



By Captain Jean Levine

Chapter 4 June Cruising Log

June 1 we depart La Pagara at 05:30am and arrive at Punta Ballena by 08:00am entering through a cut in the reef, beautiful homes on the hillside directly ahead and on the left a fabulous resort with coconut palms lining the beach a mile long. Turning to the right we anchor in a semi circular cove with mangroves and a small-uninhabited island. Known to the locals as Gilligan's Island. Since it was Sunday we watched this small island come alive. A small ferryboat came and delivered load after load of people. Others Kayaked, jet skied, and motor boated over to the island until it was bustling with activity. Jeff and I watched for a while then took a nap before venturing out via dingy. We explored a cut through the mangroves where we had seen numerous craft disappear and not return, it lead back to a beach along the southern coast protected by a large reef, hidden by the mangroves from the anchorage it was a popular weekend hangout for the locals. We had waited until late in the afternoon so the crowds were all heading for home.

Yet another early departure we went to bed early and skipped happy hour with Kamal and Christabel 1. At 05:00am we head back out through the reef waiting for just enough light to make out the cut and head for Ponce arriving before the morning breeze spikes. Ponce pronounced PONE SAY, is known as "la perla del sur" the pearl of the south or "the Noble city" because of its beautiful facades, neoclassical architecture and European touch. The anchorage was very deep and the Yacht Club had fuel and a reasonably priced slip so we decided to take advantage. The Yacht Club was impressive besides the huge Marina about 300 slips they had a summer youth program with not just sailing lessons but volleyball, tennis and golf. The grounds also included several restaurants a haul out facility and a wooded area complete with fitness trail. The club occupies premium land on the point overlooking two barrier islands complete with scenic lighthouse. The entrance is gated with a 24-hour security guard and we had to wear I.D. badges around the property. When you exit the grounds there is a public beach on the right and on the left a boardwalk 1 mile long complete with shops and cafes. Across the harbor are the cruise ship docks. A small train like the Conch Train in Key West takes you to the downtown area where you can take in the cultural sights.

There were two other boats traveling with us Kamal and Christabel 1 so we decided to share a rental car to do our provisioning, laundry and some sightseeing. I wish I had brought the camera for our first shopping expedition at Walmart, what a scene. The store was joined with a Sam's Club and both were so busy that we had to follow someone to their car to get a shopping cart. After the prices in the Bahamas (where a bag of chips was as much as \$7.50) we were very happy to stock up on discount items. The three couples each filling a cart still managed to fit the goodies in the trunk of the Ford Taurus. Next stop the Hipermarket a discount grocery store but having filled the trunk we decided to make it a scouting trip and just bring home some steaks and fresh veggies for a group



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dinner on Polyphonic. The next morning we were off doing chores the post office still trying to get our mail (watermaker part from CA.) then drop off the laundry (treat having somebody else do it) and we head off to see the sights. Up to the top of the hill that overlooks the city the Cruceta Del Vigia, a 100-foot tall Cross offers a spectacular view of the city from the observation room on the top of the tower. Below the cross lies the Castillo Serralles (the Castle Serralles featured in America's Castles) built in the 1930's by a rum baron maker of Ron Castillo, Myers and Captain Morgan to name a few of his blends. The terraced gardens were nothing less than spectacular between the sculptured trees and scrubs were a number of fountains, sculptures, park benches and a large variety of flowers blooming with the showpiece being orchids all impeccably manicured. After strolling the gardens we piled back in the car and did the scenic drive through the lovely downtown area ending up at the National Art Museum. The museum claims to have the largest collection of art in the Caribbean and also includes Puerto Rican Artists. The featured collection was an artist named Arnaldo Roche Rabell with a Van Gogh style, hiding in the works pictures of both the artist and Van Gogh or Van Gogh's sunflowers or other secret touches. The canvases were huge 8 x 10 some were trip tic's (three panels wide) all eye popping color Jeff and I found his work particularly fascinating after visiting the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam having many of the works freshly imprinted in our minds. After the Museum we continued the day picking up the laundry then making the trip to the Hipermarket for provisions and then the task of stowing all the bootie on the boats. The next day Jean the trip director suggested a drive up to the mountains where we could splash in a waterfall so off we went up to the village of Juan Diaz and beyond up and up we went on a road that just keep getting smaller. We arrived at the waterfall around 11am and I was somewhat surprised to find it right beside the road with a couple of locals swimming in the emerald pool at the bottom. We decided to head back to a park we had passed along the way called Bosque De Toro Negro (the Black Bull Forest). The park was filled with beautiful hiking trails both up the mountain and down to the valley and the stream below. With a deadline on the rental car we cut our visit short and headed back to Ponce for a last minute stop at the internet café then return the car and prepare for a 2am departure. Wow! We fit a lot into 3 days.

Slipping the dock lines about 3 am after waiting out a short passing rain cloud we are on our way to Salinas in fairly calm seas and the usual 20 knots of breeze. In Salinas a very protected mangrove harbor I spot manatees, so many, that I had to keep a good lookout to keep from coming to close to the slow moving sea cows. The town is basically a small fishing village that got discovered by cruisers and services in the town evolved to fit the demand. All the shops (sail loft, hardware, marine supply, etc.) and restaurants are one-story buildings with the exception of the Marina and adjoining hotel, which are two, stories the people warm and friendly. Jeff and I walked to the post office about 4 miles round trip the entire path (sidewalk) was lined with beautiful flowering trees. I can see why folks find it hard to leave this place, but for us we must press on. So 07:30am we



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dodge the manatees and have a short 5-mile run to our staging location for the next early morning departure. We arrive at Boca De Inferno and get the hook down just before the rain. It was a good day to nap, read and watch a movie. We invited Mike and Jenny over to watch Captain Ron since they had never seen it. Soon it was 03:00am time to leave, I am armed with the spotlight and harnessed onto the bow shining the light first to the left then to the right spot lighting the reef that is breaking on either side of the pass. (By now we accept that as the norm.) Not as calm as we had hoped the seas 4 to 6 but the wind was light and fluky with passing thundershowers. We arrive at Palmas del Mar by 08:00am but are stuck doing circles waiting for the rain to let up so we can see the narrow entrance. The entrance looks like the standard gated community stucco cement walls on either side complete with columned ends only thing it was missing was the rod iron gate and the security guard. To the left a 400 foot cliff with 5000 sq foot homes hanging off the side and on the top, one with its own beach carved out of the rock and planted with 5 palm trees quite spectacular. Once inside the wall a small fishing boat basin on the left and to the right the anchoring area just big enough for 6 boats (max) straight ahead is a four story townhouse complex each with private dock completing the picture a 100 plus foot mega yacht tied up at the end unit. Ooh La La! Although this was a picturesque place the sea wall did not detour the swell from leaking in the anchorage and we rolled away the afternoon and into the night. The next morning at first light, along with Kamal, we bugged out. Another motor sail straight upwind from the southeast corner of Puerto Rico, north and east to the Spanish Virgin Island of Culebra arriving early afternoon. Ensenada de Honda is protected on all sides known as a good hurricane hole, a reef protects the entrance on the south and mountains surround the interior then turn into mangroves as they touch the waters edge. The small village of Dewey is nestled into the northwest corner where a small canal connects the bay to the Atlantic. A ferry service runs from here to Fajardo, Puerto Rico and the locals commute back and forth to work in San Juan. The homes are tucked into the mountains and architecturally blend with nature. There are a few Bed and Breakfast Inns and small quaint hotels along with the bakery, grocery and gift shops population about 600 on the whole island. (Not counting chickens.)

Jeff and I along with Mike and Jenny rented mountain bikes to explore the island. We pedaled out of town then up and over a mountain and down the other side to Flamingo Beach where we left the bikes and loaded down with snorkel gear and a box lunch we hiked over the mountain trail to the horseshoe shaped reef. Really beautiful soft coral and colorful fish we were lucky to have bright sunshine and good light, which really brings out the color underwater. We had just gotten out of the water when a cloud came over which gave us shade for lunch. After snacking we reversed course hike back to the bikes then up and over the mountain back through town. Then Jeff and I continued up and down and up and down and up to the other end of the island overlooking the reef at the south



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entrance. From that vantage point we could see Sail Rock and St. Thomas beyond, our next destination.

June 11 Wednesday off we go to St. Thomas, well actually Water Island which is a private island located in the bight of Charlotte Amalie the capitol of the USVI. Compared to the hustle bustle of the cruise ship docks just across the bay, it is quite serene with a nice snorkel spot and beautiful palm tree lined beach in the cove known as Honeymoon cove. Just after I said how quiet it is ...a party barge arrives full of tourists. The pontoon boat was about 70 feet long, one story high, with palm fringe around the top sporting a sign "The Kon Tiki" and a live band playing island music at full blast, when it landed on the beach it looked like a Tiki Hut. There were also a collection of small huts along the beach under the palm trees, which sprang open to sell t-shirts and trinkets. After a couple of hours the huts closed up and the people all loaded back onto the "Kon Tiki" as it wove its way back out though the anchorage and then silence, back to a peaceful quiet hide away.

The next morning our friends on Kamal were off for an early start with plans to head over to Jost Van Dike in the British Virgins, we said our good byes and agreed to meet up in a few days. Well I don't think they were gone an hour before they were back.... what happened? Turned out to be so rough heading around the corner of the island that, they came back. So I suggested they follow us around the other side of the island staying close to the coast and only going half way to Jost Van Dyke to St James Island.

It was a short trip just 9miles but the wind was howling and even in the lee of St Thomas the waves were stirred up to a whirling chop. St James Island uninhabited lies just a half-mile off the eastern edge of St Thomas and 5 miles west of St John (Cruz Bay where Jeff and I hoped to catch up to our mail.) Another quiet little spot known as Christmas Cove, the island is about 500 feet high and provides a crescent shaped cove with a big rock in the center. The rock has a nice coral reef around it with great snorkeling, a favorite spot for the local day charter boats to bring the tourists, they all head back to shore by sunset and you get the place all to yourself at night. After we got anchored I blew up my 11foot inflatable Kayak and had a great paddle while Jeff swam and snorkeled.

Friday June 13 we did a short motorboat trip to Caneel Bay (next to Cruz Bay) where we picked up a mooring ball and went by dingy into Cruz Bay, St John to check our mail. No Luck...hmmm....now what? Oh well I guess whenever the mail arrives, they will do a "return to sender" and we can have our mail service send it to our friend Deb who will be joining us in Guadeloupe. So we slip off the mooring and have a glorious sail to Jost Van Dyke making sure that we arrive by 3pm so we can clear customs. Now we are in the British Virgins. Kamal was already anchored so we joined them to watch the anchoring show. Since the BVI's are the home of the largest number of bare boat charter fleets in the world (Bare boat = be your own captain even if you don't have the experience.) Watching the charter's attempt three or four times to get the anchor to set was quite entertaining. Watching time after time the "how not to" example. The worst



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being they pull into the anchorage at full speed barely tuck themselves into a spot big enough for the boat to swing throw the hook over with barely enough line for the anchor to touch bottom, then jump in the dingy and go ashore leaving the boat unattended. Yikes! It was the first time I ever put fenders out at anchor! A report we got from another boat that had the same experience was a record 10 attempts to anchor. (Our friend went aboard the charter boat and finally showed them what to do.) The next morning the boat anchored in front of us had anchored directly over our anchor and I had to use the fenders to push them out of the way to get our anchor up. Since they had partied onshore late no one even emerged from below to ask why we were so close. After that we hoisted the sails and had a lovely sail to Norman Island around the western edge of the big island of Tortola about 9 miles east to what locals call Treasure Island (Named after the book and film of the same name, the movie was filmed here).

Norman island is about 440 feet at its' highest peak to 270 at the lowest peak with a spinney back, cliffs on the windward side and several small coves on the leeward side that make good anchorages. The Bight is the largest cove and supports about 200 mooring buoys at \$20 per night (making it easy for the Charter boats no anchoring necessary) monitored by the only thing ashore there, the restaurant now called "Pirates Bight". The bay has another restaurant/bar which is located in the bay itself "the Willy T" which is a boat at anchor. For the really lazy you can stay onboard and a small boat named "Deliverance" will bring you beer, ice, ice cream and take your trash all for a fee of course. (\$5 per ice cream sandwich.... but what do you expect for delivery?) The last time Jeff and I visited here we snorkeled the famous caves but this time we choose to hike the island which is sprinkled with cactus and other scrub bushes as well as a number of goats, the view from the top was beautiful.

June 16 we enjoyed a fast 8.5-knot reach across to Roadtown, Tortola. Mike and Jenny from Kamal went into Village Cay Marina and we had plans to anchor out, but when the anchorage was too rollee we decided to splurge for a slip. We made the best use of the shore side services fuel, water, washing the boat and the laundry, the showers, the pool, plus Jeff changed the oil on both the Genset and engine and was able to dispose of the old oil at the Marina. We met another couple from Canada, Tom and Liz with a Cabot 36-foot sloop also southbound, so along with Mike and Jenny we went out to try the famous Pussers rum drinks. The Pain Killer is a rum drink sold with a rating of 1(wimpy) to 5(kick your ass) so not wanting to make a difficult decision I went in the middle with a 3. And one Pain Killer was all it took.

Painlessly the next day we set off for Virgin Gorda, which lies north and east of Tortola. We beat our way the short 6 miles in 15knots of breeze and calm seas to the southwestern edge of the island. Columbus named the island the Fat Virgin since it resembles a women lying on her back, the southwest corner has a grouping of large granite boulders known as "the Baths". The large pile of rocks form pools inside and it is possible to climb through the boulders following pathways and explore these pools, not to mention that the seaside



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of the boulders create a natural reef for the fish and the snorkeling is excellent. We arrived at 5pm in the afternoon when all but one other boat had already gone. There are a number of mooring buoys all close enough to swim from the boat to shore. We got to enjoy this very special place in almost complete solitude. We swam, then walked through the inside of the boulders leading us to a beach the next cove over, then we snorkeled our way back to the boat. Since no overnight mooring is permitted we headed 2 miles north and anchored just off the ferry dock in Spanish town the primary city of Virgin Gorda.

The next morning the sky was crystal clear and the sun was shining, so we decided to take a walk and explore the famous 5 star resort of "Lil Dix Bay" just past Spanish town to the north. On the other side of the hill where Polyphonic lies at anchor is this spectacular resort with a private cove with reef and palm tree lined white sand beach. Its feature is the landscaped grounds, which hide 2 story groupings of hotel accommodations, nestled in the gardens invisible from offshore. A maze of stone pathways lead through the resort with dazzling flowers mixed in with huge shade trees and after touring the grounds we went back to the boat, where we suited up for snorkeling. This time we just took the dingy to "the Baths" and the place was packed full of snorkelers, great people watching and quite different than the previous day. I am glad we got to experience both. When we returned to Polyphonic it was still only lunchtime and we had plenty of time to sail to North Gorda Sound, a pleasant reach up the lee of the island with smooth seas and a nice breeze.

North Gorda Sound is protected 360 degrees by 1500-foot mountains, except the three cuts through the hills where it is protected by reef. We choose to anchor off Prickely Pear Island on the North side, a nature preserve, and yet another uninhabited island. (Except for goats of course.) A fabulous day, first a walk in a beautiful garden, then a refreshing snorkel and topped off by a fast sail in smooth water. That is how the travel brochure pictured the BVI's.

The North Sound is dotted with exclusive resorts each claiming their part of the 360 degrees, Leverick Bay on the southwest corner features a Pussers Rum Bar, plus several shops, a multicolored hotel in the Caribbean style, a gourmet food store plus a full service marina and dive shop. At the opposite end of the sound The Bitter End Yacht Club with a huge water sports rental area windsurfers all types of sailing dinghy's, catamarans plus 26foot Day Sailors as well as an outpost base for the "Mooring's Yacht Charters". The accommodations are all Bungalows, the equivalent of 2&3 bedroom homes. They all had a spectacular view tucked into the mountainside overlooking the sound and the reef. (Very pricey) Jeff and I hiked "Guys Trail" around the property then up and up and up, over the top and down the other side, which lead us to yet another resort, Biras Creek. The view was great from the top and we surveyed the anegada passage the next leg of our journey.

This resort was on the other side facing the Atlantic Ocean. I took photos of Jeff and the iguana a 4-½ foot beauty right next to the iguana crossing sign.



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While waiting for the weather window to head across the Anegada to St Martin we took advantage of the clear water and calm anchorage and cleaned the boat bottom which took Jeff 2 days and 2 dive tanks and a little help from me.

June 21st the wind and seas look good for moving on and again we head out with a fleet of 5 boats. (Kamal, North Star, Karen's Weigh and Pez de Volador, plus Morning Light who left from Roadtown) Departing about 3pm in the afternoon we head out into the Anegada Passage in the usual 15 to 20 knots of wind and 4 to 6 foot choppy seas. This time the crossing is uneventful and we were the first to arrive in Marigot harbor at noon. (This is the same harbor where Jeff and I took delivery of Polyphonic back in 1998.)

As the afternoon went by Kamal and Volador came in to the anchorage but we got word that North Star and Karen's Weigh were going to continue on to Saba. Morning Light had lost their engine (since this crossing is straight up wind it is a motor sail) and was with in striking distance but too far out for us to lend any assistance. Monday morning we went in and cleared customs and immigration, which gave me an opportunity to start practicing my French since the customs officer, spoke only a little English. (Note-Marigot is the capitol of the French side of St. Martin and the other side is Dutch.) By 3pm in the afternoon we hear Morning Light on the VHF and they are only 4 miles out and by 6pm they report they are 1 and half miles out. As it grows dark they are afraid of entering the harbor so they plan to heave to and try to hold position until dawn. Jeff and I continue to monitor their position and by 10pm we decide to mount a towing expedition. We have spent many a day at sea with no engine and unfavorable winds and felt like we had to do something. I haul the anchor and Jeff pulls Polyphonic alongside Kamal and we drop off the dingy and pick up Mike to assist. The seas have backed down but they have drifted out to sea, by 11pm we spot them and get a towline bridle hooked up and deliver them safely to the anchorage and by 1am we are all headed to bed.

Tuesday I organized a shopping trip to the Marine store on the Dutch side of the island via the public bus, which is still only \$1 US. We had a list of things to buy like an 110lb storm anchor and extra heavy-duty chain, which are not readily available in US Marine stores but here home of the Mega Yachts they are in stock. Island Water World has also set themselves apart from other stores by the excellent service and prices. We paid half of the US cost for our supplies and they delivered the goods to our boat. (Could you picture us trying to lug this 110lb anchor on the bus or taxi?) We spent the next few days attempting to get parts for the watermaker, which had started acting up in Puerto Rico and pooped out in Tortola. This was our mail-chasing package, which we now accepted that we would get in Guadeloupe when our friend hand delivers the part.

We provisioned, did laundry filled the tanks both water and fuel plus filled the propane which turned out to be a stroke of luck since we were just shy of empty. I discovered a discount beverage location, which allowed me to stock up on soda and bottled water plus bottles of French wine at \$1.50 to \$4.00 and beer, a case of Tuborg for \$8.00.



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By Thursday the other cruisers had left and we decided that Friday we would head for St Eustatia, known to locals as Statia. June 27 we set off on a fast reach, the winds increased as the day went on and by the time we were in the lee of the island of Statia the winds were 25 knots with gusts higher. By 1pm in the afternoon we were sailing around the exclusion zone, a 1- mile area where an offshore pumping station fills huge super tankers. Statia is home to a large refinery on the Northwestern side of the island. The island is steep and the only anchorage is off the main village of Orangejstaad. A Dutch island the town is located on the top of a 200-300foot white cliff complete with fort. It was our turn to have problems with the engine...actually it just didn't want to start. I tried switching fuel tanks to see if it was air in the tank, but no luck. Jeff heads below to bleed the diesel and I take over at the helm to just sail on into the anchorage. By now Jeff has had a lot of practice and after about 30minutes gets the engine purring. We furl the sails and pick up a mooring ball right off the town. There is a fleet of fishing boats and a long pier, a single row of buildings along the base of the cliffs house the customs office, the park ranger station, the historical society and a bar/restaurant. We proceed in to find that customs has left for the day...but no problem, just clear in tomorrow. We checked in with the Park service and paid the \$10 mooring fee. There we got information on the Volcano on the southern end of the island, known as Quill, many hiking trails offer an opportunity to go up to the top, the peak is 1970- feet and then down inside the crater. The next morning we set off at 07:30am and made it to the top and into the volcano by 9:30am. The inside of the crater was a small rainforest full of lush green trees and wildlife, which we could hear but not see. As we hiked through the trails hermit crabs kept rolling down the mountain landing on the trail in front of us. It was like it was raining Hermit crabs. We sat and listened to the sound of the rainforest in the early morning nothing but the wind through the trees, birds singing and hermit crabs rolling. The hike down was much faster and we ended back at the Park Ranger station by 11am. Then we cleared in and out of customs and headed back to the boat where we had planned on a short swim to cool off then head for St Christopher. We snorkeled out in front of the boat to discover the sunken city walls, complete foundations of the original town including many cannons. It was filled with fish, huge schools of fish lots of variety. I felt like I was swimming through the lost city of Atlantis. Refreshed from our swim Jeff and I proceeded to clear away the dingy and get ready to leave. The last step was to raise the outboard motor from the dingy transom to the mother ship and I only had one more inch to go when.... oh no.oh no sploosh there goes the engine and Jeff along with it down to the bottom. Nuts! Luckily for us the water was crystal clear and the bottom was hard sand so Jeff swam down attached a new line to the bridle and I was able to haul it up. Well, Jeff spent about 4-hours rinsing the engine with fresh water and disassembling and then reassembling the outboard afterward we lowered it very carefully back onto the dingy and tried it. Joy! It works! By now of course it was too late to make the next anchorage so we stayed one more night.



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Sunday June 29th off to St Christopher, known as St Kitts, we thought it would be a close reach but it turned into a motor sail. Our delay caused us to depart into the teeth of a tropical wave that arrived a little early, the mooring we had been on was almost as bad as French Cay and we rolled so much that a rough day at sea was an improvement. As we motored across the 8-mile open water stretch to St Kitts the wind kept on building. Luckily it waited until we were in the smoother seas behind the island before it shifted on the nose and increased to 40knots. Of course the seas were short and choppy visibility poor and we had to pass by the city of Basseterre since it was un-navigable at the time. We continued on to Whitehall bay a protected anchorage on the southern uninhabited side of the island.

St Kitts is like two completely different islands in one. The northern side is emerald green and rises up to spectacular mountains complete with a fort that resembles a Castle on the top of a hill with lush green pastureland at its feet. To the Southern end which is also mountainous but raw and barren, uninhabited. The bay where we anchored was a local snorkel spot with a reef around the perimeter; there were a couple of snorkels and a few cars parked along the beach but nothing else. We had dropped the hook about 1pm and had just gotten set, when I hear our friends Kamal and Company on the VHF. I hail to find them all over at Nevis only another 5-miles away, so Jeff and I decided to have lunch and move on over to join the others.

We hauled up the anchor and enjoyed a lovely sail on over to Nevis as the wind had backed down and the angle was favorable for sailing, we hit 9 knots under jib alone. Now in Nevis, anchoring off of Pinney's Beach a black sand beach stretching about 2 miles lined with tall coconut palms. What a contrast we had just been the only boat at anchor with only a few swimmers, now we just joined a huge party in full swing. There were a bunch of kids in a youth group who had chartered a fleet of boats that hold ten people each. They very politely came over to inform us they would be making noise, and we gave our blessing as we were happy to rejoin our fleet. Kamal, North Star, Karen's Weigh and Volador. As it turned out the kids swam, water-skied and played loud music but it paled in comparison to the party on the beach. The gang headed over to the beach to join in the activities, there we found a group of Tiki huts that gave shade to picnic tables, the largest shaded the bar and BBQ pit and the feature of the day was the Killer Bee and BBQ Chicken. The Killer Bee was a rum drink with orange juice and I think a splash of hot sauce, whatever it was, there was lots of rum in that sting. The mountain peak in Nevis is 3232 feet and the beach lined with coconut palms gave a postcard picture of a Caribbean island but Jeff and I decided to make it an early evening.

Monday June 30th with a 20-mile journey in front of us, the fleet takes off in a pursuit start with the slowest boat leaving first and Polyphonic the last to depart giving the others a chance to arrive before us. After rounding the southern end of Nevis we were able to sail on one tack past the Kingdom of Redonda (basically a really big rock that has been claimed by Antigua and had been dimmed a kingdom.) and then on to Montserrat. Jeff



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was smiling all the way as we had the rail in the water and steamed along at 8.5 knots under jib and mizzen. We managed to beat all but one boat into the anchorage and he had motored the whole way and we sailed.

So ends June with Polyphonic and crew sailing approximately 340 miles from the southwest corner of Puerto Rico to the active volcanic island of Montserrat just 20 miles south of Antigua.