



By Captain Jean Levine

Chapter 9 November Cruising Log

November starts off in Anse Mitan, Martinique with a forecast of southeasterly winds for a few more days, so Sunday we top up the fuel, swing the dinghy on deck and set sail for St. Pierre. We had a lovely jib only sail for 15 miles, from the bay all along the west coast until we were just shy of the village of St. Pierre where the wind faded in the lee of 5000 ft Mt Pelee. Jeff fired up the engine and we motored up to the coast and dropped the hook just off the town dock, the water was so clear I could see the anchor hit the bottom. The anchorage gets no wind and can be uncomfortable if the sea swells are wrapping around the end of the island, lucky for us, it was flat and we both got a good nights sleep. The next day would be a long haul since we had plans to sail to the northern tip of Dominica about 60 miles. We left around 7:30am and motor sailed until we cleared the lee of Mt Pelee then the wind came up around 15 to 20 knots and as we sailed across the open seas (between Martinique and Dominica which are open ocean until Africa) the wind gusted 25 to 30 knots. Polyphonic was in her element, before long we were passing another sail boat that had left 2 hours before us, power reaching at 9.2 knots with a reefed jib and mizzen we blasted past the other boat like they were standing still. That was exhilarating! The seas were lumpy, Sarge got the Catnip treatment and I was wearing my electric shock bracelet so there were no cases of seasickness reported, all in all it was a glorious day, once again we almost made it all the way to the anchorage before having to resort to turning on the motor. We arrived in Portsmouth in time to have our friend and Indian River Guide, Raymond over for cocktails. It was interesting talking local politics and getting the working mans point of view of how to improve island life. We had hoped to do some more sightseeing on Dominica but our time was running short before guests would join us and we had to get up to Guadeloupe, so we said our goodbyes and only spent the night. Early the next morning we set sail for Isle Des Saints by now the wind had shifted to a northeasterly heading and we were hard on the wind. It was only about 20 miles to Isle Des Saints so after a few tacks we were anchoring in our spot behind Isle Cabrits. Since it was a short day we had time for a snorkel in the heat of the afternoon and we get to add a few more odd creatures to our fish list. A sea snake, a black crab with little tiny legs that moves sideways with a flounder following him and what we later found out is called a Sand Diver (a brown and yellow fish that lays on the bottom in the sand and arches his back.) We had been alone all afternoon, but just before sunset three boats came and anchored beside us, the young Captains came over and explained they were on Charter with a youth group and that they may be a bit noisy, but Jeff and I gave our blessing and off they went. Soon after they had swum and paddled there way ashore it began to rain on the party, so they never did make any noise. Early the next morning they were off on a race, the three boats sailed off their anchors and off they went. We were off too, on our way to Deshaies, at first we had a romp across from the Saints to Point Vieux lighthouse. Once around the end of the island the wind died, and then came



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up out of the west, which is very odd. Jeff and I suspect a possible storm to the west of us so we will tune in to the weather this afternoon and see what is happening. About 8 miles south of Deshaies the wind shifted North and we had to motor, so we decided to take a detour and check out the moorings at Isle de Pigeon part of Jacques Cousteau's Marine Park. As we were circling the island I spotted a couple of "Head Boats" taking the guests right up along the rocks surrounding the island, yikes! Lets hope the never have engine trouble. On closer inspection we decided that the moorings provided must be for dinghy's only since they all looked way to close to the island for Polyphonic, so on we went to Deshaies. We had five days before Ricci and Steve come to visit so we picked out a spot to anchor that would be out of the way and provide good holding for the Deshaies Blast when the wind blasts through the cut between the two mountain peaks east of the town. We got ourselves anchored just before sunset and decided to wait to clear customs in the morning. The next day we visited customs, the car rental office and the Patisserie for some chocolate croissants. (Pain du Chocolate) Soon after we accomplished those basic chores it started to rain and kept on raining for 5 days. The usually clear water in the anchorage was muddy with run off from the mountain streams that empty into the bay. It was still raining on Monday when we picked up the rental car and drove to the airport to pick up Steve and Ricci so we made the best of it by stopping at the Rhum Museum for a tour and Rum tasting. The rain stopped long enough for us to take a short walk along the beach on the North Coast and Ricci enjoyed putting her feet in the warm Caribbean water. I had planned ahead and had a pot roast cooking in the Slow Cooker so after we watched the sunset on the beach dinner was waiting for us back on the boat. Steve and Ricci unpacked their bags and we had dinner and got a chance to know Ricci. Unfortunately the normally smooth comfortable anchorage in Deshaies was a bit rollee and I loaded my seasick band to Ricci to help her get through the evening. The next morning it was still raining but we didn't let that ruin the trip. First thing in the morning we went to the Patisserie for some breakfast and then decided to go for a drive along the West Coast of the island stopping at all the scenic overlooks. We had a big breakfast so at noon we stopped at another Patisserie for some fresh bread and water bottles to take with us for the hike in the rainforest to the Chutes du Carbet. Although it kept on sprinkling we had a lovely walk in the woods on a paved path right up under the falls. After our walk Jeff was showing signs of needing more than bread and water, so we planned a stop at the Creole Café near the entrance road to the Park. As we were getting back into the car some tiny black finches with red breasts came begging and ate what was left of the bread right out of our hands. It was almost 4pm before we got to the restaurant and we weren't sure what to order (late lunch or early dinner), so Jeff and I shared a Creole Chicken and Steve and Ricci Creole squid, both meals came with salad and desert. It turned out to had been a great idea since by the time we got back to the boat the rolling was worse than the night before and none of us wanted dinner. Jeff and I had been watching a possible cyclone developing over Puerto Rico it seemed to be moving slowly north and east and would miss us. However, the weather system gave



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us 8 days of rain and unusual wind and seas. By Wednesday morning the anchorage was dangerous with sea swells from the southwest sending four-foot waves into the bay. So Steve braved taking me ashore so I could return the rental car, then not without difficulty we hauled up the dinghy gear and pulled up the anchor and headed out to sea. After we got into open water the wind seemed to be from the north (which is where we were thinking of heading) so we turned south for “The Saints”. It was a great choice and Steve and Ricci got to enjoy some sunshine and snorkeling in one of our favorite spots.

By Friday the weather had settled into a more normal pattern and we sailed back to Deshaies where Steve treated us to dinner at our favorite restaurant where the specialty de le Maison are large brochettes served on Sabers. This time I remembered to bring the camera so I got pictures of the great presentation.

Saturday November 15th our guests are halfway though their vacation so we are off to explore yet another island, Antigua. We set sail behind another cruiser New Beginnings and are followed by Serendipity, at first it was a motorboat parade but as we cleared the lee of Guadeloupe we set full sail and off we went leading the pack. After a lovely broad reach to Falmouth Harbor, Antigua about 40 miles north of Deshaies we got the anchor down just in time for it to rain. Jeff waited out the downpour then went into customs with Bob from Serendipity. The customs office and port authority is located in Nelson’s Dockyard in historical English Harbor just a short walk from the anchorage in Falmouth. The fees paid for anchoring are used for maintaining the historical site and providing trash removal etc. The next day (it ‘s still raining) Jeff, Steve, Ricci and I all do the tour around the dockyard and hike to the Fort which guards the entrance to English Harbor. This is where Lord Nelson stayed for almost three years and declared it hell. The harbor although well protected from storms and wind, is a bayou loaded with mangroves and mosquitoes the water muddy; accept near the entrance to the bay. The old sailing ships where Careened here, or in other words they laid the ships over on their sides and scraped and painted the bottom. The island has many protected bays all guarded by a fort on the hilltop with lots of history to explore. Antigua is 108 square miles many of which are open pasture land. The terrain is a combination of rugged hillsides covered with cactus and red rock and rolling green hills, the highest peak is only 1340 feet, which means there is no rainforest and therefore the more desert like conditions, both mongoose and lizards thrive here along with the sea birds. The entire island is surrounded by reefs and great snorkeling and diving, along with Steve and Ricci we explored the rocky entrance to English Harbor and found a huge old 1800’s anchor on the bottom and later found out that the really great spot was just around the corner, called “the Pillars of Hercules”.

Next we hiked to the lookout post overlooking Falmouth Harbor, which completed our stop here in Falmouth. Off we went around the western corner of the island, which is sort of circular in shape, around Cades Reef and half way up the coast to Jolly Harbor. This is a man made Marina Waterfront Home Community with canals intertwined to make for more waterfront home lots. Most of the houses are two story townhouses (\$149,000US starting price) with a dock out back, but there are also single-family homes and still some



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empty lots. One part of the development has a golf course and country club the other has a beautiful white sand beach: in the middle a Marina complex with Super Yacht Terminal, shops and groceries, plus a New Casino and large recreational facility with a big pool, aerobics, tennis and handball courts. Here we found the bargain of the island, the moorings are only \$10US per night and you get to use the pool plus from here you can catch a bus into St John the Capitol for \$2.50EC to get whatever you didn't find here. Ricci and Steve did some souvenir shopping while I picked up some supplies at the local grocery store. The supermarket is in the process of opening a larger store which will be wonderful since the tiny store is stacked to the ceiling with stuff and is so busy you must come with patience to wait to be checked out, its no wonder since they have a nice deli, fresh fruits and veggies plus decent prices. After our short stop here, we head north a little farther up the coast to Deep Bay to snorkel the wreck of the Andes. Just 4 short miles along the coast, the bay is home to the Royal Antiguan Hotel, at the entrance to the bay lies a 3 Masted ship that breaks the surface making for good snorkeling. (Most wrecks are too deep and are better with scuba gear.) We were anchored in the bay before lunch and went out to the wreck as soon as we could. As it turned out, all the rain had churned up the water and visibility was poor, but you could still make out the ship at close range. After snorkeling we had some lunch and went ashore to explore yet another Fort on the hilltop (Fort Barrington) and walk the beautiful beach and hotel grounds of the Royal Antiguan. The hotel which has a beautiful pool and gardens, is nestled with its back to the hills (about 10 stories high) and a lagoon in the front, with the beach over to the side with only vendor huts, water sports shack, and restaurant only open for lunch, keeping the beach clear for guests. Apparently this is "the place to go" because all the day Charter boats from St John bring their guests here. The most fun to watch is the "Jolly Roger" the pirate ship, once they have anchored the guests, may walk the plank into water, or swing out on a rope from a gin pole and drop into the water, or simply board the cattle boat tender to go ashore to walk the beach and buy trinkets from the vendors that magically appear right before the ship arrives. From the Fort on the hilltop you get a great view of the lagoon and the strip of beach, plus a clear view of Montserrat, Redonda, Nevis and even St Kitt's. We made it back to the boat in time to watch the most spectacular "Green Flash" sunset of the whole trip. When the sun hit the horizon the one cloud in the sky lit up bright green and glowed for what seemed like 5 minutes after the sun had set. WOW! During Steve and Ricci's 10-day visit, although the weather could have been better, I think they got a nice sampling of Guadeloupe and Antigua. Jeff and I took them ashore said our goodbyes and used the hotel taxi to get them to the airport, the time just flew by. After our guests departed Jeff and I both felt like sitting still for another day since we had a time schedule during their visit we had been a little rushed so we get to slow back down. We spent a relaxing afternoon watching all the activity on the beach with the boats coming and going and then the next morning we only went back to Jolly Harbor. This time we swam in the pool and took the bus to St John and Jeff won \$15US in the Casino with chips given to us by a hostess. We went looking for a ATM and



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instead this hostess gave us chips to try a new game and Jeff was lucky and also wise when he won, he said “thank you” and cashed in the chips, then we took the bus to St John to find an ATM. The weather was calm and I had been reading the cruising guide and found a spot I thought we should see while the wind was zero. So Sunday Jeff and I head off to Nonsuch Bay and Green Island, which lies behind a long protected reef on the far eastern side of the island. We made certain to arrive when the sun was high so that we could find our way though the reef and I had taken my station on the bow when to my surprise I saw the largest number of jellyfish I have ever seen, there were thousands. Once inside the bay I was disappointed to continue to see lots of jellyfish although not as many as in the pass. We selected a spot to anchor between Bird Island and Green Island about a ¼ mile behind the barrier reef and found only a few other boats around. The wind was calm and that night there was a new moon; the sky was so clear you could see the stars rising with little light from shore it was a fantastic show.

Monday morning the wind was still zero, I was repairing our Ridged Inflatable Dinghy so we pumped up the little blow up dinghy and went off to explore the bay. Jeff took us around the perimeter of the bay, along the shoreline was the exclusive Mill Reef Club Yacht Club, the MACY’s winter home on the hilltop, a few other big beautiful homes, plus Harmony Hall where we stopped and made reservations for lunch on Tuesday. We had spoken to Bob and Sue from Peregrine who told us that lunch at Harmony Hall is on the must do before you die list. (Bring your Credit Card) We completed our tour of the bay exploring the Emerald Cove Resort, which apparently has been under construction for 2 years and still shows no sign of completion. Later we found out that the island has serious water shortages, which has caused a lot of problems in the building of new homes and resorts. Nonsuch Bay is surrounded by high rocky hills with mangroves along the waters edge there is little or no beach but the big attraction is the get away from it all wilderness and the beautiful reef for snorkeling.

Before our big date for lunch I just had to see if we could find “the Devils Bridge” a large coral rock formation that has been carved out by the Atlantic swells located somewhere near the eastern edge of the bay. So Jeff and I equipped with bathing suits and snorkel gear including reef booties set off in the tiny blow up dinghy and in the morning light read our way though the middle reef to a ten foot section of beach where we jumped out and dragged the dinghy up on the beach. From there we head across the next coral cove out to the far tip of the island and there it is “the Devils Bridge”. The coral ledge has been carved out to form a rock span of 100 feet long by 6 feet wide and the waves break and splash underneath and behind the bridge. Cool! After a few photos we hop back in the dinghy and with no jellyfish insight try a little snorkeling along the reef. Pretty soft coral of different colors and brightly colored fish plus a granddaddy lobster with antenna that stuck out 20 inches, speaking of lobster we have to hurry back to the boat we have a lunch date. The restaurant at Harmony Hall is a converted Sugar Mill, a Resort Bed and Breakfast and they provide water taxi service for visiting yachts, we were happy to be picked up. The Resort has one of the few beaches on the bay and the



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launch delivers you to the dock at the beach then you go up a walkway through some lovely plantings with hummingbirds buzzing about until you reach the veranda which overlooks the whole bay, the tables are shaded with umbrellas, decorated with fresh flowers and pottery made by a local artist. The center of the dining area is the old mill tower, which provides a certain ambiance. We were served freshly baked rolls with olive oil and seasoning, then lobster with potatoes in a tarragon cream sauce presented in a mold and laced with a brown sauce and then lobster filled tortellini with a light basil sauce that was out of this world, no skimping on the lobster here. Ricardo the owner checked on each course served and was very proud to tell us that the flour to make the pasta was imported from his home town in Italy and the lobsters were fresh from the bay and after stuffing ourselves we declined dessert but were treated to a special dessert wine also from Italy called “vinchinto”?, it was as smooth as a Sauterne. An all out fine dining treat!

Once we had digested our meal we strolled through the art gallery and the gardens, then went for a swim in the pool and finally were delivered back to our boat by the launch. That was the best Thanksgiving dinner that I can ever imagine.

We got one more day of snorkeling the reef and exploring Green Island before the weather turned on us and we spent a couple of rainy days hiding out reading.

When the weather broke we went back around to Falmouth Harbor for the Nicholson Charter Yacht Show. To say that this is a Charter Yacht Show does not do it justice, this is “The Super and Mega Yacht Show” for brokers who specialize in the Charter industry (booking yachts from say \$35,000 per week to \$200,000 per week). It was the largest number of yachts of this size that Jeff and I have ever seen and a collection of many of the Yachts we have read about in our SHOW BOATS magazine. For instance some of the sailing yachts on display are built by Perini-Navi whose smallest design is 130 ft; 4 or 5 yachts are at least 170ft. Some are classic design schooners like “Windrose” and “Victoria of Strathern” flush lines with lots of varnished teak; some are very modern with satellite dishes looking like a combination of motor yacht and sailing yacht. There are also some of the largest motor yachts that we could even imagine 200 to 350 ft.

Jeff and I were pleased to take part in the pre-show cocktail parties and rub elbows with the crews. Plus we managed to take the hike up to “Shirley Heights” and enjoy the Sunday steel drum band and BBQ overlooking all of English Harbor and Falmouth Harbor at sunset along with the crews able to get away before the show. Once the show really started Jeff and I bailed out and went back around to Jolly Harbor to wait for weather to head to Barbuda.

Before we knew it we had spent a month in Antigua and happy that we did for we found it to be a real jewel.