



Postcards from the Caribbean #8
S/V Polyphonic
Jeff Grossman / Jean Levine
and the cats Sarge & Shadow
Dateline: Mt. Hartman Bay, Grenada

We have sailed 2500 miles and 8 months from home during Postcards #1 to #7. We were fortunate to have left early enough in the year to enjoy the sail down and spend some quality time in the islands.

From mid-August to early October it is known as the “Cape Verde” season, when the worst intensity and highest number of Hurricanes form. As noted in Postcard #7, we’ve chosen to spend Cape Verde season on the south coast of Grenada (pronounced GreeNAYdah). At least 500 boats are here, scattered between four major bays, and several smaller bays and harbors. We’ve selected one in the middle called Mt. Hartman Bay, joining the other cruisers “hunkered down” calling Grenada home for a couple of months.

Irony of ironies, while we’re down here hiding from Hurricanes, my sister and Jean’s parents in Washington D.C. had hurricane Isabel visit and knock out their power for several days, and my Mother experienced the remnants of Hurricane Keith while she was visiting Boston. Guess it pays to head south for the summer!

Grenada is known as the Spice Island and for very good reasons. The variety of spices grown on the island is astonishing, along with a cornucopia of fruits and vegetables. Grenada is one of the two places in the world that grows Nutmeg (Indonesia is the other). We visited the Nutmeg processing plant where everything is still done by hand with wooden tools and racks. It is very labor intensive, but this employs a lot of Grenadians. Cinnamon, Coco, Pimento, Bay, Timeran, and Cloves are just some of the other examples of the local spices. In the colonial days ships would sail for England loaded with spices, and return loaded with bricks for building.

Of all the wonderful sites and adventures we’ve had this year, one of the best experiences has been enjoying the cruising community in the anchorage. It is quite a unique form of “neighborhood”. “Homes” range from 25 footers where the couples are living like camping in a small tent with no amenities, to 64’+ luxury yachts where their biggest problem is she can’t reach the bottom of the freezer to get dinner out. But all share the love of cruising, mingle at the happy hours, and you wouldn’t be able to tell who is from what boat. Everyone looks out for each other (it would be virtually impossible to have an affair) and sounds the alarm if there is trouble on any boat. Talk about a neighborhood watch! We actually do have plenty of privacy since several hundred feet separate each boat ... usually. One morning we awoke to a gentle thud on deck. We dash up and find that our neighbor’s cat had jumped over! On odd bit of wind and current had stretched both boats towards each other to the end of the anchor chains bringing us close enough for Mitsu to make the leap. Jean quickly scooped up Mitsu and tossed her back onto her own boat.

Our community has people from all over the world, but mostly from either the US and Canada, sailing from Florida or Bermuda, or from Europe (mostly England) and South Africa, having



crossed the Atlantic. Another irony, those crossing the Atlantic did it faster, and had smoother voyages (generally), than those of us who beat our way to windward from Florida!

In our community our “telephones” are VHF radios (which defacto are party lines), our “cars” are our dinghies, fresh bread is delivered in the mornings by boat, and we all have waterfront property! There are some humorous hails heard on the VHF. The protocol is that the boat being called is named first and then the calling boat states their name. Now, the hail “Osprey, Serenity” doesn’t raise an eyebrow, but “Dawn, Morning Light” or “Wildflower, Lily”, or “Night Owl, Cheshire Cat” get a chuckle. My favorite was “Calico Clam, Alakazam”.

Sometimes the VHF can be quite exiting. Our single-hander friend John had just sailed in, anchored, and came over to Polyphonic for dinner (remember John from Montserrat Volcano and D.R. Sardines fame). We had just sat down to eat when reports of a boat dragging come over the air. We pop our heads up to see what’s going on when someone hails on the VHF that it is Trinka ... John’s into his dingy and off in a flash. The neighbors had caught Trinka, before she went to the marina by herself, and got her set with more scope and a second anchor.

Sometimes the VHF can be dramatic and sobering. One Saturday morning Jean and I are hanging out below reading when we hear the panicked hail “there’s someone drowning in the cut”. The “cut” usually refers to a place in the next bay over, so we listen as boaters there respond. Our friend, Paul, was one of the first to respond, but in the seconds it took Paul to jump in his dingy, start it and get underway, the person disappeared. Since the person was clearly visible and still very active when the dinghies left their boats, no one had thought to bring snorkel gear. Several cruisers began diving without gear while some stayed with the dinghies and worked the VHF; calling for dive gear, an ambulance to meet them at dock, and alerting the Grenada Coast Guard. Within minutes cruisers had converged with dive gear, he was brought to the surface and CPR started. Not all stories from the Caribbean have happy endings, the medics declared him dead on arrival at the dock. He was a local boy only 14 years old. We can only hope his family takes some solace from the fact that he didn’t die alone, but with the thoughts and prayers of many cruisers working hard to save him.

Whew, life does go on ... and not to be cavalier ... but this postcard is ready for comic relief ... dingy names are fun ... Polyphonic’s dingy is “Monotone”, Sea Witch’s dingy is “Broomstick”, Quietly’s dingy is “Noisy”, and China Cup has a “Rusty Bucket”!

In the anchorage someone is always organizing something (Jean is often a culprit here) Happy hour parties, Hikes in the rainforest, Yoga lessons, BBQs on the beach are examples. A short run by dingy is Hog Island, an uninhabited island with a narrow strip of beach. The only structure on the island is a hut housing Roger’s BBQ and Bar. Roger hosts Sunday afternoon BBQ, Blues bands, jam sessions, volleyball, and general cruiser partying. (For Clearwater friends it’s a weekly “Carlisle classic”). Even though Hog is a fairly large mangrove covered island, amazingly, even though it is summer and the rainy season, the mosquitoes are hardly noticeable. In Florida this time of year you couldn’t be outside without being eaten alive.



At the dingy dock for our Mt. Hartman anchorage is a small resort and an open-air bar known as the Rum Squall. It is the gathering place for the cruisers and many hours are spent here playing dominos, telling sea stories, and enjoying sunset happy hours.

One of the things that Jean organized was Hash House Harrier hiking. The Hash House Harriers is an organization that was formed around 1936 for “Drinkers with a running problem”. Seems a bunch of Brits were spending all of their days drinking at the Hash House Bar in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) so they decided they should get some exercise to at least offset the drinking a little. Locals laid a Trail and the Brits went off crashing their way through the woods trying to follow the trail marked by flour. This idea has now spread through out the British Empire and there are “Hashes” everywhere that was British territory. These days the Trail is marked by bits of paper confetti every 20’ or so. A circle marks forks in the trail and if you pick the wrong fork, you’ll find an X after about four or five trail marks and have to back track. At the circle you can yell “Are You?” and if someone is coming back from the dead end they yell “On Back”, or someone ahead on the right trail will yell “On On”. So the rallying cry for Hashers is “On On”. We did four “hashes” and Jean put out the word with the cruisers so we brought 20 or more cruisers to join the 50 or so locals in running, jogging, walking or strolling through the rainforests. We got to follow little used trails and to see parts of the island that most visitors never get a chance to. Rainforests are aptly named and thus we often ended up very muddy! Due to the history of the first Hash, they always start and finish at a bar. The best part was getting to meet many of the local residents. One of the people we befriended is one of the Harbor Pilots at the main port of St. Georges. We would be boating into the harbor and a passing ship would hail “Polyphonic” and there would be Cindy waving at us.

Another fun thing we did while in Grenada was joining the Grenada Yacht Club for one of their Mount Gay Rum Regattas. This was an “all class” race, which meant, that along with three other monohull cabin boats, there were two trimarans and two dinghies. The Boats ranged in size from 14’ Lasers to our 51’ cruiser. Because of the wide difference in boats we started in staggered fashion with the handicaps factored in to our start times, and therefore the order we finished is the order of success! We gathered our crew of 14 from eight other boats from three different anchorages and joined the fun! We managed to beat two of the other monohulls, but the Tri’s and the dinghies clipped us by a couple minutes giving us a sixth place. We still were awarded a bottle of Mount Gay Rum for participating. The hoot was seeing our name in the Grenada newspaper, The Voice, in an article summarizing the race. Of course, this was saved for our scrapbook!

Grenada has excellent shops, Marine stores and repairs services. It was especially fortunate that the primary mechanic team (Enza Marine) happened to specialize in the very engines and systems we have. Fortunate since while in Grenada the GenSet needed two repairs and the Watermaker died (again) the day before we had planned to leave. This delayed us about a week and a half. At least the watermaker company agreed to replace the expensive part at no cost to us, except the loss of invaluable cruising time.

We had two wonderful bits of serendipity while here. Our friend Sharon, whom we had met on a boat in Luperon, was to our knowledge still on that boat in St. Johns. Turns out she had left the boat in the BVI and had flown to Grenada and was renting a room in a house that happened to overlook our harbor! Her landlady, Inga, was a sailor who came to Grenada and stayed. We spent



many happy hours at Inga's enjoying her hospitality (and playing her grand piano!). Surprise surprise, living next to Inga, also with a view of Polyphonic, was our friend Paul from Clearwater. Paul and his girlfriend Anne had just moved to Grenada and are in the process of purchasing land to build on. Small world, eh!

The Cape Verde season has ended and we have just left Grenada. Anchoring in Mt. Hartman is the longest I have ever had an anchor down in one place, almost eight weeks. Having to clean barnacles and slime off the chain was a unique experience in my sailing career!

We are very sad to leave Grenada, it is a wonderful island, and we could easily move here to retire. But we are looking forward to again visiting the islands from here to the Virgins, and stopping at some of the ones we missed on the way down. We are especially looking forward to meeting up with our friends Steve and Ricci who will be meeting us in Guadeloupe in November and with the "girls", Maryanne, Annie and Petra in Tortolla for New Years. Our next postcard will cover these North bound adventures. Until then, "On On"!