

# Letter from Presto!

Man-o-War Cay, March 14<sup>th</sup> 2014

Our journey began on a sunny but cold Sunday in Middletown, RI. We were ready to head south, loaded up with supplies and unfortunately a cockpit full of snow and ice.

We took 8 days to get to our destination – Fort Lauderdale, having trailer trouble with a broken spring, snow and ice and a few stops with friends on the way. We launched *Presto!*, returned the truck and trailer to Pine Island for our partners Phil and Carroll, spent a week in Lauderdale getting the boat ready for the crossing.



Figure 1 Ready to leave the winter behind

We set sail on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> February, about noon, with a fair weather report for the Gulf Stream and Bahamas area. Not bad to start with a southwesterly wind, which strengthened and strengthened during the day, the waves got bigger and bigger, luckily they were on the starboard quarter, and Presto romped along. We put a reef in the main but after a while we dropped it, sailing under the fore between 8 and 11 kts, our highest speed in surfing was 14.8kts, yikes, then it got dark and our ETA was for 8.30 at west end, by now the wind was honking and we were flying along, quite comfortably considering the sea state, but entering West End was pretty wild, with the seas crashing over the entrance walls.

We just steered between the red and green and prayed, I said to Rodger that I was glad it was dark so we couldn't see that much!! Anyway we made it, tied up at the fuel dock and listened to the wind howling all night. Our average speed for the crossing of over 70 miles was 8 knots, not bad for a trailerable 5000 lb 30 footer!

We were glad to be in a safe harbor. Spent the next day waiting for the wind to die down, took advantage of the Marina laundry, met some other cruising people who told us about the very Northwest

Islands in the Abaco Chain, (the Northernmost Bahamas) especially Double Breasted Cays. We left early the next day for Little Grand Cay, one of the less visited islands in the northern Abacos, a neat and tidy town, cold beer, Ice and a safe anchorage, who could ask for more. We bought 3 crayfish tails from Sydney for \$5.00, and Phil the only other white man on Little Grand Cay loved to fish and on passing back to



Showing 11 kts on the GPS



his boat gave us a grouper, delicious. After spending a couple of days there we sailed off for nearby Double Breasted



Moon sea cucumber and star fish

Cays. What a beautiful place, strips of land with crystal clear turquoise channels between them, sandy beaches, tidal flats, star fish, etc. Phil, our fisherman came by and gave us a snapper, we gave him a beer.

Rodger's recommendation for the best bait to fish with is now "beer" We haven't had such good luck recently though. . . . .

Heading East by South we entered the Carter Cays, an uninhabited group of islands with 4 rather rough looking motor boats "houseboats" almost derelict looking, but come evening the fishermen came back in their Boston Whalers, started up the generators, and spent the night. We learned that they had big freezers on the boats, froze their catch and then would take it to town on Abaco and sell it; quite an operation.



Anchored in the Double Breasted Cays

Next on to Allans-Pensacola Cay, anchored in 5' and went ashore to the Allan's Cay Hilton, a camp on the beach with a phone (conch) TV, Carpet, most of the items were probably collected from the beach or the abandoned US Autec station. We were greeted by a very friendly chicken! Which seemed to be quite healthy, someone had left a stock pot hanging on a tree with a makeshift wooden lid and inside were some Chex cereal, just the thing for Robinson Crusoe Chicken.



A "signing tree" was marked on the chart and we took the trail across the island to the windward beach and there it was, a tree hung with signs from different boats some dating back over 10 years, we added a little one for *Presto!* Had a swim in the waves and headed back to *Presto!* for dinner. The next day the wind was on the nose and we motored into a sloppy chop, keeping close to Great Abaco to stay in more of a lee, heading for

White Sound in Green Turtle Cay. A landlocked bay with many cruising boats and some winter residents. We were invited to dinner at Larry & Elizabeth's who were friends of a friend on Saturday, They live in Jamestown in the summer and all the guests at dinner were from RI! Larry & Elizabeth insisted that we should sail to Manjack Cay for the day to meet Bill & Leslie, who have carved out a wonderful garden, coconut grove, and built a great house similar in design to The Barnacle in Coconut Grove. It took them 22 years, but the veggie garden is better than the one I have in RI, all this on a rocky island with only sand. They have a "marina" in a mangrove creek, which is hurricane proof and perfect for turtles, tarpon and bone fish.

Heading south again we sailed in the shallow past Don't Rock, the sea was running and therefore quite a swell, at one point the waves were breaking behind us! The deeper keel vessels had to go round Whale



Cay and those we spoke to said it was quite rough out there.

Guana Cay was quiet, not too many boats in the harbor and has a fantastic windward beach, protected by a reef, reported to be the third longest barrier reef in the world. Could be true as it runs the length of the Abaco Islands.

Now we are at Man-o-War, fixing a few items, the solar panel is working well and we can use the computer, listen to music and turn on the lights without worrying about the batteries getting discharged.

That's all for now from Rodger & Patty on *Presto!*.



Sunset from Bluff Harbour, Green Turtle Cay 10<sup>th</sup> March 2014