

Letter from Presto! No. 2

There is not much excitement to report, we are still in America waiting for the East wind to stop blowing so hard. Since I last wrote, we went back to Marathon and had great fun with a very friendly Manatee, who came over to inspect us a couple of times, it quite liked being tickled with the deck brush, when I touched its body and it felt very much like an underinflated inflatable dinghy.



Manatees love fresh water from a hose



Patty with Manatee, Marathon



On the 4th of March we celebrated Rodger's birthday with a little wine and sushi. After looking at the unfavourable weather report, we decided to rent a car for a couple of days and drive to Fort Lauderdale where we were kindly invited to stay with friends who we have known for over 30 years, Kenny & Linda. We also saw lots of other friends and had a very enjoyable lunch with them at the Southport bar & Grill, the place we first went to in 1974 on our first ever trip to the States. Tony & Judy from Newport were there, they were also waiting for weather to cross on Lime'n along with Corky & Sue on a 48' cat. Corky & Sue had been in the NYM charter fleet a few years ago. After 2 days in the big city we

were ready to get back to our quiet life aboard Presto!

Back in Marathon we looked at the charts and listening to the weather guru, Chris Parker on our short wave radio we decided to head north and east and leave from further up the Keys or Miami. This would give us a much shorter time in the Gulf Stream. We felt that we should have at least an 18 hour weather

window to get across. Once we were on the banks we can run off and head for South Bight in Andros.

Chart showing Cape Florida – Bimini/Cat Cay



The first night after leaving Marathon we anchored in Matacumbe Bight, where we noticed small power boats heading for a couple of private

marks and then they disappeared in between the mangroves. The next morning we headed towards them, there was nothing really showing on the chart, GPS or ipad Navionics, but we proceeded, it was fairly shallow, and quite narrow! but deep enough for our sharpie and the narrow cut took us out into a deeper water channel, inside Lignumvite Key, at one point the trees overlapped, luckily with our short rig we managed to get through and then put up the sails and away we went, saving about 5 miles.



That night we anchored in 5' of water off Cotton Key. Next night on to Tarpon Basin, where we saw what we called the lonely hearts club, a lot of single men in their 50's & 60's sailing alone. The city dock in Tarpon Basin has a good dinghy dock, nice grounds, places to put garbage, close to Publix, Ice and a gas station. The building was open to the public and it was airconditioned. We found our third frog

looking very miserable hunched on the cockpit seat, captured it in a bowl with a glass on top and rowed it ashore in the dinghy. Hopefully it is living happily ever after with its princess!



Sailing in the blue waters of Florida Bay

We ran into some friends, Bruce & Jane from Newport who are heading back on their 38' Morgan, Tiger Moth. They told us about the Coconut Grove Sailing Club, where the moorings were inexpensive, the club and its staff were extremely hospitable and there was ice, showers, dinghy service and a great restaurant. We spent a couple of nights there, and visited the "Barnacle" a house, now owned by the

State of Florida, but originally was build by Commodore Ralph Middleton Munroe, the designer of many sharpies one being the Presto, which our Presto!, based on the same idea of a round bottomed sharpie; the Commodore's favorite. We also ran into Tony & Judy's son who was in Miami racing his Moth Mach 2 in a regatta. Small world.



Commodore Ralph Munroe's "Barnacle"

Patty & Matt in the Coast Guard Seaplane hanger.





Nothing exceed like excess (Miami) 4 x 350 hp.

With a weeks forecast of continued strong Easterlies we had time and sailed down to Sands Key for a couple of days, had a lovely swim, fed the fish and did more chores to get the Presto! ready for the crossing.

Coconut Grove Sailing Club



At the moment we are back in the Coconut Grove

Sailing Club, having topped of with electric, gas & water. Tomorrow, March 23rd, we will anchor off Nixon's Beach on Key Biscayne ready for an early departure for the Bahamas. Finally the weather is changing and we should have a good crossing of 45 miles to Bimini. Until next time.

Cover for AARP Magazine, perhaps?



White Ibis heading out at dawn from Crocodile lake, Key Largo, Buttonwood sound

