



# THE SIDE BAR

Newsletter of the Martin County Bar Association

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## THE SIDE BAR NEWSLETTER

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If you have an article, opinion, news or other information for publication in the *SideBar*, please call (772) 220-8018 or email information to: martincountybarassociation@msn.com

The due date for all advertisements, articles and announcements is the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month preceding publication.

## *THE ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME - Part II* *St. Thomas to Margarita & Back*

We spent October, 1993 to April, 1994 in St. Thomas, USVI, working to build up the cruising kitty. We headed "down island" (as it's called by locals) from St. Thomas April 10, 1994, and made it to Margarita Island, Venezuela, about July 22. Our first stop was St. John, then on to Jost Van Dyke in the British Virgins. Jost has a very pleasant anchorage (no roll, little wind) so we decided to stay for a few days. That was cut short when our voltage regulator developed an internal short and caught fire. Luckily, it only destroyed itself. I called the Seattle manufacturer and had the replacement express mailed to St. John because the post office on Jost (yes, there is one) said it would take 3 weeks if mailed there due to customs clearances. So back to St. John we went. Amazingly, the part arrived in less than 24 hours. Meanwhile, one of our bilge pumps failed, so I took the ferry to Red Hook, St. Thomas, to get a replacement.



Barbara Kreitz Cook  
2018-19 President

After replacing the regulator and the bilge pump, we strolled through the British Virgins: Norman Island (where we discovered and repaired a tear in our mainsail with my trusty old sewing machine, and Apollo, the Rottweiler, ate a goat), Coopers Island (where our battery master switch failed), Virgin Gorda (where we were able to find a replacement), and finally Bitter End. We waited for a good weather window to beat the 70 miles to St. Martin. In the pass on the way out, we ran over a lobster trap with our trolling line. When we backtracked to retrieve the trolling line with its jig, we got the lobster trap line fowled in our drive shaft...which stalled the engine. We were under engine power as well as sail because, with the swift current against us, we were only able to make 1 knot under sail alone. Unable to clear the drive shaft while drifting toward the reef, we

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## MCBA 2018 - 2019 Executive Board:

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sailed back to a suitable place to anchor and spent the next 2 hours working on the drive shaft. By then, most of the day was shot, so we went back to Bitter End and got a fresh start the next day. We arrived in St. Martin, French side, the next afternoon about 3 p.m. We were headed for the Dutch side, but I misplaced a digit for the GPS waypoint (no chart plotters back then!), an almost fatal error. Luckily, it was daybreak when we passed very close to Anguilla and I found my error. The weather window wasn't as favorable as we had hoped . . . it took us 21 hours to tack the 70 miles. So we were pretty tired, and Apollo really had to go to the bathroom! The next day we went around to the Dutch side and entered Simpson Bay Lagoon, a delightful lake-like lagoon. While there, we called the manufacturer of our wind generator to ship a new propeller, which lost a blade in the Bahamas during a storm. It took a month to arrive. Though we paid for air mail, and it was shipped from Arizona to California by air, it was shipped by sea from California to St. Martin via the Panama Canal!



Cruising sailors say that sailing is an experience of either sheer boredom or stark terror, and that cruising is fixing one's boat in different ports. So, in between the boredom of waiting for the prop we experienced the stark terror of having our steering fail. The steering quadrant parted from the rudder because two bolts broke and the nuts holding the other two bolts worked loose. Steering fixed, we left St. Martin about June 1 and moved with just overnight stops through St. Barts, St. Kitts, Nevis, and Montserrat. We had an exciting sail to Guadeloupe in 20-30 knots hard on the wind, and anchored first in Deshayes. We found that island delightful, especially the French bakeries, friendly people, and level of civilization. We leisurely port-hopped along the leeward coast, and had a great time until we approached The Saints, a group of islands about 10 miles southeast of Guadeloupe. About a mile from the narrow mountainous entrance to the anchorage, our engine died (dirty fuel). With erratic mountain winds, it took us 3 hours to tack through the entrance and get to anchorable water without crashing into docks, rocks, or other boats. Denny, who doesn't know how to sail, was amazed at this real world introduction to sailing. We stayed in The Saints for a week: to pump out, filter and return the clean 40 gallons to the tank, to repair a torn sail, have some more baguettes and do some diving. Next island was Dominica, where there were lots of people living in shacks without sanitary facilities and rastas doing drugs and acting psycho. We

loved Martinique, known as "Paris of the Caribbean" in the 1500's, for its French pastries and high level of civilization (as measured by toilets, condos, medical care, and supermarkets) We visited the ruins of the Mt. Pelee volcanic eruption in the 1700's. The ruins remain; the town has just built new homes behind and attached to the remaining walls, like a Potemkin village!

Martinique is the island where sailors "turn the corner". From Florida to Martinique, the heading is directly into the prevailing ESE wind, and motor sailing is the only way to make a destination

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*THE ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME - Part II*

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by nightfall. After Martinique, the heading is SW, and sailing is delightful with the wind aft the beam. We stayed in St. Lucia only 2 days in a deserted anchorage because St. Lucia will not let non-native dogs on shore. We also bypassed St. Vincent for the same reason. We stayed in Bequia, the first of the Grenadine Islands, for a week because it was small enough that we didn't get hassled for the dog. St. Vincent is where we started getting fish again: we caught a 22 pound Wahoo while trolling past the island. We were very disappointed at how few and how small the fish were in the Caribbean outside of the Bahamas. The only difference is that there's no commercial netting allowed in the Bahamas. From Bequia, we went to Canoun, the next of the Grenadine Islands and purported to have great diving. However, as with fishing, nothing we saw

throughout the Grenadines except the Tobago Cays comes close to the Bahamas in clarity of water and color and extent of the reefs and reef life. On the way to Grenada we encountered a tuna feeding frenzy, like water in a washing machine, the sea churning with thousands of big fish feeding on little fish and the air, too, boiling with many birds feeding on the little fish. What excitement!

In Grenada, the spice island, we had over-the-air television, and watched live (and first learned of) the police chasing OJ in the white bronco. From Grenada we went to Testigos, the first of the Venezuelan Islands, and about 90 miles from Grenada. Los Testigos is a group of about 4 small islands, barely inhabited, exclusively by fishermen. The water there was very clear, diving was pretty good, fish plentiful: it met our criteria for a week stay. We arrived in Margarita Island, about 40 miles away, July 22. On the way we had the companionship of a whale for about an hour. It was about 40 feet long, we guessed it was young because it was narrower than the boat. It swam alongside of us, pacing our speed, about 10 feet away! After an hour, the whale swam under the boat, gave us a good bump and departed at full speed.



As we approached Margarita Island, we thought we were back in Miami: condos line the coast, the center of town was full of shops with Nikes, Ralph Lauren, large department stores and major supermarkets! The prices there were unreal: diesel fuel 7 cents a gallon; fresh oysters 75 cents a dozen; dinner at a nice restaurant about \$6US. Margarita is where rich Venezuelans go on vacation, so it doesn't have the economic, political, or security problems of the mainland. Scott flew in for a vacation, and we sailed back and dove on the Testigos, then circumnavigated Margarita, and gathered sacks of clams on the beach. It was a good anchorage for Denny to stay when Scott

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and I returned to Florida for both of us to finish law school. I was supposed to return to Margarita in December after graduation to finish our circumnavigation of the Caribbean. However, after our dinghy was stolen in November, Denny sailed back to St. Thomas on his own to begin work again. And this was the guy who didn't know how to sail! The winds and seas were aft the beam and consistently 10-15 knots, so he put up the main and jib and never changed the sail trim the entire 390 miles until he dropped the anchor again in St. Thomas.

I graduated law school, flew back to St. Thomas Christmas Eve, 1994, and worked there as an associate attorney, pending passing the USVI bar (as well as the Florida bar, with both exams a day apart). We decided to stay in St. Thomas for 1995, which turned out to be a very active hurricane year. Cruisers know that anchors do not hold and the best way for the boat to survive a hurricane is beached and tied to trees, preferably mangrove trees, whose roots and branches act like springs to stabilize the boat in strong winds. We took Full Moon to Vieques, Puerto Rico with other cruisers for Iris. A



week later Luis arrived. On September 14th, hurricane Marilyn, the third such tropical cyclone in roughly a two-week time span and the most powerful hurricane to strike the Virgin Islands since Hurricane Hugo of 1989, made a direct hit on St. Thomas. We took Full Moon to a key-hole anchorage on St. John, along with 32 other cruisers, beached her beam to the shoreline and tied to the adjacent mangrove trees using 600 feet of 3/4 inch line cut in 50-foot sections. Winds in excess of 110 mph blew from 8 pm until 4 in the morning. We survived with only a broken stanchion!

Sincerely,

*Barbara A. Kreitz Cook*

Barbara A. Kreitz Cook  
President

