exuma is located around lake Victoria, which you enter via a tunnel 15 feet wide, thirty feet long and 12feet high. Once in the lake you turn left and parking is available at the floating dingy dock behind Exuma Market. Such a large number of cruisers stay here from November to April that a radio net has been established and morning announcements include daily restaurant specials and activities (like the bridge club) as well as local businesses offering services and who has mail or faxes that Exuma Market receives. The first morning we had the radio on and heard that there was a mail packet for Polyphonic. Off to town we went to pick up the mail and drop off the trash, which is how we met Deb from Compass Rose who invited us to a party. "Island formal" she said to celebrate the sinking of the Titanic. We were delighted and accepted the invite. The rest of Saturday we spent relaxing on board and sorting the mail. Sunday was a busy day we went to town and checked the internet (at 50 cents a minute) Jeff made it quick-got word that some friends were on their way back from the Dominican Republic. Then had lunch at the "Two Turtles Inn" where we met Jan and Ron on a Custom built 43 foot sloop named "Rejoice". She is a flutist and a music teacher and I wound up getting a free music lesson. Then it was time to shower and get dressed up for the "Titanic Party" which was on a 54foot Motor Yacht named "Agenda".

We arrive at the party Jeff in his long black pants and Poly polo shirt myself in a long black dress. All the guests arrive by dingy so they used a neighboring boat as valet parking. After everyone was aboard we up anchor and parade around the harbor with the name Titanic on the stern and parade flags from bow to stern across the top; plus a sound system that imitated a cruise ship horn Hooogah! The inside of the yacht has signs like the Grand Ballroom and the Lido Deck. Just before sunset we arrive back at the anchor spot enjoy the spectacular sky and appetizers. Three of the ladies put on a show by dressing first in a military outfit singing Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy, then dressed like Diana Ross and the Supremes, Sonny& Cher and more. What fun! Jeff dragged me home around midnight after I had joined in singing with the girls. Luckily we remembered to turn on our anchor light so that our 2-mile dingy ride home in the dark ended in successfully finding Poly. We made lots of new friends at the party.



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Monday April 14th we listened to the morning Single Side Band net and heard our friends from Leanna on the way from Mayaguana. Jeff hailed them and we looked forward to their arrival on Tuesday. Judy and Dave live aboard a ChoeyLee 36 a wooden sloop with carved dragons. We first met in the British Virgin Islands April 2000 when Jeff and I had a Moorings Charter; then in Key West May 2001; then Mexico May 2002. So it was really neat to see Leanna come sailing into Georgetown, Exuma April 2003. I can't help but say see you next year who knows where.

They arrived on schedule Tuesday afternoon and we invited them to join us for dinner. We caught up on the year over BBQ Ribs, rice and salad and washed it all down with rum from the Dominican Republic. We had gotten word that Wednesday was a good day for fresh produce at the market so away we went to Exuma Market. Ahh! Fresh romaine, spinach, mushrooms, asparagus and a good selection of beef, pork, chicken, duck and Cornish game hens it always feels good to have a full freezer and fridge. On the way back to the boat from town I spot "Jieto" our friends from Hatchet Bay and we invite them to join us for potluck dinner Thursday night for a howl at the moon party. We spent a week before Jeff and I realized it; walks on the beach and island trails, snorkeling and sailing the sunflower around the anchorage. We fueled up brought provisions and enjoyed visiting with friends. Thanks to Jesse from Jieto Jeff got a new weather fax program that allowed us to receive up to the minute weather from NOAA. Using the new program Jeff sees a weather window for us to head south. So we swing the dingy on deck say good-bye to our friends, but one last chore Jeff changes the fuel filters on the engine/genset and discovers an air leak. Everything was working, but now no engine, no genset; I guess we are not leaving just yet, besides the Family Island Regatta starts on Tuesday.

All week long the townspeople of Georgetown were busily building a Regatta village of colorful shacks resembling a large Art Festival. After two days in the engine room Jeff gets things running and we head over to enjoy the opening ceremonies. This is a race of island workboats from the Abacos to Nassau to Exuma. The boats are about 22-feet long with huge masts and sails and the islanders hike out on wooden planks to keep the boats from tipping over. We watched as the boats arrived towed or on board a large cargo ship lifted out by crane. Jeff and I stuck around long enough to see the first race, which was like a slow motion dance in only zephyrs of wind, it was so light. Finally we decided that it was time to just go.

We head out on April 22 for a nice reach to Conception Island about 40 miles east. The wind started out very light and increased throughout the day. As we steamed across the top of Long Island zing went my fishing line! Oh Boy I caught something.... oh no it's a barracuda. So I reeled him in and Jeff took the hook out of his mouth and away he swam no fish for dinner tonight. Next came the dolphins, a school of 30 or more spinner dolphins splashing and jumping and surfing down the waves having a good old time. I swear I can hear them saying Yippy! Just as it gets dark we arrive at our waypoint furl the jib, drop the main and power in for the last 2 miles Jeff uses his radar navigation skills to



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get us into the anchorage in the dark. Conception Island is a deserted island and one of the many that Columbus set foot on, now a sanctuary for birds and turtles. After a nights rest we pile in the dingy and head a mile and a half around the island to a spot where you can enter into a canal that brings you to an inland lake where the turtles are reported to be hanging out. Well I guess the tide was a little low and it looked too scary to try so Jeff and I beached the dingy and walked. As we walked around the island I could not help but wonder what Columbus might have been doing here.... maybe collecting fresh water in barrels. Thank goodness for our water maker. After spotting numerous species of birds we finally spot a turtle. Mission accomplished Jeff and I dingy back to Polyphonic and head south for Rhum Cay about 20 miles south also claiming to have been discovered by Columbus. When we arrive at Rhum Cay I take my position on the bow and Jeff and I comment to each other over the radios. I could not stop feeling like we had picked the boat up and dropped her into a swimming pool the water was so clear I could see starfish on the bottom at 20 to 30 feet. After anchoring Jeff was hanging out in the cockpit while I was cooking dinner and a guy paddles over in a kayak, he turns out to be the lighthouse keeper. Almost sunset and he hurries off to work. We are next to two other ketch-rigged sailboats about a half-mile off the beach; brightly colored fishing shacks dot the southern tip of the island. Mid morning I notice the blue-hulled boat heading south and Jeff hails him on the radio "How is the wind and waves out there?" and he gets a "Great day for sailing". So we up anchor and give chase finally somebody else is going our way. A light air day turns into a beautiful but slow evening sail, until the morning brings more wind and with it choppy seas. The wind builds and now we are pounding into the waves our new sailing companions hail us on the radio to tell us they are going to stop at Plana Cays. Jeff checks the chart to find we are only 12 miles away and we agree to stop for the night. The Plana Cays are two low-lying islands stretching nine miles long. As Jeff dials in on the anchorage he spots a trimaran already at anchor. It's the same one we had been playing tag with since Galliot Cay. Now we are three. ARCATEDAS the Tri and KAMAL the 365 Pearson ketch. We enjoyed a swim and a refreshing shower then got a good nights rest (although the swell snaked around the corner for a gentle rolling motion) from the all nighter the previous day. By morning the wind is up and the three of us set sail first KAMAL then ARCATEDAS then POLYPHONIC, it did not take us long with jib and mizzen to power up and pass the others we arrived at Mayaguana by 3pm and followed the coast from "Pirate's Well" to "Devils Point" looking for a spot for three boats to anchor. Once Jeff settled on a place I dropped the hook and even though we backed down the anchor I knew we were only hooked on a rock. The others followed our lead and seemed to feel all right about the anchorage. The wind had gone flat calm and the sea was settling and there really was no other place to stop. Jeff and I visited with Kamal, Mike and Jenny, and then called it an early evening. Jeff checks the radar to 50 miles out and sees nothing so we go to bed. One thirty in the morning I awake to the sound of thunder, Jeff gets up and turns on the radar, now the rain is coming so fast that



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he did not even have to plot it. I head topside and start securing the dingy and see that Robert from the Trimiran is doing the same. No sign of life on KAMAL so I got the Qbeam and began to signal soon they hail us on the radio and Jeff informs them that we are bugging out.

So all three of us up anchor and head to sea soon the wind builds to 30 knots steady and peaks with a gust to 52 knots and of course heavy rain. Since we closed the distance it was a short storm and we hove to until we all felt it had passed over, then we decided since the wind had changed direction we would head around the corner and a few miles south. Abrams Bay is an invisible bay a semicircle of shoreline encircled by a semi-submerged reef. We elect the straightforward entrance on the western side but have to wait for good light to work our way in, but eventually we got anchored on a sandy bottom with enough room to swing around about 9am. I put the cushions out to dry, hung the lines, bailed out the dingy and made some chicken soup then Jeff and I took a five-hour nap. After a few days here to catch up on our sleep and wait for the weather to settle we head off for West Caicos.

Morning comes and the wind is light from the Northeast which will give us a nice sail so we exit the reef and set sail; another good laundry day and I hang the clothes around the lifelines to dry. The wind goes to zero and we decide to start the motor, I reel in my fishing line (since I haven't been having and luck). No sooner did I put my rod below when I spot a pair of Dorado (otherwise known as Mahi Mahi) they had to be four feet each and they were just swimming alongside the boat. Jeff said, "I didn't know that fish had thumbs or noses but I just saw two fish thumb their noses at us." Oh well no fish for dinner. A few hours passed and I tried ever lure in my tackle box and finally gave up. Then Jeff spots whales slowly arching out of the water we passed within 50 feet of the pod of five. I have a whale watching guide and we scrambled to see what kind they were, after another look we decided they were pilot whales, round noses, black body, small dorsal fin and about 18 feet long. Next Land Ho! West Caicos is a rocky island about 60 feet high with the western coast mostly walls of carved caves and very deep water up until about 500 feet from shore. There are mooring buoys here for dive boats that come to dive the reef walls and you must give up your mooring if a dive boat shows up. Since it was almost sunset that was not likely and we hooked one and spotted another down to the south of us for Kamal. Shortly after settling in I started to notice very small mosquitoes oh no! So we close the hatches, eventually turning on the genset and air conditioning then swatting away all night. Kamal had already had a night of the mosquito and exited quickly in the morning. Jeff and I hung out long enough for me to do some cleaning chores and Jeff to snorkel over to the wall that dropped off behind the boat. He said he could identify the fish below at 60 feet in the deep dark blue water. The sunlight has gone up high enough in the sky for us to head for sandbore channel and the entrance to Providencial known as Provo where we plan to get a slip and clear customs. Once close enough to hail the marina we find out that the one Jeff thought we could get into told us



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to wait for high tide. We spot our friends on Kamal and Arcatedas and anchor nearby in Sapadilla Bay to wait for more water. Still a little wiped out from swatting all night we have lunch then take a nap. Around 3pm we start to head towards the marina, but while we were napping the wind picked up and the sound became rough, we went about halfway over toward the marina and when Jeff could not get a response on the VHF we decided to bailout and head back to the anchorage. So there we sat in shallow water bucking and rolling for 36 hours. It looks like April went out like a lion just like March.