

THE HORNPIPE

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Commodore's Comments

Well, last year at this time, Andy Monjan put me in charge of this year's sailing weather. A few nights ago, Andy and I were talking, and he agreed that I had done a pretty good job with respect to the fair winds. My ticker problem — and a late pulling of the boat for cleaning of the fouled bottom — conspired to keep me from enjoying the breezes and non-scorching temperatures; but I hope you fared much better than I did and got to sail to your heart's content this year.

I hope to see you at the **2005 January Party, to be held at Cynthia and Duncan MacDonald's house on January 15 at 6:30 p.m.** Everyone should bring a side dish, appetizer, or dessert to accompany the main dish and beverages that will be provided by the social committee. Cynthia said that she would get directions out via email to those of us who do not know how to get there.

Steve Foland

Passage to Tortola, 16-25 November 2004

The Boat: *Nai'a*, a Swan 53

The Owners: Bob and Kristin Beltrano — Kristin is my niece. They are both pilots for United Airlines. After keeping the boat in Annapolis since last May, they asked me to join them as they moved the boat to the Caribbean for the winter season.

The Crew: Miguel Ruiz, a charming Spaniard, a delivery skipper with lots of cruising experience, including an Atlantic passage with his wife on a 24-foot sailboat. Paul Lewis, a proper English gentleman with no sailing experience, who formerly restored antique British autos. He and Miguel are now working for Osmatech in Eastport, a firm that specializes in repairing and restoring Swans. They did a good bit of work on *Nai'a* this past season. Paul and Miguel came along as paid crew. And finally, Captain — now "able seaman"? — George (yours truly), on his first ocean passage.

The Plan: Nine days non-stop to Tortola in the British Virgin Islands, about 1500 nautical miles. We would head southeast to pick up the Gulf Stream, cross it, then head for a waypoint southeast of Bermuda before heading due south to ride the trade winds to Tortola.

The Watch Schedule: Four of us stood watch (Kristin served as an outstanding chef underway, in addition to covering a few watches to give us a break here and there). Each of us was on standby for two hours (dressed and available to help the watch officer), then on watch for two hours, then off for four hours. I was concerned initially about having enough to keep me busy. After a few days of this schedule I found that all I wanted to do off watch was eat and sleep. Later in the trip we went to solo watches with six hours off, most of the time.

The Rules: Wear an inflatable life vest and harness whenever leaving the cabin, and hook in whenever reasonable. (All of us but Miguel followed this rule; he said he "felt like a horse" in the harness and "forgot" to wear it whenever he could get away with it). No alcohol underway — we were dry (in this sense) all the way to Tortola.



Waiting out the weather — Blue Water Yachting Center, Hampton

After waiting for several days in the Norfolk area, we finally saw a good weather window opening up, and we headed out at approximately 11 a.m. EST on Tuesday, November 16.

[This and following notes in red type are short e-mail reports filed underway by Captain Bob — AKA Master William Bligh... ;-)] Underway at 1057 EST. Motoring as the wind has died and seas calm. Only fear now is running out of fuel. We only carried enough for 3 days of motoring...need to find wind soon. WWML. William Bligh, Master.

Tuesday, November 16, 2004, at 3:08 PM GMT — Latitude 36° 53.929" N, Longitude 76° 10.439" W

We motorsailed 120 nm to our Gulf Stream entry point in moderate seas and light winds. My first night watch went by without incident — there was enough moonlight that I could pick up much of the horizon.

Wednesday, November 17, 2004, at 3:09 PM GMT — Latitude 35° 25.318" N, Longitude 73° 56.199" W



Under Way

After entering the Gulf Stream at 0800 GMT on Wednesday morning, we continued to motorsail in choppy water with seas mostly 4-6 feet. About sixty miles later we left the Gulf Stream and sailed in moderate breezes. My second night watch was a bit scarier — thick clouds hid the moon and stars, and it was pitch black.

Thursday, November 18, 2004, at 3:17 AM GMT — Latitude 35° 6.488" N, Longitude 72° 0.403" W

Thursday, November 18, 2004, at 3:25 PM GMT — Latitude 34° 33.663" N, Longitude 70° 37.646" W

"Hi Guys. Things are going reasonably well. We are still sailing SE bound, need to turn south soon. Winds are very light and fluky. May have to

motor soon. Put new thermostats in engine; hope that's the fix [engine water temperature had been increasing slowly but steadily for several hours]. Forecast is for nice weather but light winds. Need wind or will have to stop in Bermuda for fuel. We have only 230 miles to Bermuda now. The stop will cost us at least a day and maybe more for weather window. Kbird has a small burn on hand, and is getting seasick, otherwise okay. George is fine, clumsy, but fine. One of our crew, Paul, is sick. Otherwise all is well." Bob

I had a lovely night watch with brilliant stars and partial moonlight.

Friday, November 19, 2004, at 3:26 AM GMT — Latitude 33° 48.769" N, Longitude 69° 16.058" W

Friday, November 19, 2004, at 4:37 PM GMT — Latitude 33° 12.316" N, Longitude 68° 26.999" W

Saturday, November 20, 2004, at 4:38 AM GMT — Latitude 32° 46.108" N, Longitude 66° 30.284" W



St. George's Harbor, Bermuda

We made a very brief stopover in St. George's Harbor, Bermuda, at approximately 32 degrees, 22 minutes N, 64 degrees 40 minutes W. Customs check-in and checkout and fuel fill-up

from 1300-1600 hours local time, in a brief rain shower. Diesel fuel cost just under \$5 a gallon.

Sunday, November 21, 2004, at 4:40 AM GMT — Latitude 31° 33.141" N, Longitude 64° 35.563" W

Monday, November 22, 2004, at 4:41 AM — Latitude 29° 28.598" N, Longitude 64° 34.054" W

Kbird [Kristin] says hi! George says hello. Crew is doing fine. Great day. No wind. Motoring south slow. Very sunny day. Finally in shorts and T-shirts. Hoping for wind before fuel runs out. Very slow trip, looks like arrive now on T-day.

Hi All: George survived his solo night watch, of course the wind came up during, and we were able to make sail and shut the motor. Perfect day so far, partly cloudy, warm, winds perfect at 10-15 knots on the beam. We are rocketing south at 8.5-9.0 knots. Only yelled at George once today so far (0800). Cheers.

I got my first real taste of bioluminescence — as the boat makes its way through the water, it frequently encounters masses of single-celled algae that give off light in reaction to the movement. It's a beautiful sight, on a dark night, to see the trail of "sparks" in our bow wave and wake.

Monday, November 22, 2004, at 4:42 PM GMT Latitude 27° 47.035" N, Longitude 64° 32.029" W

Hi all: We just double reefed the sails as the winds are building. A cold front is scheduled to pass us about midnight with squalls and high winds. George's first taste of combat! His watch is the front passage, but we all decided to stand watch with him for support. Also helps his whimpering. 500 miles to go! This should be last of bad weather.

Tuesday, November 23, 2004, at 4:43 AM GMT — Latitude 26° 21.526" N, Longitude 64° 30.507" W

Front passed behind us to the east, because we've been going so fast south. So, no taste of foul weather for George. Just clear, star filled night sailing in warm, Caribbean air. George alone on deck now. I'm sleepy.

George caught our first fish! This a.m. a 12-pound Mahi jumped our line, George reeled him in, Miquel cut off his head, and Kbird cleaned the evidence — 8 filets! Think we'll have pizza tonight. Wind died this a.m. Perfect day, sunny, warm, calm seas. Motoring — planning arrival in 48 hrs.

Tuesday, November 23, 2004, at 4:45 PM GMT — Latitude 25° 1.998" N, Longitude 64° 35.667" W

Wednesday, November 24, 2004, at 4:46 AM GMT — Latitude 23° 29.296" N, Longitude 64° 29.817" W

Lovely, if sometimes rough, sailing in the ESE trades of 15-25 knots and six-foot seas, sometimes an eight-footer. Our best twenty-four hour distance made good, at 193 nm.

Bob gave me an excellent lesson in steering a Swan, correcting my over-steering and getting me to stand to the side, and not behind the wheel like a rookie. Two large, white birds with long split tails tried to catch a ride on our masthead, about 300 miles out of Tortola. At one point the rest of the crew sighted some whales to our starboard, but by the time I could get up the stairs to take a look all I saw was one tail disappearing into the swells.

I think I saw the green flash at sunset.

Thursday, November 25, 2004, at 4:49 AM GMT — Latitude 20° 47.536" N, Longitude 64° 27.164" W

Concerned about our making Tortola in the daylight Thursday, Kristin asked Bob about trimming the sails. He thought they were fine; she tweaked the genoa and got us another half knot of boat speed while reducing our heel. We flew down to Tortola!

Compared to my trip down the ICW last season, where I was frequently forced to work my way through very thin water, I was impressed to see that at one point the charts showed over 5000 meters of water under our keel, even with the centerboard down (and a draft of 13 feet)!



Land Ho!



Frenchman's Cay Marina, Soper's Hole (West End), Tortola

Friday, November 26, 2004, at 5:00 AM GMT — Latitude 18° 23.962" N, Longitude 64° 43.154" W

Hi all. Arrived safely in Tortola today at 1540 AST. Checked in and legal, washed boat down, parked in Frenchman's Cay Marina, BVI's.

Last 24 hours, rocked and rolled. Strong winds and seas to eight feet, not bad, just roly, most, **except** George and Miquel, got sick. Great day here. Going out looking for turkey as Kbird has done enough cooking. Okay, maybe just Rum. Aloha. Thanks for your support.

We enjoyed a traditional Thanksgiving dinner on the deck at Pusser's in Soper's Hole, then Paul and Miguel packed for their departure Friday morning on an early ferry to St. Thomas and their flight home, while we made plans to visit some of the outstanding cruising stops in the BVI during the next few days.

Exploring the British Virgin Islands, 26-30 November, 2004

Hi Guys: We haven't been able to get online, Internet down here as usual. Will try again tomorrow. Trying to wean off this sat system Taking George to Baths and Bitter End today. Maybe Monkey Point tomorrow.

tack for about three hours up the Sir Francis Drake Passage, into 15-20 knots, to the Baths on the southern end of Virgin Gorda. After picking up a mooring, Kristin and I enjoyed some lovely snorkeling — for a while I followed a small manta (?) ray that was feeding on the bottom.



At the Wheel



Sir Francis Drake Passage

Bob, Kristin, and I stayed on at Frenchman's Cay another day before heading out Saturday to



The Baths, Virgin Gorda

We then headed for North Sound, and picked up a mooring off of the Bitter End Yacht Club. Inside a reef but exposed to cooling breezes, we had a lovely night there. The next morning we sailed over to Guana Island and picked up a mooring at Monkey Point, which offered especially fine snorkeling. Between schools of small fish so thick you couldn't see two feet ahead of you, the sun

shone down on lovely coral and lots of small brilliantly-colored reef fish, and we were surprised to be joined by several large tarpon — two to three feet — cruising among the coral.



Monkey Point, Guana Island

We then headed over to Trellis Bay on Beef Island (the site of the Tortola airstrip), and picked up a mooring for the night, surrounded by several large (fifty to sixty feet) catamarans, and some sea turtles that seemed to enjoy circling our boat. The next morning we headed back to the south side of Tortola and pulled into a slip at the Village Cay Marina in Road Harbor. We found ourselves tying up next to Wild Daisy, another Swan 53 that had been worked on at Osmatech this past summer, and which was to have been our buddy boat on the passage. They decided to leave the Saturday we got to Hampton, and they had a rough passage, with twelve-foot seas and 30-35 knot winds for days south of Bermuda.

At one point Bob introduced me to the owner/operator of BVI Yacht Charters, in Road Town [he had helped them get an emergency repair done on a Sunday last year]. I talked with him about possible charters next year, and checked out a few of his boats. I'd recommend his operation to anyone, and Tortola is an excellent charter base. He came by to see us off Tuesday morning.

Kristin and I flew out of Tortola Tuesday — she was headed for JFK to work a NY-Tokyo-Singapore trip Wednesday. I really enjoyed the flight to San Juan on the Cape Air Cessna 420, an eight-seater that gave us drop-dead views of Tortola

and St. Thomas as we cruised over gorgeous water and several other lovely islands under the usual puffy white clouds and blue sky. My flight back was uneventful but delayed out of Miami. I got home at 1 a.m. Wednesday, leaving behind the 80-degree weather, pleasant trade winds, and gorgeous surroundings. But I do have a tentative invitation to make the passage back to Annapolis with them next spring....

Captain George Alberts

Menhaden Matter

Many environmentalists are not aware that menhaden are filter feeders and play an important role in helping to clean the bay. There is much less information in the news about menhaden and the role they play compared to articles about oysters.

My wife and I became aware of the menhaden issue when we sailed into Reedville, Virginia, more than 20 years ago and saw the large fish processing plants there. According to the website menhadenmatter.org, menhaden are being overfished in Virginia. Unlike Maryland, Virginia apparently has no limits on the menhaden fishery. For people who want to clean up the bay, taking action on this front seems like a no-brainer.

Ed Sabin

THANKS TO ALL OF YOU WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THIS AND PAST ISSUES OF THE HORNPIPE. WE HAVE FOUND THESE STORIES MOST ENTERTAINING. WITHOUT YOUR STORIES AND INFORMATIVE ARTICLES, HOWEVER, WE WILL HAVE VERY LITTLE TO REPORT IN OUR UPCOMING NEWSLETTERS, SO PLEASE KEEP SENDING IN YOUR ARTICLES.

