

Log of Bluebird
Atlantic Circumnavigation 2005-2006

6/16/2005

Rockland, Maine

blessing the boats

(at St. Mary's)
may the tide
that is entering even now
the lip of our understanding
carry you out
beyond the face of fear
may you kiss
the wind then turn from it
certain that it will
love you back may you
open your eyes to water
water waving forever
and may you in your innocence
sail through this to that

by Lucille Clifton

from Blessing the Boats: New and Selected Poems 1988-2000

6/19/2002

Bluebird at sea, Penobscot Bay, heading south. All's well.

6/21/2005

After two nights, we all have our sea legs. We have had fair winds and have made steady progress. Everything seems to be working. We have rounded Cape Sable of Nova Scotia and are headed for the Gulf Stream.

6/22/2005

19:25:46 GMT 41° 56.44' N 63° 47.70' W A lovely day- spinnaker up since 6 AM, warm steady SW wind blowing us towards the Gulf Stream, which we should reach late tomorrow. Many dolphins today, and a very large (? 70 ft.) finback whale and calf breached around us 4 times.

6/25/2005

We are approaching the Gulf Stream- weather getting muggy and squally.

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6/25/2005

Hello Dear Ones I've just come off watch, it's 12:30am. The sails are reefed for 20k winds, its warm and Bluebird is slicing through the night.

Moon not up yet. Its inky black but the phosphorescence lights up the waves and spray.

It is quite magical. Jan

6/28/2005

Our progress slower today in lighter shifty winds. But it's warmer.

We saw ships in the night: we have seen at least one large tanker or container ship a day. Sometimes I think they've changed course to check us out a little.

Some are quite chatty on the radio, others ignore our calls. We are also traveling with two other sailboats, both bound for the Azores: Bear on South Portland, one couple on board, a day or so ahead of us, and Reveille, of Boston, 3-4 days behind us.

Good moral support.

6/29/2005

16:49:01 GMT 41° 04.59' N 43° 14.21' W Calm day to take showers and dry damp gear. Sun is finally with us but so are the fluky winds so the spinnaker is pulling us along.

Two days ago we had 10 to 15 foot seas and 20k winds. The wind Goddess has her surprises as God sends his graces.

7/2/2005

We are 150 nm from Flores-progress has slowed as we're in the Azores High, with much lighter winds. Hopeful of arriving in a day or two.

We have seen at least one large tanker or container ship a day. They usually respond to our radio calls and are sometimes quite chatty.

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We are also traveling with other sailing vessels, a day or so behind Bear of South Portland, a week ahead of Indra of Round Pond, and Reveille of Mass. We talk daily to Herb of Southbound II for weather updates.

Wildlife: a small turtle floated by, ?loggerhead. No fish caught yet.

Other events: studying star charts, finding new (to us) constellations. Jan located Corona Borealis using Dorcas Miller's excellent star guide.

Gust and the crew- 39° 16.57' N 34° 22.99' W

7/4/2005

We are here Monday July 4th. Beautiful Flores!

We have had many adventures since arriving, like the dingy not working because of a broken valve, but we have met many great and interesting people already. Trying to learn Portuguese--fast with tapes we listened to while sailing.

7/10/2005

Bluebird setting to sea for overnight passage to Horta, leaving the flowers and black volcanic sand of Flores. Met many people here--sailors from England, France and Germany, as well as Canada and USA.

Many couples with young children who have been cruising for 2-3 years. All with great tales to tell.

We enjoyed the food here- limpits, octopus, fresh fish, as well as the local pork and beef. Wine is very good and very cheap. Dinners start at 8pm at earliest, often went to midnight, ending with aguardiente (a brandy) or grappa (white, clear, very strong). The people here are so friendly! They want us to stay for their "emmigrant" festival next week--returning islanders from abroad, mostly USA. More details from Horta.

7/12/2005

Greetings- just a quick report from an internet cafe. We can't seem to get our wireless systems working from the boat (other than Skymate).

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We had a pleasant overnight sail here, and are now berthed in a marina for the first time. This means that it is quite calm, and that we have plenty of water and electricity hookup to charge our batteries.

The biggest advantage is that we can all come and go as we please, without having to dinghy in to the shore. We are rafted up to another boat, as the marina is full. There are over a hundred boats here (as opposed to about 10 in Flores)- from America, Canada, France, Holland, Italy, Norway...

In the course of a day, we are (at least trying) to speak Portuguese (falling back on Spanish works most of the time) German and French. Most cruisers actually are young to middle aged, many with children, even babies, aboard. Many have been sailing for 2-3 years. All seem to have shore lives that they eventually plan on going back to. We've heard many tales...

Life here: most chores (shopping, repairs, etc.) get done between 9 and 11 AM, then everyone disappears until about 3 PM. Another little period of work in the afternoon.

In the evening, people start to appear on the walks around the harbor. The earliest you can even think about supper is 8 PM, and that's considered early.

We walked around last night at about midnight, families and children are still enjoying the cool breezes in the park.

Food: we continue to explore local delicacies, last night broiled squid, shrimp, meat broiled with fruit. You never ask for salt, pepper, etc, this would insult the cook. Main course is preceded by garlic-grilled fresh bread, 2-3 cheeses, olives, sometimes tibits of sausage or cured ham.

Meals always end with espresso, but it doesn't seem to keep us awake. Now that we've gotten our land legs, we are going to take the ferry across to the Island of Pico, which has the tallest mountain in Portugal, an almost-extinct volcano.

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7/14/2005

Hello! in the old days, sailors searched for food, water, maybe diesel; now we search for wireless connections.

I'm sitting on the seawall overlooking the harbor, with 6000+ foot Pico, a volcanic mountain, looming up across the bay. And here I find a wireless hot spot!

The seawall is covered with hundreds of paintings commemorating boats that have passed through. Jan is working on ours.

Some observations about Flores and Faial: these are very agricultural islands. Everyone has a garden, and in addition to the usual produce, they grow pineapples, bananas, even tea.

They love their animals, especially the cows, which move from terrace to terrace, often herded through the streets by the Azorian cattle dogs- very muscular, short haired dogs with cropped ears and tails, square-muzzled faces. All work. Pigs are also pampered and have nice lives until the inevitable end... Some goats are about, mainly for cheese production. Very few sheep.

Winds have been blustery from the Northeast, but the marina is snug and protected. We have bought a transformer so that we can hook up shore power and not have to run the engine to charge the batteries.

Our solar panel is also working nicely, giving us 2-3 amps/hour over the course of the day. Water is free as well.

7/18/2005

Miscellaneous log notes: everywhere we've been, people comment on what a great looking boat our Morris 36 Bluebird is. We appreciate the comments very much- but most of all, we've appreciated how safe, stable and sturdy Bluebird is, and how quickly and comfortably she got us across the Atlantic.

We always feel that she is taking care of us, rather than the other way around. So thank you, Chuck Paine, for designing such a functionally and aesthetically pleasing boat; thank you, Morris Yachts, for doing such a

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great job building her; and thank you, Morris Yachts and Ocean Pursuits, and everyone else, for your excellent maintenance.

7/18/2005

Walked the volcanic ash and pumis hills of the most recent creation of Faial's island and the 1957 volcanic eruption, on to the black sand beach and lava rocks, and a hike through the beautiful cedar forest and hydrangea hedgerow fields of northern Faial. Darin, Tony, and Graham made arrangements to hike with Duncan and Ruth and invited Gust and I to join them.

We are greeted at their beautiful home with gorgeous gardens that face the sea and the island of St.Jorge. Robin and Christine join our party of six.

We are treated to a supper, at the top of a field looking to the sea, by our gracious hosts. Good conversation, food, friendship, and the love of nature and her beauty complete our hike and we head back down the mountain-did I mention our 6 doggie companions?-as the sun is setting into the sea and the 3/4 moon is rising behind the caldeira rim.

Thank you to our Faial friends for sharing this beauty with us.

7/20/2005

Greetings- today we finally climbed Pico, the 2351 meter (7800 ft) volcano that we've admired daily, across the bay from Horta on the island of Pico. We joined up with Thomas, a solo Polish sailor en route from the Caribbean to the med.

We got up at 6AM (still dark here) to take the early ferry to the island of Pico. It was raining lightly, but clearing.

In Pico, we got a ride to the trail head, only 1500 meters to go! The climb is very dramatic, up a 40 degree slope of lava and pumice, past small caldera cones, all covered with pink mountain thyme and red-blossomed heather.

After 3 hours we reached the large central crater, about 30 meters deep and 300 meters across. We reached Little Pico, the 70 meter cone, just as the sun came out of the clouds.

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Beautiful! It is the highest point in all of the Azores and all of Portugal, with great views of the surrounding islands.

We had lunch sitting on top of a steaming fumerole- the volcano is dormant but not extinct! The trip down was quicker, with a death- defying ride in a taxi back to the ferry.

We are now recovering back on Bluebird.

7/21/2005

Notes from the cruise: besides standing watch and sleeping, we all spent a lot of time reading, each going through 3-4 books on the trip across. We all thought *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini, an incredible book, and recommend it to everyone. It is a tale of growing up in Afghanistan and America, but above all a novel of life- very powerful. Other favorites for me where *Acts of Faith* by Phil Caputo, and *The Things They Carried*, by Tim O'Brien, a Viet Nam war memoir.

As the mood struck, and as we remembered references, we occasionally pulled out sailing classics- *Moby Dick*, *Lord Jim*, for reading aloud. At most marinas, there are book swaps.

If we don't find an English-language bookstore in Punta Delgado, we'll be desperate on the three week crossing to St. Lucia in November.

Hopefully Harry will bring us a care package! Music: in our preparations for the trip, we recorded a lot onto our iPod, but neglected to get speakers or any external listening devise, other than the headphones.

So the only music we could all listen to at the same time was Bob Lovelace's *Hold on Tight*, which he gave us as we were leaving- fortunately it is pretty good! Thank you, Bob!

We have been talking about leaving Horta for days now but I think we are getting close- we are planning on leaving tomorrow for the next island, Sao Jorge (St. George), town of Vila das Velas.

Of course, it depends on the weather...

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7/27/2005

Today will be our 3rd day in Angra, but before we arrived here, we were on the island of Sao Jorge, first the town of Vela and the next day Calheta. While in Vela we were asked to join a flotilla/race of boats to Calheta 10 miles away.

It was Calheta's festival weekend and this was part of the events. We arrived at a port big enough to anchor one boat or tie up against the cement wall so with a rolling, windy, crashing sea around us we choose to anchor.

We had entered the playground of the community and it's festival. Daring water skiers, sailboard kite fliers, and rock climbing cable launching along with chamber music and tents with assortments of Azorean foods filled our senses to the extreme.

We were invited to join the group of sailors who raced for a dinner and award ceremony, taking a prize back with us for crossing the finish line first! Around 11:00pm the main street was lined up with people waiting for a parade.

We were delighted, as we had no idea what this parade was about, to see school children from the islands schools singing and dancing, dressed in costumes, filling the street with music.

Their teachers and parents followed with them and each community had a band to accompany the children. The parade ended around 1:00AM!

A professional group of musicians entertained the festival goers with traditional Portuguese music until 3:00AM and then the music changed to new age hard core rock and roll until 7:00AM (yes, that is 7:00Am in the morning!) What Spirit these communities have, to honor their children and their education along with the festivities of their heritage combining the young and the old. Needless to say Gust and I got little sleep as the music took place on the waterfront.

We left the anchorage after a few hours sleep as the wind was changing direction making it impossible to stay there. We want to thank the communities of Sao Jorge for treating us to a wonderful celebration.

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8/7/2005

I wanted to let everyone know that Jan's mom, Catherine McCormick Parke, died yesterday at the age of 93. She had declined in the last few weeks, after having suffered a hip fracture.

Jan was able to be there with her in New Mexico, along with her family. Jan describes her death as a blessed release from her suffering.

I never got to meet Kay, as she was called by her friends, but know from Jan's stories that she was a great spirit and a brave traveler. She is off onto her next voyage.

Jan will be rejoining our own voyage next Sunday, on the island of Terceira in the Azores.

8/9/2005

Greetings from Angra, Terceira Islands, Azores. While waiting for Jan to return, I've polished the boat, fixed everything that needed fixing, touched up the woodwork, and in short have been running out of things to stay busy with.

Today on my morning run along the breakwater, I met a fellow who was getting ready to go out on the water, loaded with diving and fish-spearing gear. It turned out that he is a marine biology/ichthyology professor at the University of the Azores, named Joao Pedro.

He earned his PhD in England, so language was not a problem. He invited me along; he was involved with a project that involved monitoring juvenile groupers, which live in large cave nurseries underwater.

We went by inflatable back to Bluebird, where I got my snorkeling gear and wet suit. Manuel, the boat operator, took us along the cliffs of Terceira to a series of underwater lava flows, riddled with caves and holes.

Joao prefers to do his research free diving (wet suit and lead weights, but no air tanks); he was able to easily dive 30-40 feet down, enter a cave, spear a grouper, and come back up on one breath, while I mostly watched from 10 feet below the surface (although I didn't have weights, so couldn't overcome the buoyancy. So I've learned a lot about fish in the Azores: this

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is a convergence point for tropical fish from both the Caribbean and from Africa, as well as the North Atlantic.

Because of the Gulf Stream and the Azores Current, its local branch, the water is much warmer than you'd expect for this latitude. Today we saw parrot fish and clown fish, normally associated with Caribbean reefs.

We also saw a barracuda, which we've also actually seen right in the marina. Moray eels.

All this in waters that also have sperm whales and even the occasional stray orca. Joao has a very interesting life.

He was born in Macao, a former Portuguese colony that is now part of China. His father was a doctor in the Portuguese Air Force, so they lived in many of Portugal's former colonies (Mozambique, Angola, Cape Verde Islands).

He has been diving all his life, doing research around the world. He spends May-Sept.

in the Azores, then goes to warmer climes- his project for this winter will take him to both the Amazon Basin in Brazil, and to Mozambique. He is also part of an ongoing multinational study of fisheries in Viet Nam and Indonesia.

Anyway, my personal fishing jinx didn't affect the expedition at all. Joao easily speared juvenile groupers at each of his sites- they were to be weighed and measured, with particular attention to their livers and gonads.

Meanwhile, while we were in the water, Manuel was happily hauling in dozens of small silvery fish (looked like mackerels of some type). Were they for research also?

"No, these are for supper!"

8/15/2005

After many hours/days? I have just put my feet on Bluebirds decks.

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My Sweet Gust was at the airport waiting with a taxi to whisk me away. It is 2:30am.

I met the the nicest people, the first were from...

Albuquerque! Small world over and over again I am amazed at the human connection.

8/18/2005

Today we arrive on the island of Sao Miguel, leaving behind Terceira under a full moon. We motor the 88 miles as there is no wind.

The port of Angra has been our home for 24 days. The wonderful people of Angra gave their friendship and unconditional kindness, making arrangements for me to return to the States to be with my family for my moms passing.

We will miss the hourly ringing of the bells of the beautiful blue Church of Mercy that stands as a sentry over the harbor's clear waters and welcomes all to her city. Angra's many open air cafes and restaurants gave us respite each day as we walked the lava cobblestone streets lined with white washed, red tiled residences and businesses intermingled to create the neighborhoods of Angra.

Jan

8/26/2005

Greetings! We have been driving around Sao Miguel with our friends David and Susan. Like all the islands, there is much evidence of volcanic activity. Besides the usual cones and calderas, Sao Miguel has many hot springs and thermal vents.

At the town of Fornas, we swam in a pool of hot spring water, very rich in minerals (especially iron). By a nearby lake, there were bubbling sulfuric springs and mud pots.

A local specialty is called "Cozido das Casdeiras"- a clay pot is buried in the mud of the hot spring and cooked all day- usually a mix of beef and vegetables. The best thermal spring is at Ferreira- we walked down a cliff to a spot where lava had flowed into the ocean, forming a natural pool. A

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hot spring enters at the bottom, warming the ocean water to a very comfortable temperature. The fish seemed to like it as well.

Other volcanic curiosities: an island off the town of Vila Franca, actually a drowned volcano- the cone rises out of the water but channels enter from the ocean. The interior is a beautiful warm shallow pool of water.

A fisherman takes people out for day trips, so we went out for a picnic. At another caldera, Sete Cidades, there are two lakes, the Blue and the Green, their colors originally because of different mineral and algae concentrations.

Both looked green to us, probably because of an invasive aquatic plant that's taken root. There is a mile-long tunnel cut through the Caldera for an aquaduct, with just enough room to walk. But with no lights; we followed a family with a flashlight through, but found out they weren't coming back. We walked back in the dark- very glad when we emerged on the other side!

Food notes: The local pineapples are delicious. They are grown in greenhouses.

"Steak on a Stone"- a slab of lava is heated in an oven and given to you on a board. You are given your meat raw; you cut slices, cook it on the stone, dip it into sauces.

Octopus: "tastes just like chicken"- actually saltier, very rich. Salt Cod, or Bacalao: The Portuguese really love this. It appears on every menu, usually 4-5 dishes, and every cook is supposed to know 365 ways of cooking it. Supermarkets have 6-10 different grades, sizes, types. I keep trying it, but it hasn't risen to a high place on my list of favorite foods.

There is a big religious festival this weekend, then we will be moving on to Santa Maria and eventually Madeira.

The hurricane hitting Florida does not seem to be affecting us. We are surrounded by a huge area of high pressure (the Bermuda-Azores High) that insulates us from storms.

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8/31/2005

We are departing the friendly shores of the Azores under clear skies and light winds, bound for the Island of Madeira about 500 miles away. We were shocked to hear of the hurricane devastation in New Orleans and send our prayers and thoughts to the people there.

We give our thanks also to the wonderful people of the Azores who were so friendly and helpful, and hope that we get a chance to return again someday. Gust and Jan

9/1/2005

We had set out for Madeira with a good forecast, but found winds on the nose as a low pressure system pushes through (possible remote hurricane effect?) After sailing overnight, we have anchored at Baia de SLorenzo on St. Maria Island.

From the cruising guide: "one of the loveliest anchorages in the entire Azores, with cliffs terraced into a lacing of black lava walls and tiny vineyards where the locally famous 'vinho de cheiro' is produced...fine sea caves and nesting birds...water is exceptionally clear..." Christopher Columbus landed here on his return trip in 1493. We'll stay a few days until the wind improves.

9/4/2005

Just a quick note: broke backstay fitting in squall 150 miles offshore, but jury rigged it and made it safely back to Ponta Delgada, Azores. Will send details soon.

We and the boat are ok.

9/5/2005

We are back in Ponta Delgada due to a backstay problem. it happened where we were close enough to come back and as of today the problem is partially fixed.

At this point we do not know when we will leave as the weather window and repairs will keep us here. That is ok.

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We have met the most wonderful people who are also cruising and have been so helpful in fixing our problem. Gust has sent a quick up date but we will send more info as we head out.

I will email again from the library - it is a 16th century Jesuit college, now taken over by the city and it has not been with the Jesuits for some time. We wonder where the Jesuits have gone since on each island the Jesuits had beautiful buildings of learning taken over by other organizations.

09/12/2005

9/12/2005

Greetings to all- we are into day 4 of our second attempt on reaching Madeira-now about 200nm away, but the wind is on the nose so the distance we still need to travel is longer. We are happy to have left the Azores, with 4 major storms swirling around the Atlantic, collapsing the protective Azores High.

Our own weather has been good, except for the direction of the wind. We have settled into our offshore routines, sleeping in 4-6 hour shifts, reading lots of books and trying to keep up with the never-ending boat maintenance and problem solving.

Right now the water looks deep blue and is 86*; the sky is clear with 360* visibility. Fabulous stars at night; sunrise is late by Maine standards, 7:02AM.

We still see dolphins almost daily and still have our flock of Cory's Shearwaters about. Best to all, G&J

9/14/2005

Safe arrival at Porto Santo, Madeira.

9/15/2005

Greetings from Porto Santo- this is a small dry island about 20 miles from the main island of Madeira. We are sitting under palm trees in the park, while a brass band is playing in the back ground.

We arrived at 3AM, after a six day sail from the Azores. We are anchored off a 2 mile long gold sand beach.

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We don't have many impressions yet, except that people are very friendly. We are about half a mile away from the town, which has the usual red tiled and white washed buildings, a central square with old colonial buildings and palm trees providing shade.

At our anchorage, we met a French woman in her 60's. She is sailing around the Atlantic by herself, in a very small and old boat. The French have a long tradition of solo sailing, and also apparently a long tradition of women sailors- she did not think it was at all unusual that she should be doing her trip by herself. We've also met several young French women who were delivery captains, returning yachts from the Caribbean to the Med.

Other interesting people: after asking about places to eat last night, a man named Miguel drove us to his son's restaurant. Miguel is in his 50's, and fled Portugal in the 1970's to avoid conscription in the Portuguese army, which was at that point engaged in fighting colonialist wars in Portugal's former African colonies. He moved to South Africa, where his son was born. They moved back after democracy was eventually restored in Portugal, but the son is still a South African citizen and has to return there once a year to get his visa renewed. He is trying to get Portuguese citizenship as well, but apparently this is difficult.

The food was excellent- beef and chicken grilled on skewers on a wood fire.

Back to the marina/anchorage- Out of about 40 boats, we are now the only Americans (in the Azores, there were usually quite a few other American and Canadian boats)- apparently most of them headed for the Med, rather than the trip South to the Canaries and the Caribbean. There are still lots of French and Brits, but now we are seeing lots of Norwegians, Swiss, and other Northern Europeans.

Our friends David and Susan aboard Suerte are celebrating "tying the knot" of the Atlantic circumnavigation that they started a year ago. They will continue on to the Canaries and eventually Brazil.

All for now, Gust

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9/21/2005

We are sitting in the boat, still in Porto Santo, waiting out one of the very rare rain showers. The town is getting ready to celebrate their Columbus Week Festival, complete with the arrival of a replica of the Santa Maria.

We are surrounded by Norwegians and Swedes and Danes, who say "Leaf Erickson arrived first, didn't take any gold and didn't leave any diseases"...we are staying neutral. Columbus lived on this island for a few years after marrying the governors' daughter. He also stopped here before going to the Canaries, his actual departure spot in 1492.

The rain is also wetting down the fine golden sand that blows about. The wind supposedly carries sand all the way from Africa, 500 miles away. Food reports: I am enjoying mangos again, a fruit I enjoyed growing up in Venezuela. They have yellow-red skin, rich succulent juicy yellow flesh, somewhat like a cross between a peach and an orange. We have also tried the christophene, a prickly-green pear-sized fruit, tasting somewhat like a cucumber.

We hope to leave for the main island of Madeira tomorrow, weather and wind permitting.

9/22/2005

Anchored Funchal, Madeira, after a nice 45 nm spinnaker run here

9/27/2005

Greetings to All! We are currently in Calheta, a small port about 16 miles from Funchal, the capital city of Madeira.

We anchored in the harbor of Funchal one night as the marina was full with boats rafted up to each other 5 deep. We watched the city come alive with lights, making the steep sloping residential streets look like streaks of light headed to the sky.

The city proper is along the tree lined waterfront with open air cafes and restaurants. A hot air balloon is permanently tethered there to give one a spectacular view of the city.

We left the anchorage the next morning under calm clear blue skies and made our way along the southern coast of Madeira. Here, the mountain

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cliffs going straight to the sea, are the 2nd highest in the world. Madeira has 5000 foot mountain peaks and snow covers the top during their winter.

This mountainous island has engineering achievements ancient and modern. The mountain sides are terraced with gardens that grow grapes, bananas, vegetables, and flowers. The modern road system has miles of tunnels and bridges connecting one coastal town to another avoiding the treacherous winding steep roadways of the interior.

Cable cars are used to get from some of the towns down to the shore. Houses are built into and extending out of the cliff sides. Vertigo is something Madeirans know nothing of! I spent a lot of time holding my breath as we drove to Funchal!

Our present marina sits at the bottom of a cliff side with the 85 degree ocean waters around us. Fresh water comes from the mountain springs and makes its way down via a system of aqueducts called levadas, some built hundreds of years ago to irrigate sugar cane. They make excellent hiking trails now, but continue to be used to bring water down from the hills. Right now grapes are being harvested, rich clusters purple black red and yellow hanging down from the vines.

9/29/2005

Greetings to all-we are leaving for the Canary Islands in the morning. They are about 300 nm away, a 2-3 day sail if all goes well and the winds are as predicted, 15-20K from the NE.

We have enjoyed our stay in the Portuguese islands of the Azores and Madeira, and are eager to see enter Spain now. We have had many on board adventures here, none of them ending with any mishaps.

While we were sailing down the coast, I noticed a Portuguese Navy patrol boat slowly change course and start following us- then, accelerating and taking position directly behind us. They sent an inflatable with 3 sailors over (I was quite afraid they'd board directly from the ship).

The sailors very politely asked if they could come aboard (like we might say no?)- they checked our papers, asked where we had come from (quite surprised at Rockland Maine), then wished us a good trip and were off. While we had nothing we should have been worried about, it's always a

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little unsettling when armed men are on your boat asking questions. However, I feel the same way when we've been boarded by the US Coast Guard. In general, we have to check in with the Maritime Police, Customs and Immigration agents at every port. And the police usually walk the docks with a check list every day. While this is sometimes a bother, I don't think foreign nationals are allowed to enter the USA by boat at all right now.

Other adventures: driving around the hairpin turns up and down the ravines and mountains of Madeira. The smaller roads have room for two very small cars to pass each other- not taking into account cement trucks or buses, especially at the blind curves. The trucks give a warning honk before roaring around. Finally, the growing conditions here are truly astounding, with rich volcanic soil gathered into cliff side terraces, well watered by the aqueducts- warm-weather crops down by the seaside, cool-weather crops higher up. The hillsides are covered with grapes right now.
Gust

10/1/2005

We had a boisterous night with winds over 20 K, a few gusts to 30, but made excellent if somewhat roly time, logging 150 nm, about halfway now to the Canaries. Winds and seas are calmer now and the sun is shining again.

10/2/2005

Safely moored at La Sociedad Harbor, Graciosa Island, off Lanzarote, Canaries, Spain! Only 180 miles to Morocco from here. We had a good passage.

10/11/2005

Greetings from Lanzarote! This is a desert volcanic island that saw its last eruption in 1730. It covered the fertile land of the island with volcanic ash and lava. Grapes are still grown- they dig a pit through the ash, 5-10 ft. diameter, plant the vine, and surround the rim with a stone wall to protect from the wind. Dew trickles down at night.

Water for the population is obtained from desalination plants. Tourism has long ago replaced fishing as the main industry, and condos and high-rise hotels cluster along the prime waterfront spots.

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This is a favorite place for Brits to retire - kind of like Florida for Americans. In the last few days, we've explored the interior, even taking a camel ride up "Fire Mountain" in the Timafaya Nat'l Park. We also explored a 7 km long lava tube cave, "Cueva de los Verdes". Other events: we saw the start of the Transat 650, a 4000 mile solo race in mini-transats (21 ft. long). The race starts in LaRoche France and ends in Bahia Brazil, with a short stop in Lanzarote. There are 70 racers, most of them French, including 4 women.

We got to meet Adam Currier, the lone American. He worked for a bit at Wayfarer in Camden. The boat has no engine, no head, no bunk- they start with a required 100 liters of water, but dump some after the start to lighten the load. These boats can surf at 18K! To follow the race, check:www.minitransat650.com

We will stay here in Lanzarote a day or two longer before sailing to Gran Canaria, about 100nm away. Amber has posted new photos and other info on the website- Cheers, Gust

10/22/2005

Greetings! We've arrived safely in Las Palmas. Getting our bearings around town. More updates once we find land internet access.

11/7/2005

Greetings! Our first report apparently was lost somewhere in cyberspace - maybe this will get through...

We arrived in Las Palmas at dawn about two weeks ago, after an overnight sail from the island of Lanzarote. The city appeared grimy and industrial, sprawling North and South along a strip of coast, and extending inland into the foothills.

The port is quite large, with a steady stream of cargo ships, tankers, Navy ships, pilot boats and tugs entering and leaving at all hours. The sailboat anchorage is tucked into one corner, next to a nice sand beach (although as our cruising guide says, "some would chose not to swim there..").

There are at least 200 sailboats here, either at anchor or in the marina, preparing to make the crossing to either the Caribbean or Brazil. The

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Canary Islands is a perfectly situated jumping off point, just south of the terrible weather tearing across the North Atlantic right now, just North of the trade winds that blow straight to the Caribbean. Columbus left from here.

We have been diligently preparing for the passage, checking all of our systems, getting spares, looking at the weather, talking to the other sailors.

Lots of socializing. We have enjoyed Las Palmas and the island Gran Canario very much. The people are very friendly and pride themselves on their independence (they don't really consider themselves part of Spain, and indeed many have immigrated from South America, Cuba, Morocco and other parts of Africa). The interior is quite diverse: there are deserts in the South; rain, fog and even snow at the mountaintops (over 5000 ft); pine forests, vegetable farms in the valleys.

We are eagerly awaiting the arrival of Harry, his guitar, our mail and spare parts!

11/16/2005

Jan Writes: These are our last days on the Spanish islands of the Canaries and our four weeks in the city of Las Palmas come to an end Sunday when we head to St. Lucia with 200 plus boats. Gust, speaking fluent Spanish, has made friends with our local neighbors on the pontoon, talked with canvas makers, mechanics, shop owners, waiters, car rentals and is greeted with smiles because he is an American speaking the Canarrian language.

I, with my limited Spanish (I wish I had paid more attention to the those classes at MES!) have negotiated food provisioning, a haircut (with many hand gestures!) and a library card (had to present my Irish passport, drivers license, and colored photo ID - what!? for a library card?) The most fun has been the aerobics and spinning classes with Carmen. She does not speak English so we work on the universal language of aerobics. Arleen and Kelly, you would love Carmen and I am so grateful to have both of you for a teacher of body movement. The Techno music is an addition I was a bit hesitant about, and I needed ear plugs some days, but we always had a lot of fun.

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There are many school aged children sailing with their parents, bringing with them curriculum from home. We have met families from the UK, Canada, and Norway. The children have endless ways to entertain each other. There was a dingy water fight-who can try to get the most water in the next boat with everyone getting soaked. The chorus of children's laughter could be heard all over the marina. Local children spend a lot of time in boats and in boating activities. Two Olympic gold medals have been won by Las Palmas young sailors.

So we leave the city and sail South.

Gust Writes: Greetings to all! We are in our last days in Las Palmas, as we focus on a last-minute flurry of repairs, provisioning and preparations. Crewmate Harry arrived safely, bringing his guitar and good energy aboard.

We are now surrounded by about 250 boats, all frantically making the same preparations. People are loading mounds of food, going up and down their masts, furling and unfurling sails, all the while talking, yelling, and cursing in many languages. We have friends now from Finland, Norway, Germany, Spain, and of course the English and Irish...

As many of you know, we have joined a rally called ARC, Atlantic Rally for Cruisers: a way of sailing somewhat in the company of others, keeping in touch by radio and satellite position reports, sharing resources. There is a racing division that is not allowed to use engines; we are in the racer-cruiser division, which allows us to motor but counts against our time if we do.

The ARC maintains a website with lots of information, including daily position reports- check it out at www.worldcruising.com, and follow the links to the ARC. The distance to St. Lucia is roughly 3000 nautical miles. Our probable course will take us to the Cape Verde Islands, a former Portuguese colony off the cost of Africa, due South from here. At that point, we should be in the westerly-blowing trade winds which will take us across the Atlantic. In the old sailing routing, the advise was "go South until the butter melts, then turn right..." We will have our butter out.

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Once in St. Lucia, we will be joined by Harry's wife Laura for a week, then we will be on our own again. In January, I will be starting work at St. Jude's Hospital.

11/21/2005

Jan Writes: Hello All! We are off with an up wind start! We are getting our sea legs-small meals, lots of sleep. It is great having Harry on board. Soon we will be into our routines; this means we read lots of books! Today we still have SW winds which are light so we are motor sailing. We are in fine fiddle and send our love.

11/21/2005

Gust Writes: Greetings! The rally start was spectacular-250 boats going downwind, about half, including us, with spinnakers up.

After getting out of the wind shadow of Gran Canaria, the wind shifted and increased up to 25-30 k- fortunately we saw this coming and were able to get the spin down and sail reefed in time. The first night was rough, winds on the nose in the mid 20's, with gusts up to 35.

Jan was the rock at the helm through the worse of it. At this point, winds are very light but we are making slow headway to the West, away from the coast of Africa. A few boats are in sight which is reassuring. We all have our sea legs now and were able to enjoy Jan's chicken soup. The boat is warm and dry and everything is working. Our progress will be slow for awhile until we get into the trade winds.

11/24/2005

AM Report - Greetings to all- we have enjoyed a great 24 hour sail, finally with favorable winds, cracking 100nm in 24 hours for the first time. Winds continue fair and we are booming along under spinnaker.

We have enjoyed a night of shooting stars and phosphorescent dolphins. Several have written concerned about tropical storm Delta. We are south and east of the danger area and should be able to stay clear. But we will keep close watch. We will be eating roast pork loin, baby Canary potatoes, and stuffing for our Thanksgiving feast, prepared by Chef Jan.

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11/24/2005

PM Report - We are becalmed again. Harry decided to fish and caught a lovely Mahi-Mahi (dolphin-fish or dorado) in about 5 minutes. In another five the fish was in the frying pan with olive oil and garlic. Delicious! Now we just need wind.

11/28/2005

Gust Writes: We've been at sea one week now. Unfortunately, our progress has been slow- we've had periods in which we logged a lot of miles; other times, as now, we sit and wait for the wind.

We have enough fuel to charge our batteries, but not enough to motor long distances. On my watch tonight we logged 4 miles in 4 hours. But the winds will come eventually, and we hope to reach the trade winds by Tuesday or Wednesday. And we are safely past tropical storm Delta, which is slowly dissipating North of us.

We have traveled 765 nautical miles since leaving Las Palmas- only 2000 to go! We are 85 miles from the Cape Verde Islands, 140 miles from Dakar, Senegal.

Wildlife sightings: about 24 frolicking dolphins yesterday, 1 large but slow shark, 1 large dead octopus. This morning we found 2 squids and one flying fish on deck. We didn't eat them; Jan made scrambled eggs and bacon instead. The water temp is now 86. Nights are still a little cool and damp. That's the news...

11/29/2005

After 2 days in the doldrums, we are finally moving again- 7K in brisk NE winds, spinnaker flying. Could we have finally entered the trade winds?

We are just N of the Cape Verde Islands, close enough to think about stopping for lunch! We are seeing some signs of land- a butterfly flew around us this morning. Yesterday, at dawn, Jan reports a white egret landed on the boat, rested for an hour, and then flew off. Harry has been proficient in providing dorados for lunch.

Now that we are moving, we wonder if the fish will rise to the bait. As the water rushes by the boat at night, we dream of fast freight trains, stampeding herds of buffalo, toboggan runs...Cheers

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12/1/2005

We are now in the trade winds, blowing a steady 20-25K towards St. Lucia. We have taken down the spinnaker-too much!-now with reefed main and poled-out reefed jib. It is a little roly but we are used to it.

It has been too fast and rough for fishing, but Harry continues his fishy ways, was pelted by 3 flying fish attacking him in the cockpit last night. One of these days we'll cook them for breakfast ("right", says Jan).

There are 3 sailboats in sight around us, keeping pace. As we move west, we need to start resetting our watches to East Coast time. That's the news!

12/5/2005

Greetings from the high seas! At this point, we have been at sea for over two weeks, have sailed nearly 2000 nm, and are about 1200nm from St. Lucia. We made 154 nm yesterday, and if we can keep this pace up should arrive in 8-9 days.

We are going downwind in brisk trades, and have had "Mad Max", the full spinnaker, up for the last 3 days. At first we were intimidated, but now everyone seems comfortable dealing with him. We hit a top speed of 9.4k this AM, surfing down a wave. Usually our speed is 6-7k.

We are very settled into our offshore routines- standing watch, sleeping, eating together, reading, doing chores (laundry, patching sails, looking for chafe and rigging problems). In the first week, despite physically being ok, we all had to deal psychologically with being so far from shore and not totally panicking, worrying about all the potential disasters.

We all seem more comfortable now. We are seeing new Southern constellations at night, new birds (a forked-tail tropic bird came by this AM). 4 birds have landed on the boat, rested and then flown off. We still have plenty of water, propane, and food, although the fresh stuff is all gone.

The water temp is 90°F, air temp 80's-90's. That's the report.

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12/5/2005

Harry caught a 4.5 foot bull mahi-mahi, or dorado or dolphin-fish. It was a beautiful iridescent blue. It took about an hour to land and in the end we had to take down the spinnaker and stop the boat to be able to get it aboard.

12/7/2005

890 nm to go! all ok on board, making good time in NE trade winds, on a broad reach with reefed jib and main, winds 20K.

12/6/05

A 40 knot squall forced Mad Max down this afternoon. We are sailing along nicely on a reach, looking for a quieter night with reefed jib and mainsail; we are hopeful of going back to the spinnaker tomorrow. Bluebird got a nice freshwater rinse. Cheers from the crew!

12/8/2005

More blustery conditions, winds 20-25K with higher gusts. We are moving along with double-reefed main and staysail. Only 720 nm to go! It is very hot and sunny now.

12/10/2005

Greetings- a cold front had swept down from the US, bringing 3days of winds of 25-30K with higher gusts, occasional squalls. It is finally passing and we expect things to settle down a little.

No more Greek alphabet storms. We are making good progress with double-reefed mainsail and the small staysail jib. We are only 400 nm from St. Lu and expect to arrive by Tuesday.

Today we are all taking showers, whether we need them or not (we are getting a little crusty)! We still have nearly 50 gal of water in our tanks.

We are almost out of diesel but have enough to keep batteries charged and get into port. After 3 days of eating instant meals 3 times a day, this morning Jan made pancakes. We enjoyed them with Skowhegan maple syrup- thank you Sherrie, John, and Iver! Cheers from the crew!

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12/11/2005

Gust and Harry caught a 4ft. wahoo this afternoon. To get it aboard, we had to douse the spinnaker, losing some time. We had a great dinner and Mad Max is flying again!

12/15/2005

Greetings, everybody- we have safely arrived in St. Lucia and are very happy to have arrived safely.

3 weeks is a long time at sea- it is hard to believe that we did it! We are now surrounded by lush green volcanic hills, rain forest, clear blue water.

Jan, Harry and Laura are off biking in the rain forest and swimming under waterfalls; I'm on the boat with various repairs and projects to recover from the trip. They say that the essence of cruising is doing maintenance in paradise.

We are not sure how we've done in the race department- we think we are in the top of our division but we definitely did not win. Handicaps and motoring time still not factored in, and some boats are still finishing.

Cheers, Gust

12/24/2005

Greetings to all! The ARC festivities finally settled down in Rodney Bay, St. Lucia. In the end, after all the adjustments, we ended up 6th in our class of 25 boats, 43rd overall out of 200+.

While we didn't win any awards, we were happy that we arrived safely and in a reasonable amount of time, 21 days for almost 3000 nautical miles. Once we were rested up, we left Rodney Bay and anchored in nearby Marigot Bay- very beautiful but somewhat developed.

We sailed on to Soufriere Bay at the foot of the Piton Mountains- incredibly beautiful peaks, rising out of the water and towering above the bay. The inland areas are lush tropical rainforest- we walked to a small waterfall, heated by thermal activity, for outdoor showers.

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While we were there, a group of Dutch sailors with children arrived, and while swimming, burst out spontaneously in Christmas Carols- we joined them for "I'm dreaming of a white Christmas"...

We stopped for one night at Vieux Forte, the town where I will be working at the hospital. Like all areas in St. Lucia outside of the tourist resorts, it was desperately poor. Open sewers ran through the town, dogs and chickens roamed about, people looked somewhat desperate- even though we had prepared ourselves for this, we were a little shocked.

We talked to the head of the fisherman's cooperative, and he felt it wouldn't be safe to leave Bluebird in the harbor while working at the hospital. So we will have to bring her back to Rodney Bay and then stay in the hospital housing.

In the meantime, we've sailed on to St. Vincent, the next island: it is very wild and undeveloped, dominated by the still somewhat active volcano Suffriere. We stayed one night at Wallilabou Bay, where Pirates of the Caribbean was filmed- the sets are still there with the dock in active use! From there, we've sailed to the island of Bequia- a wonderful spot for sailors, very protected and friendly.

The people here are very active fishermen, have beautiful colorful wooden boats that they build by hand on the beach. They have a whaling tradition here, developed from their historical contact with New England whalers, and are allowed to harvest 4 humpback whales a year from open boats using hand harpoons. Apparently the whaling skills are dying out and last year they did not harvest any- probably the best thing for the whales!

We are missing our families and friends for Christmas. But, today we have been invited by our Norwegian friends for a traditional Scandinavian Christmas Eve on the beach. Tomorrow we will join our English friends and their numerous children for a Christmas lobster broil on the beach. We will only be able to think of snow, fir trees, sledding and skiing, wood fires...

Merry Christmas and Happy New Years to all, Gust and Jan

1/4/2006

We are having our hospital orientation and today Gust begins work. Rich is also working at the hospital and it is good to have him here with us. The

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hospital is very poor as is the area but the people are so kind and friendly. It is going to be an interesting month.

We share a common room and bathroom with 3 other people but have a locked bedroom, and have our meals in the staff cafeteria- like dormitory life all over again! We have been for a lovely walk through the rain forest with another venturesome couple.

1/7/2006

Amber writes: Jan reports via telephone that she spent her birthday scuba diving for the first time in the Caribbean. The colors were amazing and she saw lots of fish and explored the ocean floor.

They celebrated with a big dinner, lots of friends, champagne, and chocolate cake! She also said that the only internet connection is at a beachside cafe where you can lounge in a beach chair, sip a banana shake, bask in the sun, watch the crystal blue ocean - and as an added bonus write home to your family and tell them you really have found paradise and Happy Birthday! Ahhh - the island life...Enjoy

1/14/2006

Greetings from sunny St. Lucia!

This is our second week at St. Jude Hospital, so a report is long overdue: History: The hospital is 3 miles outside of Vieux Forte, a poor fishing/commercial port town at the Southern end of the island, away from the tourist developments in the North. The hospital was first built by the US Army during WWII, in anticipation of receiving casualties from the invasion of North Africa and Italy, this being one of the closest spots in the Americas to the Mediterranean Sea. Apparently, it was supposed to have been built in Trinidad, but, due to a code mix up, the construction crew landed here instead.

In any case, it was never used, as the campaign was over before the hospital was finished. In the 1950's, it was used briefly as a base for tracking Russian communications, but reception was poor and the project abandoned.

In the 1960's, it was acquired and rehabilitated by the Sisters of the Sorrowful Heart as a Catholic charity hospital. They began the tradition of recruiting foreign volunteers. As the number of sisters dwindled, it was

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taken over by the St. Lucia government as one of the two public hospitals on the island. A few sisters are still here and it retains its roots as a Catholic service institution.

Our setting: a sprawling 2 story brick and tile building with multiple wings and outbuildings, breezy open hallways, ward rooms ventilated with fresh air through windows screened against mosquitoes (much less dense compared to Maine in June).

We live in "The Dorm", which we share with the other volunteers. We have our own bedroom, but share a common room, bathroom and showers. The common room has a fridge, hotplate, and small library- just like being in college again. Some nights, it looks like the night before term exams, with everyone is hanging out and reading.

We are in a residential area. Cars cruise by with stereos booming, complementing the music wafting from small neighborhood bars- Country and Western seems as popular as reggae. It does quiet down at night. Goats, cows and ponies are tethered along the roadsides grazing, while chickens and dogs wander about freely.

Exotic flowers grow in the ditches, coconuts tree, mangos and bananas in the vacant lots. At dawn, we wake to a cacophony of roosters, songbirds, and cows that want to be milked.

Our Crew: most of the doctors are local. Most have gone to medical school in Cuba, and appear to have had excellent training there. Others have gone to the University of West Indies in Trinidad. A few are from India or other former English colonies.

After a rotating internship, they progress through in-house training as "house officers", more or less equivalent to residency. Eventually, they can become "registered" and practice independently. To specialize, they have to seek training elsewhere. They have all been friendly and welcoming, and appreciate any updates that we can offer.

The volunteers are a diverse lot, in age, background and experience: Anna, a young dentist from Germany, with Tom and Tom, dentists from Chicago; Mona and Mohamed, medical students from England; Daisy, a third-year pediatrics resident, and Tracy, an ER doc, both from Chicago; Kathy, a

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retired OB/GYN from Idaho, here for a year; Bill, a retired surgeon "promoted" to family practice- he's been here many times and seems to know everyone on the island; Jim, a orthopedic surgeon from Maryland. Most stay about a month, although a few specialist sometimes volunteer for a few weeks. Few people come during the summer.

Our work: The hospital is organized around the usual departments: a walk-in outpatient clinic, ER, surgery, medicine, pediatrics, OB/GYN, orthopedics, dental, as well as clinics for occasional specialist: ENT, urology, psychiatry, etc. The hospital has about a hundred beds, but most seem not to be in active use.

There are 2 operating theaters. The maternity ward is quite busy, with a half dozen deliveries a day. Caesarian Sections are relatively rare- women are attended by midwives and are allowed to labor as long as needed- "Failure to Progress" is a rare diagnosis. Pain control during labor: "Deal with it, girl". The nurses do give good emotional support. Women routinely have 8-9 children.

My own work is primarily in the outpatient clinic. It is amazingly similar to my practice in Skowhegan- the same common complaints and problems, with the occasional more exotic or dramatic disease thrown in. Because of the decreased (but not absent) availability of laboratory tests and x-rays, diagnosis are made clinically and empirically. Just as in Skowhegan, patients are aware and concerned about the costs of tests and medicines, which they usually have to pay out of their own pockets.

There doesn't appear to be a Medicare-type system for the elderly. Many have no pension or retirement plan, and rely on their children for support. As in the US, treatment of chronic diseases (diabetes, heart disease, lung disease) takes up a lot of resources, and long-term management systems would be helpful. In all, patients are very respectful and appreciative, but most of the volunteers would agree that we are getting more out of the experience than the patients are.

Fun: After work, those who can head for "The Reef", a very pleasant beach about 5 miles away. There is a small windsurfing/kite surfing establishment there, with a nice cafe with wireless internet. The local people are here playing basketball, riding ponies down the beach, and generally enjoying the water. I've developed a sideline treating neck and back injuries among

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the surfing instructors in exchange for windsurfing lessons- yes, I'm riding now!

On weekends, we have gone scuba diving, climbed the Piton mountains, and hiked through the rainforest in the center of the island. Tonight, we are being dragged (kicking and screaming) by the younger volunteers to the Karaoke Club- apparently it's very popular with the islanders, and will go on all night- we'll try to slip out early...

Well, that's enough for now. We are very happy to have come here and are again grateful to have this opportunity. Before we arrived we were very apprehensive, even a little afraid, of what we might be getting into- but it has been a great experience. I would encourage any health care professional with some time (a month or more) to consider volunteering here or somewhere else overseas. More information is available from Lucilia at stjudes@candw.lc

Cheers to all, Gust

3/15/2006

Greetings from St. Martin!

This is an island that is half French, half Dutch. We are in Marigot, on the French side. We are experiencing life in a boatyard, as we have hauled out to dry land to paint the bottom, replace zinks, and do other routine maintenance jobs. We are perched on the edge of a canal that empties into Simpson Bay Lagoon.

A bridge opens three times a day, followed by a parade of boats entering and exiting. We have power and water to the boat, and toilets and showers nearby, so living aboard is comfortable. Best of all, there is a reasonable free wireless internet connection, so we can get our mail, read the New York Times, and even listen to Maine Public Radio from the comfort of our boat!

We are surrounded by other boats, all in various stages of repair/disrepair. Some are in the middle of very long term projects: engines removed, storage and shade structures built, some even have small gardens with ripening tomatoes planted. One boat next to us has 3 cats and one dog aboard- the cats are brought out individually once a day for a supervised

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yard stroll, then returned below. The dog seems to be able to come and go and visit the other boatyard dogs. Another boat has a mom, dad and 3 children aboard.

From here, we will sail to the British Virgin Islands, US Virgins, and Spanish Virgins (Culebra and Viquiz) plus a visit to Puerto Rico, before sailing for the Turks and Caicos and Bahama Islands.

3/2/06

Greetings all- we are traveling along: Antigua- this island is a favorite of our English friends. We anchored at English Harbor, headquarters of the British Fleet during the various wars with the French during the 1700's. Nelson became commander here in 1784 after the previous commander accidentally blinded himself with a fork while chasing a cockroach (hard to imagine that scene!).

The harbor is an enclosed hurricane hole- very easy to protect the fleet from both enemies and bad weather. The old fortifications and dockyard buildings have been restored to a working waterfront and the whole area is a national park.

It is a great spot for naval history buffs and Jack Aubrey fans. We were anchored in the outer harbor and enjoyed the parade of beautiful boats entering and departing.

The snorkeling from the boat was excellent. Antigua is also endpoint of many transatlantic races. One of the more unusual: the Atlantic Rowing Race (you though sailing across was hard?). 26 teams (singles, doubles and quads) left La Gomera, Canary Islands, November 27, the week after we had left. Many abandoned the race and were rescued at sea. But many more actually made it across. We were able to cheer on couple, a man and woman from Ireland, who arrived early one morning. 3 months together, rowing! There is still one solo woman out there, who is apparently writing a book and in no hurry to arrive. She eats sprouting soybeans and dried food. For the gory details, check out www.atlanticrowingrace.co.uk

Barbuda: This is a very interesting island, very low-lying compared to everywhere else we've been. It is connected politically with Antigua. The original population were imported as slaves by the Codrington family, who ran the entire island as a hunting reserve and were rarely actually there.

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The slaves adapted to living on the island and lived independently, hunting, fishing and gardening.

After emancipation, they held the land communally and this has continued into modern times. Since there is no individual ownership, land in general is not sold to outsiders. A few small resorts were allowed by the town council. Various mega-development projects encouraged by the Antigua government were abandoned after protests from the Barbuda people (they apparently once occupied a construction site, demolished buildings and threw the remains into the sea). It is essentially a wild park, with one small town. Horses, wild donkeys and deer wander about.

In any case, we found a beautiful island with miles and miles of pink-white sand beaches, fringed with coral reefs. Unfortunately for us, there was very heavy swell, preventing us from landing on the beach.

We called George, who runs a water taxi and mangrove tour service ("Garden of Eden" is his call sign). He took us through a large mangrove lagoon to see the frigatebird rookery. These are very large black seabirds. The males have a bright red pouch on their chest; during mating season (right now) they inflate the pouches and make strange thumping, drumming and clicking noises to attract their mate. They mate with only one partner (at least for the season), and produce only one egg. The male gathers the sticks for the nest, but the female builds it.

The male does most of the nest sitting after the egg is laid, but gets time off for good behavior to fish. The rookery was an incredible spectacle- thousands of frigate birds, all nesting in the mangroves, clicking and drumming, preening and mating, wheeling like bats in the air...

St. Barthalemy (St. Barts)- after being driven off by the swells on Barbuda, we had a wonderful overnight sail to St. Barts. Along the way, we could see the smoldering volcano of Monsarrat, as well as the islands of St. Kitts and Nevis, Statia, and Saba.

The winds were warm, pleasant and moderate for a change (we've been having relatively rough island passages). St. Barts was originally a base for French pirates, but was eventually sold by France to Sweden, who developed it into a prosperous trading center (translation: smuggling base). Eventually in the 1800's it was sold back to France. Today it is the

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"Riviera of the Caribbean", full of beautiful people, boutiques and restaurants, as well as lovely beaches. We are anchored outside the main harbor, Gustavia.

We arrived just in time to enjoy the last day of Carnival, "Fat Tuesday" on Feb. 28. We were completely unprepared for this event- almost the only people on the island without costumes. Imagine the West Athens Fourth of July Parade crossed with Mardi Gras and dropped into a beautiful Caribbean island.

Floats, drummers, dancers, revelers and general craziness...

Then Ash Wednesday, March 1st, we understood that there would be some kind of burning ceremony on the beach- with our poor command of French, we weren't sure exactly what, but knew we would be there! A parade of revelers carried the effigy of Vaval, the King of Carnival, to the edge of the beach and onto his pyre; to the rhythms of masked drummers and fire dancers, he was ignited. So we were able to have a somewhat late Capricorn Ball. Today we hope to have a quieter time on shore.

Eventually, from here, we will go to nearby St. Martin, then a longer jump to the Virgin Islands. Maine is getting closer all the time!

Gust & Jan

2/28/06

Hello- we left Barbuda because of heavy swell in the anchorages. We did get to see a huge frigatebird colony. We had a wonderful overnight sail to St. Barts.

2/20/06

Greetings- we're anchored in English Harbor, by Nelson's Dockyard, Antigua.

2/17/06

Hello all- we've had episodic problems with our email system and apparently our log and position reports had not been going out, so here's an update. Excuse any duplications! Our travels so far:
St. Lucia: we left at the beginning of February. We enjoyed our time there. Parts of the island, like the Piton Mountains of Soufriere Bay, are stunningly beautiful. We were troubled by the contrast between the tourist

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resorts and the dire poverty and crumbling infrastructure of the villages. We were glad to have worked at the hospital, although in the end, our biggest contribution was to give the local doctors a break from their work. We received much back in friendship from the people of St. Lucia.

Martinique: a Caribbean slice of France. It is much more affluent than St. Lucia, with good roads, hospitals, schools, as it's infrastructure is supported by France. The fusion of Africa with France produces Creole Culture- spicy, vibrant and lively.

We very much enjoyed the food, music and attitudes of the people. It was hard to leave!

Dominica: (between Martinique and Guadeloupe, not to be confused with the Dominican Republic between Puerto Rico and Cuba): a very wild and undeveloped island. There are many mountains rising from the sea, very few beaches, and consequently it never got developed for tourism with mega-resorts.

The lack of flat land also minimized it's colonization for sugar cane plantations in the 1800's. Instead, over the decades and centuries, it had relatively small scale coconut, citrus and banana plantations, all essentially abandoned as the various foreign markets came to an end.

Dominica became independent from England in 1978; subsequent land reform broke up many of the remaining plantations. Today, many (?most) people still make a subsistence living as small farmers and fishermen. There are many local subsistence industries, such as distilling bay leaf oil, pressing coconut oil, weaving hats and baskets, grinding arrowroot and cassava, charcoal production. Ecotourism is being developed to provide jobs and exploit, in a sustainable manner, the beauty of the rainforests, rivers and waterfalls.

We are currently in Iles des Saintes. These are a small group of steep, dry islands next to Guadeloupe. They have always been connected to France, settled centuries ago by Breton fishermen. Like Martinique, it is very civilized and beautiful.

Are you detecting a bias for the French Islands? It's true...

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From here, we will stop a few days in nearby Guadeloupe before heading on to Antigua, where we hope to enjoy Carnival. From there, our plans are vague (suggestions welcomed!), except that we realize we need to keep moving North to be back in Maine by June.

Roughly, we will most likely see a few more Caribbean Islands (?St. Martin), then St. John in the US Virgin Islands, then a long sail to Turks and Caicos in the Bahamas, then another long jump to Beaufort, North Carolina, taking the inter coastal waterway into the Chesapeake Bay. We'll fill in the details as we go along...

Cheers to all- Gust and Jan

2/8/06

Greetings from sunny Martinique! We are anchored in St. Pierre, at the foot of Mt. Pelee, which erupted in 1902, killing 30,000 people in town and sinking 12 ships in the harbor. The only survivor was Cyparis, a condemned murderer whose stone cell protected him. Today, the town is much smaller- turn of the centuries wooden houses are built into the stone ruins.

A green cliff side wraps around the town. Red and yellow fishing boats are dragged up on the black sand beach, which is lined with small cafes and restaurants. A cathedral with twin bell towers rises from the town square. To the North, up the flanks of the volcano, sugar cane is growing.

The water under the boat is so clear that we can see fish around the anchor, 25 feet below. From here, we will sail on to Dominica- reported to be wild and undeveloped, full of waterfalls, rivers and rainforest. Because Martinique is a department of France, it seems much more prosperous compared to St. Lucia. Roads, schools, hospitals, water and sewer systems, are all more modern and well maintained. People are very friendly, most speaking no English at all but encouraging of our feeble efforts at speaking French. The open air markets are full of local fruits and vegetables, the fishermen sell their catch right off the beach after the boats land.

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3/21/2006

In Marigot Bay, St. Martin, we had a joyous reunion with cruising friends Hamish (Low Profile), John and Angela (Galadriel), and David and Sue (Suerte, whom we'd last seen in the Canaries).

We sailed together to Anguila, a beautiful low-lying island a few miles away. Anguila was forced reluctantly into independence by the British in 1967, forced into an alliance with the island of St. Kitts. This ended in an armed rebellion, in which the Anguillians forced the departure of the St. Kitts police force, and then preemptively invaded St. Kitts!

Fortunately, no one was killed, the invaders returned, and England eventually agreed to resume administration of the island. At this point, it is a lovely peaceful place with miles of sandy beaches and beautiful coral reefs.

We sail tonight for the BVI, where we hope to see our friends Norm and Pat of Patty Dee from Skowhegan, and Dick and Moira of Fairfield, on Equinox. The trade winds have settled down to a pleasant 10-15 knots, so we hope for a good sail under the stars.

Gust & Jan

3/28/2006

For Those We've Lost- poem by Henry Van Dyke

I am standing on the seashore. A ship at my side,
spreads her white sails to the morning breeze and starts
for the blue ocean. She is an object of beauty and strength.
I stand and watch her until, at length, she hangs like a speck
of white cloud just where the sea and sky come to mingle with each other.

Then someone at my side says: "There, she is gone!"

Gone where?

Gone from my sight. That is all. She is just as large in mast,
hull and spar as when she left my side.

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And, she is just as able to bear her load of living freight to her destined port.
Her diminished size is in me, not in her.

And just at that moment when someone at my side says: "There, she is gone!"
there are other eyes watching her coming, and other voices ready to take up the glad shout: "Here she comes!"

And that is dying...

3/30/2006

Greetings- our world has changed once again after sailing overnight from Anguilla to Virgin Gorda, British Virgin Islands. We had first sailed here now 12 years ago, on one-week vacation charters.

We assumed that development and overcrowding would have taken its toll. We're happy to say that, despite the large number of charter cruisers (who provided nightly entertainment and excitement in their attempts at anchoring), we found the BVI still a fantastic place to sail, with clear water, lots of reefs, and abundant fish. If anything, it seemed nicer- communities have made great efforts to clean up and recycle trash. We were especially pleased to return to Foxy's on Jost van Dyke, and find Foxy still strumming his calypso tunes on his guitar.

We were happy to find friends Norm and Pat from Skowhegan aboard the Patti Dee in Trellis Bay, and friends Dick and Moira from Fairfield aboard Equinox in Great Harbor. After 10 months of being out of US waters, we have reentered at the island of St. John. The customs and immigration agents were quite serious and armed, and asked that I present Jan to them (everywhere else we've been, the captain simply presents the crew's passports). After that, we were stamped in efficiently and set loose. Almost all boats are American flagged.

NPR is on the radio. NOAA weather reports are on the VHF. Everyone speaks English. Most of St. John is a US National Park, consequently has been spared the development seen on the other islands. Despite having feral goats, donkeys, and pigs, the island has not been overgrazed; the woodlands are much greener and have more diverse plant life than the other islands.

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There is little development in terms of resorts, etc. Like Acadia National Park, it was donated to the government by the Rockefeller family.

From here, we sail past St. Thomas en route to the Spanish Virgin Islands, Vieques and Culebra, then on to Puerto Rico itself. We may decide to bypass the Bahamas altogether, and sail directly for North Carolina, a distance of a little over 1000 miles.

Cruising is in some ways a separation from the "normal" life ashore, in which we no longer share directly with our communities the flow of work, the celebrations of births, graduations and marriages, and the mourning of those who have died. We miss this sharing and support now on hearing of the death of friend Richard. We will keep him, and all of you, in our thoughts, and continue to try to live fully in the moment. Fair winds to all,
Gust

4/12/2006

US Virgin Islands - St. John and St. Thomas: These islands were settled originally by Arawak and Taino Indians who migrated from mainland South America. In one of our hikes in St.

John, we came across ancient petroglyphs, carved into smooth dark rock by a jungle pool. It reminded us a bit of the petroglyphs on the Kennebec River near Solon.

Columbus landed on the islands in 1493, and called them "The Virgins" allegedly after St. Ursula and her 11,000 Virgins. Originally occupied by Spain, the islands were taken over by Denmark once the Spanish gold fleets stopped coming through. Eventually, large scale sugar cane plantations were established, using imported African slaves as labor.

Our sailing trip has essentially reproduced the West Indian trade triangle, in which, following the Trade Winds, African slaves were carried to the Caribbean, with ships returning to New England with rum and molasses. In the 1700's, opposition to slave traffic increased, until it was outlawed by England in 1772 (much earlier than the US). Slave rebellions occurred regularly as news of emancipation elsewhere spread. The rebellions were violently suppressed, but they took their toll on the plantations.

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The introduction of the sugar beet in Europe in the mid-1800's ended the profitability of the sugar plantations. The slaves were emancipated in the 1840's, the small white population fled, and the islands remained essentially undeveloped for the next 100 years.

The US bought the islands from Denmark in 1917, theoretically to provide bases for protecting the Panama Canal. Eventually their potential for tourism was appreciated. This has reached its highest expression (or is it the lowest?) in St. Thomas, where every day, up to 6 cruise ships arrive, disgorging thousands of passengers who "shop till they drop" in the hundreds of duty-free stores in Charlotte Amalie. It's hard to imagine how so many stores could be peddling expensive watches, jewelry, and perfumes. Despite the crowds, we did enjoy Charlotte Amalie- especially walking into the fully-stocked US style supermarket!

We also enjoyed the old Danish buildings, and found many beautiful uncrowded anchorages and beaches. Culebra and Vieques- Collectively known as the Spanish Virgin Islands, these are such undiscovered jewels that I hesitate to even mention them.

Occupied by the US Navy after the Spanish-American war, they remained Naval Bombing ranges for decades. Bombing stopped in Culebra during the 1970's, after escalating protests by the local population and backed by the local Catholic Church, the Navy finally relinquished its control of Vieques to the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Now 80% of the island and its surrounding waters are preserved (although development pressures are apparently quite fierce). We have found very friendly people; miles of beautiful white sand beaches (dotted with the occasional rusted-out hulk of a tank or landing craft), and crystal clear waters (albeit with the occasional unexploded bomb to watch out for).

We particularly liked the little island of Culebrita. Wildlife sightings: wild donkeys, horses, goats, and even pigs wander about. They are quite destructive of the native vegetation. We saw a deer on St. John. We see mongooses run across the roads. They look like a cross between a squirrel and a rat. They were introduced by the British from India in the hopes that they would control rats (who damaged the sugar crop). Unfortunately, the rats and the mongooses avoid each other, and the mongoose instead ate lots of bird eggs.

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Underwater: we were diving with friends from another boat on Culebrita. A very bold, roughly 5 lb. spiny lobster came out of his ledge to challenge us. One of the divers grabbed him, and emerged triumphantly from the cloud of sea sand to carry him to the surface (this is perfectly legal here). They are not as tasty as Maine lobsters, of course, but will do in a pinch (they don't have claws).

Sea turtles: we have enjoyed almost daily sightings of these magnificent creatures, both above and below the water. Usually we have seen green turtles, who graze on sea grass. We have also occasionally seen hawksbill turtles, who dine on sponges on the reefs.

From here, we will leave for mainland Puerto Rico in a few days. We hope to visit the El Yunque Rain Forest Nat'l Park, as well as Old San Juan, site of the oldest Spanish fort in the Americas, as well as one of the oldest cities. From there, we will begin our offshore passages home. The sea still beacons, but so does the garden on the Back Road...

That's all the news for now.
Fair Winds, Gust & Jan

4/25/2006

Greetings to all- our progress: Puerto Rico- a wonderful island, exotic and Hispanic, but with US infrastructure, phone service, parts and supermarkets. We hiked in the El Yunque rain forest.

We arrived in Old San Juan on Easter Sunday, and went to mass at the San Juan Cathedral, the oldest in the Western Hemisphere. Mass was celebrated by the Archbishop of San Juan, a charismatic person who supported the non-violent protests that ended the Navy bombings of the island of Vieques.

While in Vieques, we were able to visit with Rick and Honor of Last Unicorn fame- they live in Vieques year round in a beautiful mountaintop home; we had a wonderful dinner together. On Easter Sunday afternoon, we strolled in the park around El Morro, the old Spanish fortress, now a National monument; thousands of children fly kites there every Easter. We saw old men teaching their great-grandchildren to fly!

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Flora and Fauna: Fern palms and orchids in the rainforest. We hoped to see manatees at our anchorage, but missed them. Old San Juan has a large population of feral cats, descended from ship-jumpers in the Colonial days. They live in the rocks of the breakwaters and the parks around the city. At one point, the city wanted to exterminate them; this led to protests, and eventually to a "catch, neuter and release" program that has worked very well.

The number of cats are controlled, and they keep down the rats. They live independently and seemed proud and aloof, as cats should be.

Turks and Caicos: We set off from Puerto Rico, intending on making the 1200 mile passage to Morehead City, North Carolina. A few days out, we developed problems with our alternator and also ran into unexpected bad weather. We changed course, had a wild downwind ride and arrived safely to Gran Turk Island. It is settled by descendants of immigrants from Bermuda and loyalists from the US, who came originally to "rake salt" from the shallow salt pans. It looks as Bermuda might have 100 years ago. People were very friendly and gracious.

The water is turquoise colored, and so clear that we can see the conchs crawling along the sandy bottom while at anchor. It is fortunate that the water is so clear, because we are crossing the Caicos banks as I write, about 40 miles in depths of about 10 feet, with occasional coral heads and reefs here and there.

From here, we will hop along a few more islands while waiting for a good weather window for the offshore trip to Morehead City/Beaufort. Fair winds to all, Gust

04/25/2006

21° 29.91' N 71° 45.49' W

4/25/2006

Many of you have already received this, but apparently most of the first transmission was lost in cyberspace- has communication improved from bottles?

This was launched in St. Barths, and recovered in Vieques: All sailors take heed: We are not in trouble We are not in need. Our boat is coping well.

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The wind is kind, and the seas are swell. This is just a note to say hallo to you there on your boat.

If you discover this note please be kind and let us know your find.

4/28/2006

Yippee! The alternator is charging and we are off to the Bahamas. The weather offshore is still poor and we will wait for a better window for the trip to North Carolina.

04/29/2006

22° 19.50' N 73° 01.82' W

4/29/2006

We've arrived in Mayaguana, one of the Bahamas out-islands. We are anchored behind the reef at Abraham's Bay. Strong Northerly wind and swells will keep us here for a few days.

4/30/2006

We are again having alternator difficulties (no charge coming out)- returning to Turks and Caicos from Mayaguana, Bahamas. All is otherwise well; we would not have been able to make any progress north against the wind in any case until later this week.

5/11/2006

Well, it is hard to keep to a rigid schedule while cruising. In our last report, we had arrived in Turks and Caicos, had replaced our alternator with the spare, and had set sail for the Bahamas, which we did indeed reach at the island of Mayaguana.

Unfortunately, after working perfectly for two days, the new alternator suddenly died. Since there was a Yanmar (our engine) dealer at Turks and Caicos, we returned and ordered a new alternator, which did arrive easily in a few days.

In the meantime, we hung out at the dock, doing odds and ends of maintenance- patching chafed sails, cleaning up the boat and ourselves. We watched an osprey feeding her chicks in her nest atop a power pole. We watched the resident 5 foot barracuda patrol the dock. We patted the

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boatyard dogs, who slept by our boat in hopes of a repeat of the steak bones we had given them the first night.

We entertained Johannes, a 20 year old German young man who crossed the Atlantic by himself in his 26 foot old production boat, in January, at the height of the winter trades and gales. He had worked in a shipyard for a year to raise money for this trip; he plans to continue to New York, sell the boat there, and return to college to pursue a career as a naval architect. He enjoyed Jan's meals! He has a website (in German)- www.allein-auf-see.de ("alone at sea")

Once the new alternator arrived, we were quickly off- we decided to take advantage of fair winds and moonlit nights to sail through the Bahamas without stopping. Once again, 3 or 4 days out, the engine wouldn't start- a clogged fuel filter and fuel line. It should have been easy to clear, but in the cramped space of the engine compartment, with the rolling boat, I just couldn't get things clear.

We turned West to the Abacos, just 100 miles away, had a lovely overnight sail, tacked through the opening in the reef (we've gotten used to sailing through reefs in shallow water at this point) and anchored in Marsh Town, Great Abaco Island. In the calm of the harbor, and help from friendly neighbors, the engine roared to life again. Engines are great! Besides propelling Bluebird, the alternator charges the batteries, which in turn keep Ishmael the Autopilot humming, relieving us of the tedium of the wheel during those long overnight watches.

Now we have lost our weather window and are waiting for our last 500 mile dash to our intended landfall in Beaufort, North Carolina. We are actually only 100 miles or so from Miami, but it is out of the way for our return to Maine.

There are worse places to be than Marsh harbor. People are very friendly, both the locals and the large population of cruisers. We are eating conch and grouper. Lobsters are out of season. We went diving this morning and saw our first shark, a 6 foot reef shark- he was quite shy and quickly swam away after checking us out. We do have a picture of him that will eventually get posted. We saw a large Spotted Eagle ray, groupers, and a hoard of other fish.

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At this point, we will leave for another try as soon as the weather looks favorable. We hope we are through with breakdowns- we were getting discouraged, but it was all probably for the best, we are glad to have had a taste of the Bahamas and hope to return someday. So fair winds to all and wish us good luck this time!

5/19/2006

Safely arrived 7AM after 4 days of storms and squalls. Will write with details later.

5/21/2006

Greetings to all! We have finally made it to mainland USA, arriving in Beaufort, North Carolina, after a 4 night sail from the Abacos.

This was our most challenging passage to date- winds were much higher than predicted, usually 25-30 K, especially in the Gulf Stream. We went through several squalls and recorded our highest wind speeds to date- 56K. Fortunately, it was all downwind with following seas and current. We arrived here at dawn after sailing all night with just a staysail (the smallest sail on the boat). We were glad that all of our systems worked on this passage with no mechanical problems.

Beaufort is a beautiful and historic seaport, settled in Colonial days. It is just inside the Outer Banks, a region of sandy barrier islands exposed to the Atlantic. Wild horses live on many of the islands. Like Maine, the seacoast has shifted from being primarily based on shipping and fishing to tourism. As in seacoast Maine, the area is "Downeast" from the rest of the state.

Local foods: the oyster season unfortunately ended in April. Soft Shell Crabs are in!

Weather: It is really cold! What were we thinking?

Travels: from here we enter the Intracoastal Waterway and make our way to Norfolk, Virginia, in the Chesapeake. From there, weather depending, we will hopefully be able to go offshore again for the trip to New York.

Fair winds to all, Gust and Jan

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6/2/2006

Intercoastal Waterway: After enjoying the Southern hospitality of Beaufort, North Carolina, we entered the waters of the Intercoastal Waterway for the 300 miles trip to Norfolk, Virginia. Nicknamed "the Big Ditch", we were expecting a protected but dull trip motoring behind Cape Hattaras to the Chesapeake.

Instead, we had a delightful time, enjoying the wild-appearing marshy bays, rivers and canals, going under bridges and through one lock. We saw ospreys, Canadian geese, herons. We saw lots of watermen (as fishermen are called here) harvesting crabs. After our wild nights offshore, we enjoyed being able to anchor at night and enjoy a sunset.

Norfolk, Virginia: We exited the ICW in Norfolk, at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. This is home to the largest Naval base in the United States, perhaps the world. We were able to see aircraft carriers, nuclear submarines, many frigates and other naval vessels. We saw a frigate returning from a long tour- the ship was greeted by tugs spraying salutes through their water canons. Families lined the dock ashore while the sailors were at attention in their dress whites along the rail. It was a very moving site, especially as it occurred on Memorial Day Weekend. Whatever one's feelings about the war, one rejoiced in the sailors safe arrival home to their families.

Chesapeake Bay: we debated sailing up the Chesapeake Bay and into Delaware Bay- but we had a good weather window, and in the end went out the mouth of the Bay, sailing along the Maryland Shore. Our first night, we had cold, dripping fog and wondered again, why had we left the sunny Caribbean? The fog cleared at dawn and the next two days were pleasant.

We saw the lights of Atlantic City at sunset, rising from the Jersey shore like the City of Oz. New York City! What a great place. We had clear skies as we sailed under the Verrazano Narrows Bridge into the Upper Bay.

What a busy harbor! We shared it with tugboats and barges, freighters and tankers, ferry boats and tour boats, and even a couple of sailboats.

We sailed past the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, where both my grandfather and Jan's mother arrived as immigrants from Greece and Ireland respectively.

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We sailed up the Hudson River to the Upper West Side of Manhattan, settling finally at the 79th St. Boat Basin, where at \$30 a night for a mooring, one has the least expensive accommodations in all of New York City. I wish I could list all the plays, movies and museums that we visited, but all we really did was walk around, enjoying all the views and people on the streets- we especially enjoyed a day walking through Central Park with our good friend and tour guide, Sylvia.

And once again, we found that our visit was cut short by predictions of deteriorating weather in the next few days, with a good opportunity to leave now- We departed the Upper West Side at 6AM, reaching the Battery (the tip of Manhattan) in an hour- the fog was very dense, and it was very intimidating rounding it with all the ferries and tugboats coming and going, unseen until they cut across our bow or stern. There were too many to begin to track with the radar.

We managed to get under the Brooklyn Bridge and into the East River safely, the fog finally lifted a little and we were able to relax and enjoy the views of the East Side of the city. Through Hell's Gate (an area of swirling currents), past Rikers Island Prison, we finally exited into Long Island Sound.

Long Island Sound: cold green water, fog, all we can say is that we are getting closer to Maine! We will sail all night and arrive in the morning at Block Island, off the Rhode Island coast, where we will wait out the next cold front.

Next Stops: Buzzards Bay, Cape Cod, then Maine!

6/2/2006

We are NOT in Block Island as the weather coming in would have kept us there for a week waiting for things to change. We sailed into New Bedford, MA on Buzzards Bay and are looking forward to exploring this historical place for the next days of promised rain and wind.

Next overnight sail will take us to Rockland!

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6/6/2006

Well, after 9,600 nautical miles, we have closed the circle of our Atlantic circumnavigation off of Monhegan Island. It is densely foggy.

We will arrive in Rockland sometime late this afternoon. It is hard to believe that this trip is almost over!

Bluebird

6/9/2006

Greetings to All! We arrived in Rockland Harbor Tuesday afternoon, June 6, 2 weeks shy of being gone one year.

We logged 9,600 nautical miles. We saw many islands and met so many wonderful people.

It is hard to believe that the voyage is over. It seems as though we just left last month!

It was wonderful to arrive to our home. The cats seemed happy to see us, and it's great that water comes out of the tap continuously without having to fill any tanks!

And how about that electricity that just arrives over wires, without having to generate it ourselves...

On the other hand, the lawn really needs mowing, and the garden is full of weeds...

What's next: Jan will return to her job of school social worker. I will be joining my old partner Dina Jeannotte M.D.

and Don Dubois, M.D., at Somerset Primary Care, 4 miles down the road. I do look forward to returning to work.

We look forward to sailing this summer in our home waters on the Coast of Maine- still the most beautiful cruising grounds that we've seen. So many thanks to all the people who have made the voyage possible: to Darin and Harry, our trans-Atlantic shipmates; to Rita, who minded our home, kept track of our mail, and paid our bills; to Amber and Dave, who maintained

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the website; to Karen, who kept my professional paperwork up-to-date; and to all our friends and family who supported us emotionally on this voyage.

And a special thank you to all our cruising friends, especially those who are still out there, from whom we've learned so much, and with whom we've had such fun: Come and see us in Maine!

Fair winds to all,

Gust and Jan S/V Bluebird