

# THE PORT HOLE

OCTOBER 2018

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R. John Garside, AP, Editor-in-Chief  
Prince Edward Power and Sail Squadron

**G**reetings!! Here it is already the month of October and the season of shorter days and cooler temperatures is now upon us, and for many boaters in Canada, this is their final month of boating. So as you start thinking of putting your boat away for the next few months, remember that not all of us have to do this. In this edition of *The Port Hole* I invite you to read about a spot where the water never freezes, and one “can live the dream”. The Southern Caribbean is a very popular boating vacation spot for many, but all is not rosy as you will discover in the article.

I have also had the privilege of interviewing one of Canada’s most interesting Squadron Commanders who is heading up one of our newest Squadrons, the Northshore Power and Sail Squadron. He has been a driving force in the setup of the new Squadron and continues to not only serve actively at the Squadron level, but also at the District level and beyond. He is a real asset to CPS-ECP, and it shows what just one person can do when backed up with a competent crew.

Then an article that is very short and to the point. One that will not only grab your attention, but also provide you and your crew with some “food for thought” this winter. As many readers know, boating is fun, but things can and do happen, and on a sunny day off the west coast just such an event took place, one that could have ended in a disaster, but careful planning and training intervened. So do enjoy the read!

And of course being October I hope that many of you will make the effort to attend our National Conference being held in Ottawa, it should be quite a birthday party! I am certainly looking forward to it, not only to meet up with

many of my fellow CPS-ECP Members who I have known and worked with for many years, but also to meet some new faces and get a feel for the course being plotted for our 80 year old organization. Recently I was leafing through some old administrative items from my Prince Edward Squadron when out of the files dropped an old undelivered Merit Mark Certificate. It was dated 1968 and the recipient’s name was hand lettered and actually signed in ink by the Chief Commander of that time. How things have changed!

Now I have a request for all of you who own a Canadian built boat. Next year I am planning on running a series of articles on Canadian boat builders, both past and present. To illustrate these articles I would ask that you send me your Canadian built boat’s picture along with a few comments concerning its age, the builder and of course its home port. The pictures can be in colour or black and white, but please do send them! My contact information can be found on the masthead page of this issue.

In closing I also hope you enjoy my next chapter of “*Boats that I have Known*” describing the arrival of lumber and how I learn the finer points of loading a boat, and even though the events being described took place almost sixty years ago, they still ring true today, as boating is such fun, and there is always something new to learn!

So do you have a story to tell? Has your Squadron done something of interest?

If so, do send me your stories and information and look for them in a future edition of *The Port Hole*. The next deadline for submissions is November 20, 2018.



Charles Beall, AP  
Chief Commander

## Notes from the Chief's Log

“These are the times that try men’s souls...” A 1962 Kingston Trio song about Charlie, who couldn’t get off the subway because he was short a nickel, opens with those words. All of us involved with the IT project can identify with that sentiment, except that today it would include everyone’s souls.

This project is much more complicated than we ever imagined. Our CPS-ECP Volunteers include some very sophisticated and experienced IT users. Our new IT provider, Innovexa, is capable, with a solid track record of providing high quality IT systems to a variety of users, including some organizations much larger and more complex than we are.

By last October, Innovexa had completed a new, improved, easy to use IT structure to handle our on-line functions. The new structure takes just one log-in to get to: public web pages (our course calendar and class schedules); member web pages (Squadron pages and annual conference news); member and officer access library (policy guidelines and minutes); and officer and staff specific dashboards that connect to our database of (financial and membership data). These are examples. There’s way more in there.

Innovexa did an initial “dump” of our existing Oasis database from the beginning of time to the day they asked for it into the new system. This step took involved much more than we (and Innovexa) expected. The Oasis data needed a lot of “cleaning” before Innovexa could use it. What we got was a pot of spaghetti! Imagine cooking this huge pot of spaghetti, in 4 different colours, red, green, blue and yellow. When you pull it out of the pot, the colours are all mixed up with each other and stuck together. Now you have to separate the red ones from all the others, without breaking any of the coloured spaghetti noodles (data strands in real life). It came as a big surprise and took a lot of time to sort out.

We had to build a table of contents for a new static documents library (the documents that don’t change). A truly dedicated group of CPS-ECP Volunteers sorted those documents to decide what to take as is, what to take and modify, and what to leave behind for both languages. We did the same thing for the public and member web page content.

The most critical post conference task though was to test

new structure and functions to make sure they were what we expected. We couldn’t use our live, real data because that would mess up our ongoing operations. Innovexa gave us a platform where we used “fake data” (stuff we made up so we could test) as well as 1000 randomly selected real files from the first cleaned data “dump” from our Oasis database. We completed two rounds of testing using this data and various fixes have been done as we discovered functional or language issues which are “show stoppers” (stuff that needs to work before we can launch).

However, to fully test the system in the next rounds, we needed more content loaded into the new system. That was essential for our testing focused on the functions critical for a Phase 1 launch.

Still, early in the New Year, a launch by the end of March looked like a possibility. But then, another factor came into play. A huge number of our membership renewals (the vast majority) occur in March and April. Rather than risk messing up that critical business process with a launch of a new IT system, we decided to wait until at least early May.

That decision delayed the launch for good business reasons and turned out to have been a good decision for operational reasons as well. Not all of our data is stored on the Oasis servers. The “back office” accounting systems, for example, had to be integrated into our Innovexa platform. Ship’s stores, the stuff we sell, had to be assigned individual product codes and then entered. That’s more than just a few golf shirts, coffee mugs and flags. It includes memberships, standard course descriptions with all of the corresponding course materials, certificates, and cards, to name a few. Imagine a 2 meter high chandelier that is a meter and a half in diameter at the bottom and has 36 lights on it. The task is to take it all apart, assign each individual piece of glass a number, catalogue it, and then put it back together. Unless you’ve done it before, and we hadn’t, you can’t really appreciate how time consuming that exercise is. The fact is, identifying, sorting and entering the “back office” data took far, far longer than we had ever thought it would.

One of the decisions we made at the beginning was to use “off the shelf” products rather than having a custom





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built system. It was cheaper and we believe it will work better in the long run. (One of the major problems with the Oasis system was the fact that it was custom built, and various “patches” were put on it over the years, which nobody mapped – so no one knows how it really works!).

As part of putting all the ships stores information into the Innovexa system, we had to make sure that the various technical products correctly worked together (“talked” to each other). That wasn’t a particularly difficult task from a technical stand point, but it still took time and longer than we thought.

All the parts of this project are inter-related. While working towards a late spring launch, thought life would be easier for everyone if Squadrons stopped posting courses to [boatingcourses.ca](http://boatingcourses.ca) and [ecp-quebec.ca](http://ecp-quebec.ca). It would mean less to transfer before launch and we would have time to do it before the course registrations “ramped up” at the end of the summer. Once we realized the launch would not happen before the end of August, we asked the Squadrons to put their scheduled class information into the usual websites. But there’s a hole in our old data systems. We can’t just transfer that data from those separate, stand-alone web sites over as part of our launch. It has to be manually entered into the new system. Again, a truly dedicated group of Volunteers is doing exactly that: Squadron by Squadron and class by class for all our courses and classes in all of our Squadrons.

By the middle of June, a launch by the end of August was looked like a realistic target. Nancy Richards developed a schedule of the 20 steps we needed to complete to meet that target. We and Innovexa all agreed on the specifics and the timetable. The first thing we needed to do was to get a second “data dump” from Oasis for the period from the end of the first dump to the new day we asked for it – a “delta dump”. Part of our contract with Oasis required us to give 7 days notice, which we did on August 1.

Then things quickly got messy. Oasis wanted to give us the same big ball of 4 coloured spaghetti that we got in the first uncleaned “dump” plus the uncleaned “delta dump”. Innovexa would have to untangle all the spaghetti again and clean up not only the new entries made since the first “dump” but also figure out what had been deleted and changed in the original content “dump”, a process that could take Innovexa months (an unacceptable amount of time) to try to figure out.

With our National Law Officer, Brad Vermeersch leading the charge, and ably assisted by Nancy Richards and Walter Kowalchuk, we made a deal with Oasis to give us the codes/“instructions” Innovexa needs to do its work. We finally got those on August 22, but that information was not complete.

This is going to delay the launch beyond the end of September. But, we are operating on the principle that it is more important to have quality data from a reliable source so that we can have a properly functioning, quality system available to our Members. On August 24 we met to update the timetable of 20 steps needed launch to do everything possible to “go live” before the Ottawa Conference.

Without Nancy’s exceptional project management skills, and organization, we would truly be up an isolated estuary without an adequate means of conveyance (think “Creek” and “Paddle”). She has been ably assisted with an outstanding group of dedicated Volunteers and the National Office staff, who have spent hours reviewing material, testing processes and entering reams of data.

I remain optimistic.

(With many thanks to Peter Bolton, Nancy Richards, Robert Pepin for their invaluable editorial assistance)



# Man Overboard!

Gary Berkeley  
Sunshine Coast Squadron

We're in the middle of Georgia Strait, with sunny skies in a thirty foot sailboat and our over the ground speed is six knots, and we are motor sailing in a moderate sea, and it's the start of our vacation cruise!

What happens next catches all three of us by surprise. We're changing helmsmen. Now this requires climbing over the bench in the cockpit to get around the large wheel. In the process, the helmsman stumbles sideways, loses her balance, and slams against the stainless safety cable strung across the stern. Her body twists awkwardly, and then the fitting of the safety wire lets go, and the helmsman executes a spastic backward tumble over the transom, arms and legs thrashing about helplessly, vainly searching for support. She hits the water in a shower of icy spray and becomes briefly entangled in the lines of the inflatable dinghy that is being towed behind. Then, silently, in the surreal scene that has taken a mere instant to unfold, she slips out of sight!

We three had been alone in the cockpit, as the skipper had gone below to don some warmer clothing. She reappears in the cockpit just in time to take in what has happened. While she grabs the wheel, I search the dark waters astern for some reappearance of our lost helmsman. The distance is rapidly increasing. Finally, I see her head break the surface, way off now, hat and glasses gone. I immediately shout to skipper and begin pointing to the floating helmsman's location. I never take my eyes off her, continuing all the while to point. The skipper makes a quick 180 degree turn, to retrace our track. I then see that our lost helmsman has fired the cartridge to inflate her Personal Flotation Device, and is floating face up in the water. The inflation, and resulting hyperextended position of her arms, makes it difficult for her to move, or to help with her own rescue.

As part of our training, we had practiced for this very scenario. So the skipper brings the boat about downwind of our helmsman, then slowly eases the vessel forward until the dinghy is within her grasp. By now, some time has elapsed. I pull the dinghy in, with her holding on, and snug the tender to the stern. I then help her up the boarding ladder, which is attached to the swim grid. She is shaking from shock and the cold. After a change into dry clothes, and a hot cup of tea, she falls fast asleep, exhausted. What might have been a disaster, simply turns into a lively topic for discussion at Happy Hour!

There are several important issues here. First is the element of surprise. None of us was remotely expecting this to happen. When it did, our previous training and practice kicked in automatically. Would that have happened without prior training? What if the helmsman had not been wearing a PFD? There was no time for her to grab one from the boat. The vessel also had a high freeboard. If it hadn't had a walk-in transom and swim grid, would the outcome have been different? For older boaters, do we have a reboarding device to raise a sodden, helpless individual in full gear, out of the water? Have we got the strength? Will our device function on a vessel with high freeboard? Have we ever tried using it? What if the weather had been worse, the seas higher, or the spotting more difficult, or the person overboard wasn't normally comfortable in the water?

Get some training. The Canadian Power and Sail Squadrons is active where you live. Contact them to learn what they have available.

# Squadron Commander Interview - North Shore - Guy Cooper

by R. John Garside [AP](#)



**Squadron:** North Shore Power and Sail Squadron

**Location:** North Vancouver, British Columbia.

**Squadron Commander:** Guy Cooper

**Warrant Issued:** April 29, 2017

**Membership:** 486

**Life Members:** 18

**Newsletter:** North Shore Power and Sail Squadron E-Blast

Sitting in their newly acquired sailboat Guy Cooper and his wife set out from Vancouver to explore the Gulf Islands, and using their hand held GPS unit with its one inch square screen, they proceeded confidently out into the bay and the channels that surround the Port of Vancouver. However, on their way to the Gulf Islands “there were all these coloured things in the water and we didn’t know what they were”. Wanting to be responsible boaters they decided that it was time to find out more about the “coloured things”. Reading the local paper one day, the Northshore News, Guy read an ad concerning a CPS-ECP Boating Course being offered by the NorVan Power and Sail Squadron. The timing was a good fit, so he soon found himself surrounded by many other eager students learning

the finer points of boating, and in the spring of 2000 Guy graduated and became a member of CPS-ECP.

When I asked Guy why he became a member he replied, “I am a boater, and CPS is a collection of boaters helping boaters through teaching. I enjoyed meeting the teachers and students in the classes, and wanted to continue to know them, and there is a great social aspect of CPS too.” So after taking the boating course Guy continued his boating education, taking both the Piloting and Advanced Piloting courses. He felt that only now was he really prepared to sail in the salt water off of the port of Vancouver.

Along with taking courses Guy also became involved with the local Squadron and its activities, and as the years went by there were lots of boating, cruising and other pleasant social things, but as time moved on it became clear that though being a Member of CPS-ECP was a good thing, there was a developing problem with the three surrounding Squadrons, Seymour, NorVan and Capilano. Each one had its strengths and weaknesses but the time seemed ripe for some drastic action. So over the course of one year, members of the three Squadrons met

and decided that it would be in everyone’s best interest to amalgamate the three Squadrons into one.

Now these things just don’t happen, so there was a very concerted effort by all three Bridges and many Members to make this work. So on April 29, 2017 at their very first AGM “the North Shore Squadron hit the ground running with all its courses and venues set in place for the coming year”. When I asked Guy about his thoughts being part of this amalgamation he said, “We are one of the newest and largest squadrons in CPS, and it is exciting to be on the inaugural Bridge of the new Squadron. There was so much work to do to get this off the ground, but we had great people working to sort it out and we could cherry pick the best people for the job”.

As with many Squadrons North Shore has its own burgee as well, and Guy explained, “we had a competition involving all three Squadrons that formed North Shore. All members were invited to submit a design and we received eight fantastic ones for the new burgee. The new interim-Bridge reviewed the designs and after much consideration selected one that we felt represented the heart of the new Squadron, and carried forward the strong history of our past”. At North Shore’s Warrant Night, “even the burgee designer was there and was awarded a one year membership for their artistic effort”.

Being the very first Commander of North Shore is not a lonely position either, as currently there are 21 dedicated volunteers serving on the Bridge with plans to increase that number next year. Bridge meetings are held monthly except for the months of July, August and December. The meetings are usually less than 2 hours in length, as Guy explained that “we work hard to keep them under 2 hours. People’s time is valuable and we want to focus on the important aspects. Also we want suffi-



cient time to recap, socialize, and relax at the ‘after meeting’ at the nearby pub”.

Of course being on the West Coast where the water is never hard, but only salty, provides for a great opportunity to not only enjoy the water in your boat but also connect with other members at the local yacht clubs of which there are four! So in the coming year several RVCC checks are planned and a flare disposal effort will be headed up as well. In addition “we have planned four Squadron cruises and one of the cruises is with two other District Squadrons and another is with our USPS sister Bellevue Squadron out of Washington State”. However, it seems that if you can only make one of the cruises, the one to attend is their “legendary Thanksgiving cruise”. When I asked why this one was so popular Guy said that, “all the turkeys are cooked on the boats and it is a very special weekend, not only is it scenic and tranquil, but the meal is fantastic, and there are seldom any leftovers”.

As a new Squadron, North Shore continues to actively promote its courses and “has 20 to 30 enthusiastic instructors on hand “ to do the teaching and proctoring when required. This past year they had a sellout crowd

for their Boating 2 & 3 course and each of the VHF courses attracted up to 15 students at each offering. Teaching is done mostly at one of the local high schools except for VHF which is done at various sites through the area.

With the various cruises and teaching commitments the Squadron is engaged in, Guy commented that, “our Life Members are so important, as these people are the backbone of our new Squadron, and we owe them a tremendous amount of gratitude for the hours and hard work they have contributed. In fact “90% of the inaugural Bridge was made up of Past Commanders, all coming from the three amalgamated Squadrons. They have a wealth of knowledge, and we have new people coming on board too”. Guy commented that with each course taught it was important to “approach each student and socialize a bit with them and then open a pathway for them to become a proctor, which can often lead them to becoming a future bridge member”. Currently there are, “four or five new people coming up through the ranks, all with good ideas”.

We then spoke about Guy’s vision of his Squadron’s future to which he said, “I want our Squadron to continue

with the successful amalgamation of the three Squadrons and I want to offer advanced boating courses as well as maintain our high course enrollment, and welcome new members who join us from the courses”.

As for CPS-ECP’s future Guy felt that it was important, “for CPS-ECP to continue to evolve as the premier National organization for teaching boating skills, and to carry the message to our Members, that for less than \$60.00 a year, Members get an amazing value in terms of discounts for marine purchases, discounts for boating courses and access to social functions with like-minded boaters. Of all a boater’s expenses, CPS Membership represents the best value!”.

As our evening chat came to a close Guy expressed his thanks once again to his fellow officers for all their efforts in getting North Shore Squadron afloat and after a small pause said, “and the greatest benefit working with these dedicated people is the lifelong friendships you make”. I can see that if you are a member of Canada’s newest Squadron, you certainly have a wealth of talent on deck, and many interesting opportunities await you.

## Have you checked out the Member Benefits program lately?

Do you know that the saving from some of the Member Benefits more than pay for your yearly CPS-ECP membership? Savings from Cowan and C-Tow can pay for your membership in just one purchase. Also check out the excellent savings available from Weems and Plath, icom, Salus Marine Wear, Fugawi, and Canadian Yachting. They are all Sponsors of CPS-ECP. Some are even making it easier for you to take advantage by offering rebate programs.

There are more Member Benefits savings listed that you can take advantage all year round while traveling or making improvements around home. More exciting benefits will be coming. There is the information about where to sign up for CPS-ECP courses and the information on how to become a member.

Why not download the Member Benefits to your tablet or smart phone? Visit [www.cps-ecp.ca](http://www.cps-ecp.ca) click on Member Benefits to download a PDF. Now you will have them with you all the time!! You will always have with you the Benefits of Membership and the information to help your boating friends become members of CPS-ECP.



# Living the Dream in the Southern Caribbean

P/D/C Martin P. Hederich *AP*  
Prince Edward Power and Sail Squadron

For the past 10 years, the author has kept his Beneteau First 38 sloop at Curacao Marine, in the Netherlands Antilles.

Every year, for the last 25 years, we have been able to spend the winter months on our sailboat. During presentations given at special events, I often hear the comment: “You are living the Dream!” Let’s have a look at the realities.

The Southern Caribbean Islands stretch along the Venezuelan coastline from Trinidad to Panama and are only 10 - 12 degrees north of the Equator. As such they enjoy permanently hot weather and sunshine with daytime temperatures running between 26 and 30 degrees Celsius, and water temperatures between 25 and 27 degrees Celsius. From December until April/May they are in the trade wind zone, with winds permanently from the East at 15 to 30 knots which results in average wave heights between the islands of 8 to 12 feet, augmented by a current of up to 2 knots setting West. So while downwind sailing is mostly fast and pleasurable, travelling East is generally a tough slog to windward, making sailing almost impossible and requiring the help of a strong motor. As a result cruising boats are often stuck in harbours and marinas for long periods of time, anxiously waiting for a weather window with calmer winds and waves to travel East to the Windward Islands, or North to Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands, each of them being hundreds of miles away and requiring long passages. For this reason, you will not find any charter boats around here, because the average charter boater or guest is unlikely to wait for four weeks for calmer weather, or attempt

a passage of 50 miles between islands under adverse conditions with the added uncertainty about the return trip. Most sailors passing through here are choosing the easier West route, directed towards the Panama Canal, notwithstanding the fact that the trade winds being funnelled into the Southwest corner of the Colombian basin can easily exceed 40 knots, with wave heights increasing accordingly around Santa Martha or Cartagena.

This year, we arrived as usual at the beginning of January and spent the first 3 weeks in the boatyard while having repair work finished from the previous year. Then we moved into a slip on the dock to wait for an opportunity to leave for Bonaire, which is our favourite spot for the winter. While checking wind and wave heights on four different websites like windfinder, passageweather, predictwind and NOAA, we finally discovered a window opening up in the middle of February. This was about the same time as our guests arrived, who wanted to spend a week with us on the boat on the mooring in Bonaire. As we had not been able to get there yet, they met us in Curacao, just when we were getting ready to check out with Customs and Immigration. After a brief look at our modest, but freshly painted guest cabin and confronted with the thought of an offshore passage to Bonaire, they decided very quickly that they would be better off at a cheap air B&B at the beach and passed on Bonaire all together. So we spent a day to show them the island, had a final drink on the boat and went our separate ways.

My partner had chosen the weather window perfectly



and we had a fast and uneventful passage in 15 knots of wind and wave heights of only 6 feet, motoring at six knots and arriving in Bonaire in only 8 hours and 30 minutes, which was a new time record for us. To get ready for Customs and Immigration, we launched our dinghy after picking up a mooring at the first attempt. We attached and refuelled our new Yamaha outboard, which had been stored inside the boat and had not been used the previous year due to our lengthy stay in the boatyard for re-rigging.

I gave it one strong pull and I almost tore the ligaments in my wrist and shoulder! The motor was seized solid and could not be convinced to turn over. Off it came again, I drained out the fresh gas and went to get our trusty 20 year old Nissan unit. It also had been sitting on the boat, but at least it was turning over. After installation and a fuel up, it sputtered to life hesitantly and brought us almost into the nearby marina about 2 km away, when it died, along with a heavy leakage of oil and gasoline. Now we were down to the paddles to get us to the dock, where to my great relief I saw the local Yamaha dealer delivering a motor to another boat. He had sold us our motor a couple of years earlier. Overjoyed, I handed him the patient, which he took onto his pickup truck, but he refused to even look at the Nissan. I was able to contact another mechanic who agreed to come and pick it up. Now we needed a tow from the marina operator to get us back home, once we had cleared in with the authorities on foot. Paddling 2 km upwind in 20 knots of wind would not have done it. Now I was really glad that our guests had cancelled.

It took 3 days until we heard from our motors again. Meanwhile, we had to plead for rides to shore with our friendly neighbours, many of whom are fortunately also good friends from years ago. As it turned out, the Yamaha was permanently seized and required a new core motor, which was currently unavailable on the island as was a completely new motor of our size. The Nissan needed a new fuel tank and carburetor, which were also unavailable, but at least it was running again, sort of, the cost of tune up was \$60 and with careful nurturing, it is still getting us around.

Note that if I could have gotten both motors serviced in Curacao as planned, when we had time, we could have avoided this ordeal, but the local mechanic was too busy and tried to point us to the available services in Bonaire, so we went with it, to our detriment. Next year we know better.

We are now settling into our usual routine of life on the mooring. Every day, we go to the marina to get our bag of ice to keep our food and drinks cold in the cooler. We also drop off the laundry and the garbage, and fill our five gallon water canisters with fresh water and our gas can for the dingy motor. After the quickly melting ice has been stored in the cooler and our water canisters heaved back on board, we now load up our empty dive tanks and motor another 2 km in the other direction to the local dive shop to exchange them for fresh tanks. At their dock, we have to lift



the heavy tanks from the wildly jumping dinghy over our head and push them up onto the high dock, all the while trying to keep the dinghy from disappearing underneath. Neither in the marina nor at the dive shop can anybody embark or disembark in a normal fashion. You have to hang on to the edge of the dock at eye level and try to pull yourself up, until you can roll like a beached whale onto the landing, while your dinghy disappears underneath, looking to get its motor destroyed under the dock, bobbing and jumping wildly on the waves. There is no elegant way of doing this, particularly when you are pushing 70, like the majority of our cruising and diving friends.

Back on the boat, we wrestle the heavy tanks from the jumping dinghy and then get back on board, whenever a wave lifts us high enough to toss one on the swim ladder, while the other person is catching it. Now we are so exhausted, that we have to take the rest of the day off with resting, swimming and snorkelling. At 16:30 we have to leave again (twice a week) to catch the free grocery bus from the marina to the Supermarket. After shopping and motoring back with our treasures, there is just enough time to prepare dinner before it is dark. After doing the dishes (in seawater, scooped up with a bucket) we watch a Netflix movie on the iPad in the cockpit, hooked up with our earphones.

Every other day is diving day. After a leisurely breakfast we digest for an hour and check e-mail until it is time to suit up, assemble our dive gear and start our dive from the swim platform around 10:30. Our boat swings back and forth right above the reef, about 30 feet underneath. We admire the thousands of fishes and other sea creatures who live here for about an hour and a half and surface with

empty tanks around noon. Now we are hungry and it is time for lunch. Diving always makes us hungry, it is the sport with the highest calorie consumption, approx. 900 cal/hr. We also need a little siesta to recover from all the excitement, before we can cope with the next job at hand.

In the afternoon, we try to pump up our aging dinghy again, which is losing air at a slow but steady pace. While taking off one of the valve covers to pump, the whole inner stem and spring falls out and won't go back in, leading to rapid and total air loss in one of the three chambers. Now we need to hitch a ride to shore again with one of our friendly fellow cruisers to walk to Budget Marine and buy a new inner core and valve, a \$30 purchase. Back on the boat two hours later, we take out our inflatable repair kit and try to take out the old valve core, it has a special little plastic wrench for turning out the core, ours has 8 slots to slide into the fitting, darn, it does not match the valve, the dinghy needs one with 6 slots. We call our friendly neighbours again, but nobody has one which fits. Budget Marine does though for \$ 15.00 U.S. We schedule another trip to get the tool, as we can't change the valve without it. Coming back, I am able to take the old valve out without difficulties, but now we have to screw the new one in. Sadly, I am losing the grip on the female part, (story of my life) which is sitting inside the tube and it falls deep down into the bottom, where the floor begins. I can't even feel it anymore through the fabric. By now, it is getting dark and we hoist our deflatable out of the waves into its dinghy davits. We will try again tomorrow.

Now we have to devise a plan how to retrieve the errant valve through the hole in the fabric. Fortunately, I find a 2 foot piece of dowelling in my shop supplies and with a lot of feeling, we manage to impale the valve housing inside the suspended dinghy tube, while our vessel's stern jumps 3 feet up and down in the waves. While pushing through the fabric, I am able to position the valve against the hole, while my partner is trying to thread the core in from the outside. On the third attempt, the thread starts to grip and the two parts firmly mate together through the hole. A final twist with our new wrench and we are able to try and pump it up again. Finally, we can resume our routine of picking up supplies in town and exchanging tanks at the dive shop.

Wednesday evening is Burger Night and Happy Hour at the marina bar. We get together with our cruising friends to share a meal and a few drinks until it is time to jump into the dinghies and motor back to the boat. Sunday nights we play Dominos with other cruisers at a restaurant in town while sharing food and drinks, Monday nights are fish – ID seminars at the local dive shop, professionally taught by our friend Kim, who is a marine biologist and lives on another sailboat a few moorings further down from us. Many of us have taken part in her seminars already for three or four years. So whenever we dive, we fill out fish surveys which get registered and reported online to supply scientific data. The rest of the time, we read a lot, cook and look after the household chores or work on the boat.

We watch the cruise ships come and go on a daily basis and complain about the tour boats and dive operators who churn up the harbour with their powerful deep vee hulls creating four foot wakes and making our belongings fly off the table. On days like that, it can be quite uncomfortable on a rolly boat on the mooring. At sunset, we enjoy our sundowner and watch the sun set over the horizon while hoping for a green flash. Later, the moon appears over the now quiet waters and everything becomes peaceful and serene, except for the dozens of dinghies from all the boats beside us, racing through the darkness without lights on their trips to and from town.

Soon, the droning of the nightly entertainment can be heard all across the harbour. Long gone are the days when Reggae - or Calypso sounds contributed to the islands ambience or steel drum orchestras entertained the visitors. Now all we hear are giant Mega - Boom boxes operated by some crazy maniac calling himself a DJ, introducing himself as "Grandmaster Flash", covered from head to toe in Bling, piercings and tattoos (his grandfather was probably a Maori warrior). He is also losing his pants on stage. He is screaming animations and/or obscenities into his PA system: "C'mon Baby" and "Feel the Music!" The "Baby" can't help but feel the music, as it hits her in the head and first makes her eardrums and then her head explode, while all the window panes within a 2 mile radius are reverberating. Only people who are drunk or stoned out of their mind are moving like a bunch of Zombies, enduring the rhythm of the Megawatts unleashed at the audience. There is no melody or music, only mindless screaming and yelling from the DJ and unskilled beating on drums and bass guitars, multiplied electronically thousandfold, which continues until 3 a.m. Last year, volunteers handed out 5000 free earplugs to participants of the Curacao Carnival Parade, but it probably was too little, too late. To us boaters, all of this is just stupid and annoying.

Slowly it is time to think about the return trip home. After 6 weeks on the mooring in Bonaire without a drop of rain, the boat and everything on it and in it is covered in a coat of dust, which incessantly blows offshore in the lee of the island in the Tradewinds. We are looking at three solid days of cleaning to put everything away in the marina in Curacao. After that, we are looking forward to fly back home, where 3 months of excessive sweating and sunburn comes to an end.

We are going to be able to wear some real clothes again and enjoy the quiet and peaceful surroundings of our rural property. Maybe we will even enjoy a real fire in our fireplace in the evening. You only appreciate these things if you can spend some time in the tropics every now and then, as after a while, all the beaches start to look the same.

Do I want to live the dream full time? Not in my life, I enjoy my shore-bound life way too much!



# Boats that I have known

## Chapter 10 – The Lumber Arrives...

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It was now just after breakfast at the Roberts Island cottage and my uncle and I were off on an errand, an errand that involved “the little red boat”. So knowing that there was another boat ride in my immediate future I was excited and very curious as to where and what we were about to do. I took my seat at the front of the boat as usual and soon we were off! Now instead of the usual route that I was used to my uncle made for a new spot. This was directly across from the cottage on the mainland, right beside the Delawana Inn. Being curious I asked, “Where are we going?” “To the government wharf”, my uncle said which he pointed to in the distance. And yes, there, off to one side, sat this very large dock, with a small roof over part of it. We were soon passing by it and my uncle who had been there several times before, docked the boat with ease and soon both of us were standing on this thing called a government wharf.

Looking around I was quite impressed, not only with the size of the wharf, but how robust it was too. It was just about this time that a horn sounded in the distance and there coming down the road towards the government wharf was a very large dark green truck. My uncle waved at the driver and soon the truck stopped just short of the dock. Looking carefully at the truck I noticed that it had the letters “Coldwater Lumber” spelled out on the door and in the back of the truck was a huge pile of lumber. Turning to my uncle I asked, “Is this all for us?” He laughed and said, “I hope not! But some of it is ours for sure”.

With that said, he explained that on our way up to the cottage, when we had stopped in Coldwater, he had or-

dered the lumber to complete the new dock and now it was on the truck in front of us. Looking up at the truck I saw all kinds of wood, most of it quite long and large, and began to wonder just how this would all go together, in making the new dock.

I then asked my uncle, “How does the wood get to the cottage now?” With another smile and a small chuckle he replied, “In the boat of course - that’s why we’re here”. I then realized that this was not going to be just another regular boat ride, but one that could have an adventure or two attached to it!

The two men in the lumber truck then got out and approached my uncle “Where shall we begin?” asked the driver. He was the one wearing a peaked cap, not unlike the one my grandfather had, but instead of the words “Canadian National” spelled out, it had a large animal depicted that sort of resembled a beaver. I thought that it was quite appropriate given that he was driving a lumber truck and he seemed to be the one in charge. My uncle then asked if all the items that he had ordered were here and the driver assured him that everything, including the nuts and bolts, were aboard.

“So let’s get the heavy stuff out first and place them by the boat.”, said my uncle, as he obviously had a plan. So both the driver and his helper began reaching into their cab and began retrieving several small wooden boxes. These boxes were certainly not light, as they only carried one of them at a time and carefully placed them on the dock beside the



boat. Being curious, I looked at each of the boxes and began to wonder what they had to do with building a dock. So I asked my uncle what was in them. My uncle by this time was now seated in the boat, and was looking over each box, and examining them carefully. "These are all the nails and the various nuts and bolts that we will need to build the dock, along with a few extra items for the future", he replied. Now my uncle was a very organized man. He was reviewing each box's label and comparing that to the list he had used to order all the lumber and associated hardware when we were in the lumber store.

Soon all the small wooden boxes were piled neatly beside the boat and my uncle was very glad that everything seemed to have made it. There must have been about a dozen boxes, some of them no bigger than a shoe box, but they were all very, very heavy. My uncle then began picking each one up and placing it in the "little red boat". While he was doing this he started to explain to me how to load the boat. "You start with the heaviest items first, and place them on the bottom of the boat and near the centre" he said, "That way your boat will be nice and stable and less likely to tip over and will be much easier to handle if the water gets rough." I was very attentive and watched as each box was carefully selected and then placed near the centre of the boat. Soon all twelve boxes were aboard. My uncle looked at the loaded boxes, smiled, and then addressed the two lumberyard men "Great work, now let's get my lumber off the truck and then we'll sort it by size."

So the two men began their task of offloading my uncle's lumber. Now I had never seen so much lumber on one truck before, so I was curious how much of this would actually be my uncle's. I was careful not to get in the way and stood just off to the left of my uncle as the workmen offloaded the lumber. As each piece was offloaded, my uncle would look it over and nod and then place a small tick on the list he had in his hand. Soon there was quite a pile of lumber sitting beside the truck and all of it had this very nice aroma. Noticing that I was curious, my uncle then informed me, "This is all cedar and redwood and this is what we are going to use to build the dock with."

Then a voice from the truck announced, "That should be it!" and my uncle consulting his list nodded his agreement and said, "And it looks good too!" Looking at the lumber now scattered around the truck, I was amazed at the number of boards and all the different sizes. None were short, and I was by this time getting very curious as to how all of this lumber was going to fit into our "little red boat". My uncle then asked me to put on my lifejacket and get into the boat. Very quickly I tied myself into my jacket, carefully got into the boat and proceeded to the small front seat. "Excellent." said my uncle and then turned to me and said, "Watch this."

He then took out from behind his back seat three small wooden boxes and placed one under each of the three other seats. They just fitted between the bottom of the boat and

the seat and as he placed the last one into position he explained to me the purpose of the little boxes. "These seats are strong, but these boxes will support the middle of the seats and make them even stronger, as this is where we are going to put all of the lumber."

"On top of the seats?" I asked. My uncle replied smiling, "Yes, as some of those pieces are sixteen feet long and will only fit into our boat if they sit on top of the seats." So with great curiosity I sat in my front row seat and watched the next step with care. My uncle then turned to the two lumberyard men and said he was ready to load the long pieces first, one at a time, "Just like last time". So, several very long sixteen foot pieces of redwood cedar were passed down to my uncle, who laid them very carefully on top of the seats that were in front of him. I remember there were about ten of them and they were spread very nicely across the seats and ended up just being short of where I was sitting. To me it looked like we now had a big long table in the middle of the boat!

Next came a large number of eight foot pieces and they were placed on top of the sixteen foot pieces. My uncle was very careful not only in placing the lumber but also explaining what he was doing. "It is very important to spread the load out evenly", he said "and that is why we do it from the centre out. That way the boat will be nice and stable." So I watched as each piece came aboard and was placed side by side and the table in front of me got higher and higher.

"That's it!" called out one of the lumberyard men and my uncle looked up, smiled and said, "A few more pieces this time, isn't it!" The man replied, "That it is, but the load looks safe, and the weather is perfect for a boat ride." My uncle then got out of the boat and thanked the two men. Then I noticed he gave them each some paper currency, "You've earned it." said my uncle, and with that, the two men thanked my uncle again and climbed back into their big green lumber truck.

My uncle waved them off, and then turned to me and said, "Now it's time to return to the cottage, and we are no longer just in "the little red boat", but we are now in a well loaded, big red barge!" Looking back at my uncle, I could see how pleased he was, as all his the planning was now bearing fruit, and with the "little red boat" now fully loaded, and ready to go, I was curious about the trip back. "Will it take long?" I asked.

Smiling, my uncle wisely replied, "Longer than our trip out, but it will be interesting. So sit tight, and we'll soon be on our way!"

Next: Chapter 11 – The Trip in the Loaded Little Red Barge...