

The Preliminaries

Ed and Deb Close took their 37 foot Tayana “Ariel at Home” from coastal Georgia down to the Turks and Caicos in the British West Indies in 2010 with the idea of having more time to sail in the tropics. Twice they had headed out for the Virgins but ran out of time; they reasoned that if the boat was in the tropics they could fly in and enjoy a lot of sailing. During 2011 they were not able to make the trip, and they decided in 2012 to bring the boat back to southeast Georgia.

The Characters

Ed Close contacted Jack Sterrett by email from the Turks in mid-November, 2012 about being crew to bring the boat back to Georgia, roughly 1,000 nautical miles, and Jack readily agreed. During a Golden Isles Power Squadron meeting the next day he mentioned the trip to Coy Hodges who also agreed to make the trip. One of Coy’s special interests is the weather, and he provided a lot of information and good advice on the weather during the trip.



Ed Close is Canadian, and he and Deb live in the small town of Picton outside of Toronto. He has sailed for years, and retired from a

career in law enforcement and as the owner of a bakery. He had “Ariel” at the Brunswick Landing Marina in Brunswick for several years before



taking her to the Turks.

Coy and Jack have been active in the local Power Squadron for six years (both having

attained the rank of Senior Navigator) and felt the trip would be a good practice of the skills they had been studying. While both had done some long trips to the Bahamas and other places in their own boats, a trip of the magnitude Ed needed provided a special challenge. The past Commander of the local Power Squadron, Charles Wilsdorf, was extremely helpful in providing weather information via email for the longer passages.

Jack brought a foul-weather suit to have on board, an inflatable life jacket, an extra tether safety line, an extra hand-held GPS, and a Spot Messenger. The Spot sends a prerecorded message via satellite to ten people, giving them the exact latitude and longitude of the boat. The receiver of the Spot message can click on that information and see a Google Earth picture of the exact location of the boat, often within a few feet. In a marina, for example, the message receiver can see exactly in which slip the boat is located. A Spot message was sent everyday of the journey at 8:00am and 8:00pm to the three wives and seven others: Greg Phillips and George Bloodworth (experienced ocean travelers and good friends), Glen Walker (an insurance agent and good friend), Werner Oppen, the “engineer” and friend from Dock 5, John Wood and Darrel McCook (other great friends) and Ed’s son Wayne. Also included was Charles Wilsdorf, past Commander of the Golden Isles Power Squadron, and the instructor for most of the courses Jack and Coy

had taken. Charles is also one of only 5 in the country to receive the Charles Chapman Teaching Award. (A summary of the Spot messages follows this narrative.)



The Preparation

Jack and Coy were driven to the Jacksonville airport on November 27 by Lynda, Jack’s wife. They left St. Simons at 3:00pm and arrived at the Clarion

Hotel on the airport property at 4:30pm. Coy treated Jack and Lynda to a nice dinner at the Red Lobster restaurant with the idea that it might be the last really good meal they would have. (It was also Jack and Lynda’s 38th anniversary.) While underway it is often very difficult to prepare meals, especially hot meals when the boat is in rough seas. Both Coy and Jack were tired and were asleep by 8:00pm.

On Wednesday, November 28 the “crew” ate a full breakfast at the Clarion (including fish). The hotel valet took them to the airport and they were checked in and at the departure gate by 7:30am. The small American Airlines plane left on time (9:20am) to Miami, where they had lunch at Wendy’s and boarded a larger plane for Provenciales (called “Provo” by the locals). Jack’s airplane seating companion (Neil) owned a scuba-

diving business in New Jersey, and was taking 10 students down to Provo for the many excellent diving opportunities. It turns out Coy, seated several rows in front of Jack, sat next to one of the students. This woman owned a motorcycle dealership in New Jersey, and Jack changed seats with her in mid flight. (The teacher and student wanted to sit together.)



The flight arrived in Provo on time (2:25pm) but clearing Customs took almost two hours. At least two large planes landed at the same time, and there were probably 200 people to be processed. When Jack and Coy cleared (they were among the last), Ed was waiting for them. He had taken his son Wayne to the airport earlier in the day to fly back to Canada, and having the crew arrive the same day made the logistics easier. Jack and Coy chatted with a few people while waiting in the Customs line, and took a picture with a young lady who owned a horse farm in Kentucky.

Jack tried to call Lynda with his U.S. Verizon telephone, and also sent a Spot message. Lynda emailed him that Verizon charges for a foreign country were very high and that Jack had already been billed for \$50. Jack turned off the phone for the remainder of the trip.



The three sailors went to a small restaurant/bar on the water in Provo for dinner and beer. They sampled the Turks and Caicos local beer, and found it was good. (Turns out Ed had put four cases of the beer on the boat for the trip.) Ed had provisioned the boat for the trip with basics, but took Jack and Coy to a nice grocery store to buy particular things they liked (extra orange juice, peanuts, more lettuce, hot dogs and as variety of snacks) and then they all went back to the

boat. After stowing their gear (Coy was in the V-berth and Jack was in the enclosed cockpit or on the portside settee in the main cabin -he moved around- and Ed was in the starboard settee in the main cabin). They slept well and arose around 5:00am to prepare for leaving. The marina Ed had the boat in had shallow water, and the boat had to have

high tide to leave (high tide was at 9:20am). One of the chores to be done before leaving was to return the rental car Ed used to go to the airport (renting a car is much cheaper than taking a taxi). The rental place did not have numbers for the cars they rented (they said numbers were complicated to keep up with), but rather had names on the front of the car which was a pretty good idea. The car Ed had rented was named Prancer. In doing final checking on the boat it was discovered that the depth sounders did not work. In checking electrical connections the GPS quit. The GPS was restored but the depth sounders were not. Around 8:30am the Customs officer came to the boat and cleared the boat and crew to leave. There was one last review of the weather, and one last cup of hot coffee. The last thing the marina owner (Bob) told Ed was that if they needed anything in Mayaguana (the next destination) to call "Skully" on the VHF radio. He was the man to fix anything.



Leg One:

Provo to Mayaguana Thursday, November 29



Ariel pulled out of her slip at 9:00am sharp with calm weather and a prospect of good weather for the roughly 60 mile trip to Mayaguana. The boat bumped on the bottom when leaving the marina, but it was soft mud and created no serious problems. During the day the waves increased in height, and the ride became rougher. Seas probably built to the 8-10 foot range, and

half way to Mayaguana a rogue wave hit the boat on the portside which caused it to pitch violently. Jack and Coy were in the cockpit and Ed was down below (the turbulence had caused the television mount to break as well as a lot of items below to be displaced.) Ed had gone below to get an apple and to try to protect the television. As the boat healed over one way and then hard the next way, Coy was almost thrown overboard (he was at the helm) and Ed was thrown very hard against the port cabin wall. Jack was in the cockpit in front of



the wheel, and was able to hold on. Jack did see out of the corner of his eye Coy being thrown hard to port: the port support for the wind generator kept him from leaving the boat. Ed was thrown hard against the portside of the boat. Coy sustained a bad bruise on his hip (from the port cleat but surprisingly not any head injuries from hitting the wind generator support), but Ed was not so lucky. He got up and came to the companionway holding the back of his head. When he removed his hand it was covered in blood, and he was very disoriented. Jack got him to sit down in the cabin and cleaned the blood



from the one inch gash he had received. Fortunately the bleeding slowed down, and Neosporin and a band aid were applied. The cut was caused by blunt trauma and not by anything sharp, which was probably a blessing. It appeared to be about 1/8inch deep, and could have required stitches. Turning back to Provo was not a good option (Coy and Jack were not familiar with the marina they had left and probably could not get the boat back in unless it was high tide). The gash on Ed's head seemed under control, but his mental faculties were confused. His eyes were not dilated and very fortunately he did not lose consciousness. He kept asking Coy and Jack where we were going (to Mayaguana) and where we had left from (Provo). He was not sure why he went below (originally it was to get apples-then he started looking after the television). Coy and Jack were concerned but decided to continue to Mayaguana. The seas were still very rough. Ed had not made a route on the GPS, and they were not exactly sure where Ed planned to anchor. The next couple of hours were unsettling.

Coy kept asking Ed questions to check his memory. It worried us that he did not remember his son's departure the day before or much about the trip. After two hours and a lot of prompting by Coy, Ed's memory started to return. The bleeding had stopped (the band aids would not stick but a lot of Neosporin helped to keep out any infection) and although still groggy, he seemed much better.

Ariel dropped her anchor at an anchorage in Horse Pond Bay outside of Mayaguana that Ed had used on the way down to the Turks and Caicos two years earlier. The boat was about 3 miles from the town of Abraham, which the crew planned to go to in the morning to clear Customs into the Bahamas. Ed was the chef for the trip (the galley was too small for more than one person) and for dinner they had chicken fingers, beans with onions, and boiled potatoes. They finished off a great meal with coconut/chocolate brownies. Also a new bottle of Bailey's Irish Crème appeared and was sampled.

They arose at 6:00am, and Ed made coffee and oatmeal (which became the normal routine). Jack put more Neosporin on Ed's cut. After several attempts, they were unable to free the Manson anchor (it was snagged under a large rock). Ed was not in favor of having Jack dive down to see if he could free it (Ed estimated the depth to be 18 feet), and he called "Skully" on the VHF radio. Skully answered as Bob had said he would, and replied he would call us back in 15 minutes. At 9:30am Ed called again and Skully said he had to put gas in the boat and was about to leave (we found out later he had to find a diver). At 10:30am we still had not heard from Skully and Ed and Jack went to the bow of the boat to cut the anchor chain (which would free the boat but leave a \$600 Manson anchor on the ocean floor). As Ed had the bolt cutters in his hands, Coy saw Skully coming toward Ariel in a very small pram. The boat was very hard to see with the waves and the shoreline, but he arrived and with the help of the diver they were able to free the anchor. Skully then agreed to lead them into town for clearing Customs. Ed asked what the charges would be, and they agreed to \$125 for freeing the anchor, taking them into town for Customs in his boat (saving the crew the trouble of launching Ariel's dingy), and bringing them back to the boat. (The harbor was too shallow for Ariel to go to the dock, and Ariel had to anchor out from town about a mile.) Skully mentioned that he worked at the local airport three days a week, and was finished for the day. He said that the crew of Ariel would be



his job for the rest of the day, and he and the diver stayed with the three sailors. Skully and the diver were given a couple of beers, which they seemed to appreciate.



Upon arriving in town Ed and Coy went to the Customs office and Jack went to the Batelco Telephone Company. Jack had an "unlocked" telephone that needed to be initialized. The phone was used in the Bahamas last year, and the Bahamas now

have a policy of canceling any numbers that are not used within 6 months. Laverne of

Batelco was nice enough to call Nassau and ask to have the old number reinstated. The only other option was to purchase a new “sim” card, which could not be done on this island. Coy used Skully’s phone to call Charles for an update on the weather, which was very helpful. Skully arranged for the group to have lunch at Reggie’s, where they had terrific grouper sandwiches. After lunch they stopped by the Batelco office again and used their computer to check the weather. To get the phone to work Jack needed some information about the old phone number which was on a card back on the boat. Skully gave him a ride back to the boat (Skully got more beer) and Laverne called Nassau again about the telephone. She said she expected it would take an hour or two if they could reinstate the number, otherwise we would need to buy a sim card when we reached Freeport. Jack purchased \$30 worth of minutes for the phone from Batelco in the hopes that it would work, and just as they were leaving the area it did. Everyone made calls home to assure them that we were safe.



Skully and the diver delivered Ed and his crew back to Ariel at 4:00pm (and got still more beer). The next destination was to be Long Key, which was approximately 134 miles north. The trip would be overnight, and they expected to arrive in the afternoon of Saturday, December 1. The watch schedule was set on a rotation of three hours, with at least two people “up” in the cockpit at night. Much of the time all of the crew was in the cockpit. Inflatable life vests and tethers to the jack line were required of anyone in the cockpit at night.

Leg Two: Mayaguana to Long Key Saturday, December 1



Ariel continued sailing all night, rotating the watch every three hours. The fuel filter clogged and the engine shut down at 1:00am, and the jib was unfurled rather than trying to replace the filter. (The seas still were not calm.) The boat, with a reefed jib, continued to make approximately 7 knots per hour, almost what it was doing with the engine running. Ariel was also saving some fuel. The boat had 4 fuel filters and they were a little worried that they might have a problem if filters only lasted a couple of hundred miles

each: the estimated total trip distance was a little over 900 nautical miles. Ariel traveled approximately 125 nautical miles from 4:00pm on Friday to noon on Saturday, and arrived at Clarence Town around noon. She was anchored a mile or two from the marina in order to change the fuel filter: Ed was worried about the engine stopping while maneuvering in strong winds within a marina. Bleeding the air from the lines was a big problem, and Ed finally diagnosed the problem to be the bleed pump button being stuck. He removed the pump head, and after an hour or so the engine was restarted. On pulling up the anchor the deck anchor switch on the port side jammed, which caused another slight delay. Ariel has two separate windlass switches and the one by the wheel worked.



The marina dockhand guided Ed into a slip at the Flying Fish Marina that was protected from the ocean by a large stone wall, but a slip in which it was going to be very difficult to back out of. The winds had picked up significantly and in docking the port navigation light was damaged. (It was the dockhand's (Marvin) first day on the job and he did not know how to handle lines.) Also, it turned out that the slip had no electricity, and the option was to either run the engine at idle or run the 2000 watt Honda generator Ed had on the boat. The dock manager (Jason) had promised to bring an extra power cord (we were not near a pedestal), which he apparently forgot about. When he did bring the extension a couple of hours later, the nearest electrical pedestal did not work. It was



ironic that Ariel was the only boat in the marina, and that the slip was well protected but probably the hardest to get out of and one of the few without electricity. The Tayana is a terrific boat, but with a full keel it does not back well at all. Ed made a decision in the future to not take the first slip the dockhands want to put you in: he should have refused that slip and opted for one not so restricted. The winds had now picked up and it was obvious that the boat was going to have to stay in the marina for at least two or three days, when weather predictions showed improved conditions.

Ed and the crew were able to all take hot showers for the first time in a couple of days, and it felt great

After securing the boat and showering, they walked the mile and a half to town. They passed a couple of churches and ended up at the town docks where they met the “Ocean Gambler,” a local fisherman who also was waiting out the weather. His ultimate destination was north to the Abacos, and the likelihood of both boats leaving Clarence Town on Tuesday or Wednesday together was discussed. Jack was able to buy 7 large lobsters (5.5 pounds) for \$50 from the Gambler, which insured that they would eat well while in Clarence Town. Ed was able to get the internet for an update on the weather, which by now had sustained winds over 30 knots.



On a more personal note, being on a boat for a couple of days of bad weather tends to keep you and your clothes either wet or very damp. All of them had been in pretty wet clothes, and Coy and Ed had developed rashes caused by the salt water. It was not pleasant for Jack to hear daily updates (this lasted for several days) about the condition of their rear ends. (“Coy, is the Anusol doing any good for you?”) Some things are better not so publicly discussed.

Jack was able to call Lynda and check on the weather; she was at Joe Sirica’s house for the annual Power Squadron Christmas Party. Charles Wilsdorf was sending regular weather updates to Ed’s computer, which helped them decide when they could leave for the next destination. While Coy and Jack were below, they heard what sounded like Ed working on the windlass. When Jack went above, he saw Ed fighting with the staysail in the high winds. The winds had caused the sail to partially unravel, and it was struggling very hard to either rip or pull the boat into the dock. The line securing the bottom of the sail was wet, knotted up, and could not be freed. Jack called to Coy, and together they tried to hold the line down so Ed could unfasten it. Ed was finally able (winds were now 40 knots) to loosen the hasp holding the sail to the deck, and the sail, still connected at

the mast, flew out at least 50 feet. Finally the line was untangled and the sail was pulled back to the boat. One option had been to cut the line and let the sail go, and fortunately that was not necessary. The force of the wind on the sail had lifted Jack off of the deck a couple of times.



Ed complained in a nice way to Jason

that not having power was a pretty serious inconvenience. Jason seemed to be a little friendlier after that and did ask us occasionally if everything was going alright. He mentioned that the cost of gas to run the generator was probably less than he would have charged for electricity, which was an interesting comment from a marina manager. Incidentally, his wife Wendy was much more of a “people person,” and she and Jason had a very cute puppy named “Emma.

Ed, Coy and Jack had a terrific dinner of lobster and boiled potatoes and a salad and turned into bed early.

Sunday, December 2

The sailors awoke after a very windy night at the dock, and Ed, as became his custom, put the water for coffee on before saying “good morning.” He served the coffee and made egg omelets with lobster, which was a great way to start the day. After breakfast the winds had died down some and Ed and Jack worked on the port navigation light. They found the problem to be a blown fuse (likely from all of the rain and sea water during the recent passage). Some duct tape helped to seal it from the elements. Next they tackled the non-working windlass deck switch. When the switch was removed they found that the return mechanism was broken and it could not be repaired. Ed had a remote control for the



windlass and he and Jack put that in the place of the deck switch. It was wired so the remote control would raise the windlass but you still had to press the starboard deck peddle switch to lower the anchor. Ed was satisfied with the repair. The repairs were finished at 12:30: Coy had been studying for the Weather course that he was to begin teaching in January. The group started to walk back into town, but were detoured by the “Rowdy Boys”



bar and restaurant and walked for a mile or two on the beach. As they got close to the restaurant they saw a woman picking up what appeared to be shells. She also had something larger in her hand. When they got back to the restaurant they ordered a couple of beers and watched the television (which they had not seen for several days). They were particularly interested in who had won the Georgia-Alabama college football team (Alabama), and fortunately they were able to see some of the highlights of the game on the sports channel. They went back to the boat and had another lobster dinner. The sustained winds continued to be 25 knots, and they were glad they were at a marina. There were two sailboats anchored out in the harbor entrance that had decided to weather the storm. The crew expected them to give up and come into the marina, but they never did. They had to be having a pretty miserable time. The sun set early (5:30pm) and the boys went to bed around 8:00pm. Ed left the Honda generator running to charge the batteries until it ran out of gasoline, around 10:00pm.

Monday, December 3

The crew awoke to a serving of the usual cup of coffee, and they were served “gruel,” an affectionate name for oatmeal with brown sugar. The battery bank power had fallen to 31%, a pretty substantial decrease from 100% the previous evening. Ed had turned off the refrigerator, so the drop was even more significant. He decided that the new wind generator was part of the problem, and



disconnected it totally. When the sun was shining the two solar panels seemed to be putting power back into the batteries, which was comforting. At noon the voltage in the batteries had risen to 12 volts, which is still far from the desired 12.6. Ed again turned on the Honda generator. They walked on the beach and came back to lunch and a couple of beers at the Flying Fish Marina restaurant in the marina. Coy treated the group to lunch. The cook was a lady named “Hermie,” who had worked for the marina for 9 years. After talking for an hour or so on the boat everyone turned in around 10:00pm.

Tuesday, December 4

After a morning of coffee and gruel, we found the weather to be improving slightly. The batteries registered 71%, which was better than the day before. Ed started the Honda generator and everyone studied the weather. It looked like there was an opportunity to leave the marina in the afternoon and travel overnight. The problem was the boat would

have to stop after 12 hours: the next destination had reefs and had to be navigated in the daylight. If Ariel stayed in the marina until morning she could leave and be at the next destination during the daylight hours and could cross the reefs easily. It was decided to wait until the morning. In the forward planning the crew also decided they wanted to stop at Lucaya for at least a day. If the weather cooperated it was possible for Ariel to be home either Monday, December 11 or Tuesday, December 12. If there was another weather setback the crew was prepared to stop at Lucaya and fly home (Coy had to be home by December 20 and Jack by December 22).

Coy began studying for his weather course and Jack and Ed walked back into town. The boat had lost a chain snubber during the stuck-anchor ordeal, and Ed was anxious to have it replaced. He got a map of the island and wanted to go to either a marine store or a hardware store. The nearest places were 6 or 7 miles away, and Jack suggested that they start walking that way (there was only one road on the island) and probably someone would stop and offer them a ride.

(They had just missed a chance of a ride from one of the marina workers.) When they got to the docks where Ocean Gambler was still docked they found a lady sitting in an older pickup truck. Ed leaned into the truck and asked her if she would give them a ride, and she asked where they wanted to go. He showed her the hardware store marked on a map, and she said “Get in.” Jack jumped on the back of the pickup truck and within a couple

of minutes they were going down the road 40 miles an hour (on the opposite side of the road from the U.S.). The lady was named Patricia, and was the city dock master. Also, ironically she was the woman they had seen on the beach. She had the shells she had collected displayed on the dashboard of her truck, and the thing she had in her hand was her portable radio. Jack and Ed were never sure why she was parked at the dock, since there did not seem to be any boat traffic that day.



She mentioned that a supply boat comes to town three times a week, and that there was a mail boat that came once a week. When they arrived at the hardware store, Ed found a suitable substitute for the snubber that had been lost, and offered to buy Patricia some gas for her trouble and to treat her to lunch. Getting \$20 of gas took a while (Patricia's truck had an obstruction in the filler pipe), and they stopped at a local restaurant Patricia selected for lunch. Jack had meatloaf, Patricia had fish (which she did not like),



and Ed had chicken. Patricia drank a couple of grape sodas, and Jack and Ed sampled the local beers (Strong Back, Kalik, and Sands). Patricia had a terrific personality and was a lot of fun. She brought them back to the boat, and wanted to see what it looked like inside. When the pickup truck pulled up to the marina Coy was walking near the boat and he was very surprised to see Jack in the bed of the pickup and Ed in the passenger seat. Patricia visited for a while, and on leaving wanted to take a picture. Jack had her camera and her phone, and when she took the camera it slipped out of her hand and went into the ocean. A fishing boat had come into a slip near Ariel, and one of the crew volunteered to dive for the camera, which he did. The camera did not work when it was retrieved, but Ed assured her that the pictures on the disk would probably be alright. Patricia said that the camera was actually her daughters but and that she had a camera and would give her camera to her daughter. Ed got her email address and they agreed to send her another camera. Jack and Ed had eaten lunch, but Coy had not. Ed had some canned oysters and crackers on board, which Coy had for dinner.

Ed called Charles who emailed a complete weather report for the next couple of days. Ed, Coy and Jack also viewed "Wind Guru" and "Wunderground Weather." The conclusion was that the weather would permit moving in the morning. The rest of the bottle of Bailey's was finished (another of their daily customs) and the crew went to sleep. To charge the batteries as much as possible Ed turned on the Honda generator until it ran out of gas. The plan was to purchase ice in the morning to help the refrigerator keep everything cold.

Leg Three: Long Key to Alice Wednesday, December 5

Everyone arose at 6:00am, and after coffee and gruel, began preparing to leave. As mentioned, the slip at the Flying Fish Marina was close to a rock barrier wall, and backing Ariel was not going to be an easy task. It was decided to manually spin the boat



so the bow was pointed out, which was done with the help of Marvin, the new dockhand. Ariel, with the bow sprit and davits on the back, was probably close to 45 feet long, and there was barely enough room to turn her around. The marina did not have any ice which was disappointing (the refrigerator had been turned off the night before to save the batteries). In addition to one more lobster, we had hamburger, sandwich meat and other perishables to worry about. Today

was Deb's birthday, and Ed was thoughtful and had sent her an email the prior evening.

The initial target destination for the next day was Conception Island (they actually stopped at Alice), and Ariel left the marina at 8:00am. She had her main sail flying by 9:00am and the jib by 9:30am. The boat was making over 7 knots without the motor, which made everyone feel good. Beans with onions and a roll were served for supper, and the crew sailed continuously until 10:30pm, when the wind clocked around quickly from the east to the south and then died. It also started to rain, so the sails were taken in and they motored for the rest of the night. The auto pilot also quit briefly at 10:30pm with the wind changes, but started working again within 30 minutes. The larger waves were probably the reason.

Thursday, December 6

Ariel passed Conception Island and Cat Islands during the night and arrived at Sandy Point at 6:00am Thursday morning, as planned. The boat was in very shallow water (10-13 feet) for a several miles, and then had 34 miles to go in skinny water before going through Fleming Reef. Once past Fleming, there was clear sailing and deep water to Freeport/Lucaya. They calculated that if they could keep going they would arrive in Lucaya at 3:00pm on Friday afternoon, which would give them barely enough time to enter the narrow channel before sunset. Ed was particularly tired after the overnight passage, and the weather had again taken a turn for the worst. For several hours the rain was so hard you could not see beyond the boat. Ed had gone below to sleep and Jack was at the helm. The Garmin GPS did not show clearly Fleming Channel, where they needed to go over the reef into the ocean. Ed was awakened at 4:00pm and the decision was made to stop at a place named Alice Town. Alice Town is a small settlement off of Hatchet Bay that has had free mooring balls available for sailors for years. Ed assured us

most Bahama cruisers have either heard of or had stayed in Hatchet Bay. As they approached the mooring ball the engine on Ariel again quit, but Coy and Jack were able to tie up to the mooring on the first pass. The problem was again a clogged fuel filter, which was to become a recurring problem for the rest of the trip. Ed changed the filter and everyone slept from 4:00pm until 9:00pm. Coy was the last to wake up and was worried that we had eaten supper and not told him (a common problem when suffering from sleep deprivation!). He was assured that we had all just woken up; Ed cooked up a great meal of hotdogs. Half of the diesel fuel they were carrying on the deck (15 gallons) was put into the main tank, and then everyone went back to sleep until 6:00am on Friday morning.

Alice Town had a Batelco tower which could be seen from the boat, and Jack called Lynda after supper. She mentioned that Greg had received a Spot message that morning and had called her to warn of the bad weather we experienced. She also sadly reported that her brother, who had been ill, had passed away.

Leg Four: Alice to Lucaya Friday, December 7

After the usual coffee and gruel, preparations were made to leave, which included another check of the weather. The plan was to be underway by 9:00am but they actually were making way at 8:00am. The next destination was Lucaya, approximately 140 nautical miles northwest. They calculated arriving with plenty of time to go into the narrow inlet. The Grand Bahama Yacht Club, and excellent marina in the past, had gone into bankruptcy and was now private. The only marina option was to the left of the inlet going into Lucaya (the Lucaya Marina). It was convenient but not near as nice as the Grand Bahama Yacht Club.

Ariel passed through Fleming Channel around 10:30 am and was now in the open ocean with plenty of water. They motor-sailed all night.

Saturday, December 8

The weather was good and Ariel made excellent progress toward Lucaya. Arrival was shortly after 8:00am, and the crew was pleased to make the 140 nautical miles in 24 hours. They got into the inlet without trouble (it is narrow and shallow, and it was low tide), and tied up at the fuel dock. The engine died again as the boat approached the fuel

dock, and Ed used the next to the last fuel filter. He decided to top off the fuel tank to make sure there was enough to make the last leg to Brunswick. The marina put 40 gallons of diesel fuel in the tank, and a bag of ice was put into the refrigerator. (Ed had decided that the fan on the refrigerator was not working which that caused it to stay on too long, thus draining the batteries.) Ed inquired about getting more filters, and found that the nearest marine store was near the airport, a half hour cab ride from the marina. He calculated that the engine could run 15 hours on the last filter, and that Ariel could sail a good part of the remaining leg. He did have three smaller filters which could work if they had to use them, and the crew opted not to try and get more fuel filters.



After tying up Ariel everyone went ashore and was treated by Jack to a great breakfast at Zorba's Greek Restaurant. The next order of business was much needed showers: Jack and Coy used the marina facility but Ed could not get the shower lock to work and ended up taking a shower on Ariel. Jack went back into Lucaya to walk around while Coy and Ed opted to sleep until 3:00pm. Jack walked around the many shops and had a salad and a sandwich at a Pizza Inn restaurant. He went into the Casino, put two dollars in the slot machine and won \$20, and decided to stop while he was ahead. When he got back to the boat at 2:00pm, both Ed and Coy were awake. They all went back into town, where Coy wanted to try a recommended fish



sandwich at one of the local restaurants. After he and Ed ate, they went to the casino where Coy lost \$1. They then went to a Corona Beer bar where they could buy two Corona beers for \$5 (Jack had been there earlier) and enjoyed the afternoon watching people and sipping beer. They stopped at a liquor store and got more beer (the Turks and Caicos beer was almost gone) and another bottle of Bailey's Irish Crème. They went back to the boat and

checked the weather several times, and sampled the new bottle of Baileys. It turns out that Coy did not know about Bailey's Irish Crème before the trip, but had grown to like it (a lot).

The last leg of the trip was to be from Lucaya to Brunswick, approximately 320 miles, and would require at least a three day safe weather window. There was an option of going into Fort Pierce or several other Florida ports if the weather turned bad. North winds go against the Gulf Stream and make for a very bad passage: they would not attempt to be in the Gulf Stream if any weather indicated northerly winds. All of the weather reports indicated an unusually long good-weather window (four days), and the decision was made to leave Lucaya the next day. Ed, Coy and Jack tried to calculate boat speed to Brunswick, which was dependent on the lift the Gulf Stream would give Ariel. Normally Ariel would average 6 plus knots per hour, but the Gulf Stream flows northward at 2-3 knots, giving the boat a potential of 9 or more knots per hour. With good winds they could average 10 knots for much of the trip. Ed was optimistic and felt the last leg of the trip would be under 40 hours, or an average speed of around 8 knots. That meant if Ariel left at 8:00am she would arrive in Brunswick in the dark. They contemplated leaving as late as 4:00pm the next day, which would put the boat in the Brunswick Channel at noon, when the tide would be favorable for the last 13 miles. The final decision would be made in the morning.

Leg Five: Lucaya to Brunswick Sunday, December 9



The crew woke up to coffee and an extra large helping of gruel for the coming long passage. Jack woke up early (5:00am) and took a shower. He was interested in going back into town before the planned departure now of 2:00pm, but Ed and Coy were not enthusiastic. The weather was checked for the last time, and it still looked favorable. The forward running lights were rechecked and found to be not working, nor was the light in the bathroom. Ed ran a wire from one of the main cabin fixtures to the running lights and that fixed the running light problem (not the bathroom light). The stern light did not work either, but taking the lens off and cleaning the contacts got it working. (It would later quit).

Around 10:00am Ed felt they should get underway. Sitting around waiting was not productive and Ariel was certainly not getting any closer to home. He checked out of the marina, and they were underway by 11:00am.

The crew motor-sailed with the jib past Freeport and held a more westerly course to allow picking up the Gulf Stream earlier. (A more direct route toward Brunswick just after passing Freeport would have taken longer to reach the Gulf Stream.) Ariel picked up speed from the Gulf Stream around 7:00pm, and the winds were from the southeast but were not very strong. With the sails up she only saw speeds of 9 knots occasionally, not the 10 plus that her crew had hoped for. The early sailing was in calm weather for several hours and then the sails were brought in due to relatively light winds and some rain. The moon was coming up later each day, and did not come up until after 3:00am Monday. It was far from a full moon and did not give much light by which to navigate. The horizon was still discernible, which made the journey more pleasant.

Monday, December 10

At 3:00am the fuel filter quit again, and this time it was not easy to remedy. After changing the filter the engine would start and then stall. It seemed as if there was an air pocket in the fuel but after repeated bleeding the engine would not continue running. Coy and Jack had raised the jib when the engine quit and they were able to maintain a 6 knot speed.

At 8:00am Ariel was well off the coast of Florida, somewhere south of Titusville. Jack estimated that they had traveled 125 nautical miles and had approximately 180 to go. During the day the last 30 micron fuel filter was installed. There were three 10 micron filters, but they were expected to clog much faster than the 30's. Ed continued to pump the diesel primer for a few seconds after the engine restarted which temporarily solved the problem. Somehow this kept the engine running for several more hours without having to replace the fuel filter.

Visibility deteriorated during the evening and became very poor. There was very hard rain from 6:30pm to after 11:30pm, which reduced visibility to zero. After midnight several vessels were spotted, and Ariel came within a mile of one vessel towing another. Coy talked with the captain on the radio and assured him that we had him in sight. The other vessels spotted during the night appeared to be cruise ships, but the number of ships seen was smaller than was anticipated.

It is often very difficult to judge where other ships are headed at night, especially when visibility is poor. The crew saw vessels that had their running lights on the back of the boat instead of the front which was confusing, and it was difficult to recognize the yellow

towing light on the boat mentioned above until after it had passed (it looked white in the rain and heavy fog).

AIS system-equipped radios (automatic identification system) show the approaching vessel, the direction the vessel is heading, the speed of the vessel, indicate if it will pass your boat's path, and gives the operator the estimated time and distance of the nearest approach. In addition to all of that, the radio will indicate the ship's destination (it makes a big difference if the ship is going to Nassau or Miami) and the ship's name. The AIS radio mike can be cued and it rings the other ship's radio in a scrambled code so others cannot eavesdrop. It is a terrific radio and we expect will be standard (or required) equipment on all boats in the future. Ariel did not have an AIS radio, and the radar did not function, so the only way to tell which way a ship was headed was to keep it monitored. If it stayed in the same place for a long time (for example, at 1 o'clock on the starboard side of the boat) a very close call or collision could occur.

Ariel continued through the night with the help of the jib, and only occasionally saw over 10 knots on the GPS. Ed, Coy and Jack began to realize that they would not get to Brunswick early Tuesday morning, but more likely around noon. They knew the boat would slow down when she left the Gulf Stream, hopefully somewhere north of St. Augustine. (The boat actually left the Gulf Stream south of St. Augustine.) Ariel was then expected to go back to her average speed of around 6 knots.

Tuesday, December 11

They motor-sailed through the night, and left the Gulf Stream somewhere around St. Augustine. The engine quit three times, but Ed was able to pump it back to life. The fuel filter was changed for the last time at 6:30am, using the first of the 10 microns. Arrival at the dock was calculated to be noon, and it was hoped that the filter would hold out. Ed had put in over 70 gallons of fuel (18 before we left, 15 from the deck tanks, and 40 in Lucaya) and felt any contaminated fuel should have been burned up or filtered out. A likely explanation for the fuel problems was an accumulation of sludge on the bottom of the tank, which the rough passages had agitated. Ed will thoroughly clean the tank when the boat is in Brunswick.

A Spot message was sent at 8:00am as usual. The boat and crew had traveled approximately 300 miles from Lucaya and were off the coast of Jekyll Island. They had land in sight, and that meant that their cell phones worked. One of the first calls received was from Charles, who had been tracking the journey. Coy and Jack called home to report their location and likely arrival at the marina dock around noon. Werner Oppen,

the “engineer” on Dock 5 at the marina, also had calculated Ariel’s position and hailed her on channel 16 on the VHF radio. The marina monitors channel 16, and Cindy Dennis from the Brunswick Landing Marina called to welcome everyone home. The mike on the VHF radio stopped working about this time, and Ed could receive messages but he could not send them. He switched to a portable VHF radio to make the final preparations to dock.

St. Simons channel was entered at 10:30am and Ariel motored the last 13 miles to the dock. Jack had bet Coy that Charles would be at the dock to welcome them home: he



was there along with Werner and Lynda. Greg Phillips and George Bloodworth called to congratulate the crew on the trip. Ed, Coy and Jack had cleared U.S. Customs by 1:00pm, and moved Ariel to her new home on Dock 5. Ariel was docked in front of Jack and Lynda’s boat “Martini,” and across from Coy’s boat, “Makana.”

Welcome Home Ariel and Ed!

Three Men and a Boat



Narrative of a trip from Provo to Brunswick, Georgia

December, 2012

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