

ABACOS ISLANDS TRIP

Feb 22 - Feb 28, 2006

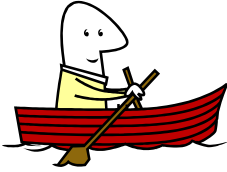
Chapter 1: Getting There

Just to insure that the Abacos Islands are really there my wife Barb and I decided to fly down and explore the real life's of cruisers.



With the gracious hospitality of Rich and Judy, **The Puddle Pirates**, on board Splendor Hyaline, we arrived at Marsh Harbor somewhere around 1:30 on the 22nd. We were scheduled to arrive about 12:30 but sometimes airplanes and time schedules never meet, as the airline explained, "the plane needed a few mechanical adjustments in order to fly out to sea". For those of you that want to try something like this our flight from BWI was at 6:30 AM which required us to arrive at the airport around 4:00 AM to insure that we had enough time to obtain boarding pass, check bags, and pass through security. After doing all that, I really believe that you do not have arrive 2 hours before the departure

time. In any case, we found the gate and along with our traveling companions, Bob and Cindy from Last Mango who had made similar arrangements to stay with Dave and Nancy, **The Fearless Voyagers**, on board The IllyBay we settled in to wait for our departure to Miami. As we were waiting who shows up but Jim and Anita of Jams, they were taking the same flight to Miami and



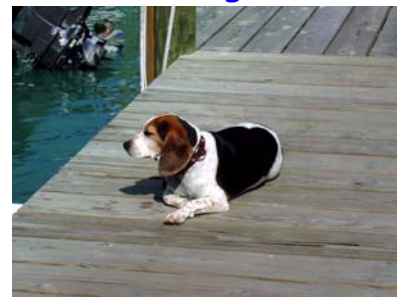
continuing on to the Dominican Republic for a week's vacation in the sun and warm temperatures and there were looking forward to seeing the flying dink. Now, I'm not going to mention what we said to the flying dink story so you will have to ask Jim and Anita to explain about the flying dink.

Flying into the Abacos is really something to see for as the plane banks over a group of Islands called the Berry Islands with shoal depths of 6 to 12 feet and then you cross over the Northwest Providence Channel with depths of more than 1 mile. Continuing northward you approach the Abacos Island and Cays which appear to be not much above the high water line with white sandy beaches and lagoons and bays with white bottoms and patches of sea grasses. On the islands you can see scrub pines and small growths of green here and there. Along with that, the changes in the water colors representing different depths and small cuts and lagoons. Upon arrival in the upscale airport of Marsh Harbor you realize that you have arrived, you are now on island time. The temperature on bounce down was in the mid 70's with the sun shining with about a 10 knot breeze to cool you down and get you ready for island immigration. Having been to the BVI's and experiencing their official immigration, this was nothing like that. You stand in kind of a line and come to two officials that check the form that you filled in on the way over and they put the official stamp in its place and remind you save the form since you will need to get off the island. Having passed that part of the

procedure we were waiting for our checked luggage when a big burly islander approached and asked if we were waiting to get our bags. Upon responding yes, we were escorted to the baggage cart and we pointed out which were ours upon which he pulls them off the cart, slings them over his shoulder and off we go past customs with a wave and into a waiting taxi van. Now that's the way to go, by that time the taxi driver knew where we want to go and we are off, around the one traffic circle zipping down the one and only highway, on the left hand side of the road, towards the big city of Marsh Harbor with its one traffic light and to our destination Harbour View Marina.

Chapter 2: Reunion

Upon arrival at the marina we were greeted by part of the gang who rushed out the door of the marina like we all were long lost survivors of the cold winter lands of the north. There was Rich, and Judy and Dave, Nancy, Abby the dog that knows she is human, and Dave's daughter Amy who was vacationing with them for the past few weeks. The reception was a joyous one with everyone asking questions and welcoming the lost travelers to the islands. Of course after that we meet the owner of the marina Troy who also owns Snappas the bar and eating establishment along side the marina and a power boat rental service. Oh, I forgot we also had to meet Henry the official four footed greeter and "hay you got anything to eat" guy. By the way, Henry also has a brother, Hank, but he was off on an important mission somewhere on the piers. As a side story it appears that Hank and Henry had to show who was boss when Abby arrived on the docks and they ganged up on her. From what we understand the next time they met Abby, in her true nature, jumped them both and



made it clear that she was here to stay and don't mess with me. Needless to say all is calm on the docks since that time and all are friends. Only that Abby loves to mess with them when they are given snacks by trying to steal them before they can chomp them down.

After going aboard and settling in by getting into island clothes and having a welcoming Abacos rum punch which consisted of two kinds of juices, two kinds of rum and one kind of liquor our hosts Rich and Judy suggested that perhaps we would like to stretch our legs and take a walk so that we could become acquainted with where a few things were. As we walked down the pier it was really neat to be introduced to everyone that we meet and everyone was very welcoming. The marina residence consists of a mixture of power and sail with the range of sizes of the power vessels from 38 through 56 feet. Not to be outdone the sailing community ranges from 38 to 50 feet. There are very few full time residents, the majority of the vessels are transients and come during the winter months then head back to the coastal ports of the USA for the summer season. Do the owners spend all their time at the marina? While a few might, most use the marina as a base and take trips to various Cays. What is the percentage of live-aboards? At this marina I would say about 10%, and they follow the sun, south in the winter then back to home waters during the summer. What size vessels do live-aboards own? That varies, anywhere from 48 feet to 38 feet at this marina but, for those on the hook in the harbor, it ranges down to about 32 feet. What kinds of vessels? Now, that varies from home built catamarans to the power boats that exceed 100 feet and have 440 volt power cables as big as your arm. Woops, sorry I got carried away with where I was in the story. Oh that's right; we were going for a walk. Well, out of the gate of the marina we trudge turning left and passing, George the Conk Guy, George

goes out every day and catches conk brings them back, cleans them and makes the best Conk Salad that I have had the pleasure of eating. Onwards pass Sapodilliy's Restaurant and Bar, and past the Mooring Charters and Curly Tails. We had to stop in at a small shop that Richard has an investment in, the best jewelry on the island, and I was very surprised to learn the Conk's occasionally have been found with pearls inside. Next in the list of shops was the Rolex shop, yup that's correct, Rolex with only one L. Crossing the main street, which is accomplished by looking right then left, and if the coast is clear make quick tracks across the street. After following a side road for a while we came to Abaco Beach Resort & Boat Harbor. This place has everything you could want for once you get there with your sport fisherman there is no need to go anywhere else, it has shops for the girls, a large beach, a swimming pool with a bar connecting and docks with slips large enough for just about any size boat. As the name implies they even rent condos so you don't even need the sport fisherman. Needless to say the girls were thirsty so we had to sample the mixologist at the bar, after-all it was a long walk right? On the way back we passed the Buck a Book trailer, when asked what it was Judy explained. It is run by a woman that cares for animals and the inside her 48 foot container has accumulated a very large collection of paperback books from cruisers mainly, and sells them to other cruisers for buck a book. All the money that is made is put towards caring for the wild horses on the island. At the present time she has enough to start inoculating program against diseases. Judy also explained that she helps out and has organized several other cruisers to operate the store when the woman is gone on business or raising funds from other locations.

Well we finally made it back on board and it was just in time to have a recuperation rum punch from our long walk in the Abaco Sun.

Say, I did title this chapter reunion didn't I? The Reunion was Wednesday night at the Jib Room which is located across the harbor at the Marsh Harbor Marina; part of its fame is that it is the only BoatUS cooperating marina in the entire Abacos. On Wednesdays the Jib Room serves ribs, so you say what is special about their ribs? For one thing you must have reservations and it is suggested that you make them early since they will only take a limited number of reservations. For this special night Judy made reservations for 12, more about the 12 later. They start early in the morning preparing the ribs which are then slow cooked over a pit fire for the rest of the day with their special barbecue sauce. After a few happy hour indulgences and at 7:00 everyone starts to get in line and they start serving. Hanging onto their huge plates while they spoon out salad, coleslaw, potato salad, bake beans, and then comes the rack of ribs. The size of the rack almost takes up the entire plate. Are they good? Well that is an understatement, they were **fabulous**. Since the Jib Room is on the Puddle Pirates list the things to do on Wednesday and Fridays for their specials, Friday is steak night, Judy had talked a local band into coming back for this Wednesday and playing since she told them that she would have at least 12 guests. The band was Rake 'n Scrape and the main man is aka Brown Tip who is also known in the area as the saw man. It is truly amazing what 4 guys can do with a boom box a few CD's, maraca's, an assortment of saws with knives and forks and a mike. It was great, and the music, yes I said music was great. Within a few minutes most everyone was jumping, twisting and having a great time. Needless to say there were some in our party that got carried away were leading others into the corruption of the night. Just think of it, here we were over 700 miles away from home but we had an FMYC reunion. I have inserted a picture of the FMYC members that made their way into the Abacos Islands for this reunion.



If you can't recognize who we were here goes; Rich and Judy of Splendor Hyaline, Dave and Nancy of The Illy Bay, Paul and Monica of New Broom, Stephen and Barbara of Tenacity, Bob and Cindy of Last Mango and Bob and Barb of First Light. As guests, there was Stephen and Barbara son and friend whom were visiting from England. Missing from the picture was Chazz from Spice Girl, who was there somewhere but was probably looking for a few new acquaintances. As you can see FMYC was well represented in the Abacos. In total at the present time FMYC has a total of 5 vessels in residence and I can report that the FMCY burgee's snaps freely on all vessels. It was unfortunate that Tom and his wife on Sea Tryst could not be there for this affair but they just flown back to the states. After all this fun and excitement we dinked back to the boats and finally decided to turn in after our first big day in the lives of true cruisers.