

Our Great Sailing Adventure May 29-June 6, 2017

Eddie & Cindy Crane and Rob & Donna Reiley



Monday, 5/29/17, Memorial Day - We started off on our great adventure to sail in the USVI with Rob & Donna Reiley on their boat. The trip down was easy. We left Marco at 7am, had an easy drive over the Tamiami Trail to the Sheraton Airport Hotel to park our car. Then the van took us to the airport, where we had an easy check-in. We had a nice Cuban breakfast at KuVa Restaurant. Our flight AA 1391 to St. Thomas was a very smooth flight. We had thought we would get in at 3:30, but we misread the ticket and we actually got in at 2:30. After we quickly retrieved our bags, we jumped into a 10-person taxi for the ride to the Red Hook Ferry. It was really a rollercoaster ride up over the mountains and on very



steep narrow switchback roads. What fun!! At the ferry dock, we bought our tickets and stopped for a couple of Carib beers at **Capt. Quinn's Bar** while we waited to board the ferry for our 20-minute ride to St. John where we met Rob & Donna. It was so good to see them! After Cindy retrieved all our bags (because Eddie stepped outside of the line and could not cross again to the



boat) we went to **Joe's Rum Hut** in Cruz Bay for a few rounds of drinks and some bar food.

Next, we took the dinghy ride over to the boat, Legacy II, which was on a mooring ball in **Caneel Bay**. What a beautiful boat! This was a 46' monohulled sailboat by Beneteau, just like the new boat that Rob & Donna just bought. It was very comfortable, with a huge cockpit area, a nice salon area, and 3



staterooms, one was the v-berth which was for Rob & Donna. We slept in one back stateroom and used the other as a closet area. Although the boat does have the 3 staterooms, it is actually perfect for 2 couples so that there is no crowding. After settling in to our new accommodations and having a few beers, we turned in for the night. We had the first of our nightly rainstorms and this one was pretty heavy with thunder and lightning. Eddie slept through the entire thing but Cindy was awake opening and closing the hatches and getting used to the roll of the boat. The morning brought more "rock n roll" as the ferry boats, which take people and cars from St. Thomas to St. John, cause big waves.



Tuesday, 5/30/17 ~ After coffee and blueberry muffins this morning we motored to Hawksnest Bay where we got another mooring ball and enjoyed a relaxing morning with some brief rain showers. After lunch, we took the dinghy in to Gibney Beach, a very beautiful quiet beach with lots of soft white sand and lovely aqua colored water. We had a nice swim and saw a large turtle in the water and a huge iguana on the beach. Caneel Bay and Hawksnest Bay are home to the huge Caneel Bay Resort which was built by Laurence Rockefeller on an 18th century sugar plantation.



Actually Mr. Rockefeller had a huge influence on the entire island of St. John. During the 1950s he purchased over half of the entire island, about 5,000 acres, and then turned it into a National Park, preserving forever its natural beauty for all to enjoy. There are 39 beaches, many of them quite secluded. There is great hiking on the island with over 20 miles of trails inside of the park alone. There are historic sites, such as abandoned sugar cane factories, ruins of 5 windmills, petroglyphs, and a small museum dedicated to the very first biosphere in the world. There are huge mangrove forests, rocky cliffs, salt ponds, and very large mountains.

The island was once home to the Arawak, Carib, & Taino Indians. The Danes took possession of the Virgin Islands in 1694 and officially colonized St. John in 1717. Most of the settlers at that time were Dutch. The Danes and Dutch cleared the land, terraced the steep hills, and planted sugar cane. They soon began to import slaves from Africa to do the very hard manual labor. Back then, St. John was the "poor cousin" to St. Thomas and St. Croix, so the local farmers could not afford to buy the "best" slaves (those who were more docile), so they ended up with "troublemakers" (Africans who were unwilling to surrender their independence so easily). Two such slaves, Prince Aquashi and King Bolombo (both noblemen in their native Africa) were two St. John slaves who refused to live in chains. They organized other slaves and staged an island-wide revolt in 1733. They massacred the European plantation families and held the island for six months against the best efforts of the Danes and the British. Only when hundreds of French troops were brought in, were they finally defeated. Even then, the rebel slaves

refused to give up and many chose mass suicide by jumping off cliffs into the sea at Mary's Point. New planters arrived after the revolt and the plantations continued using slaves until the practice was legally abolished by Denmark in 1848.





In 1917, the US purchased the Virgin Islands from Denmark for \$24 million in order to have a military base in the Caribbean. Today the US Virgin Islands are a US territory meaning that the people are US citizens, have US passports, and pay US income taxes, but they cannot vote for President. They elect their own local government.



After our pleasant swim, we motored over to **Francis Bay** and got another mooring ball for the night. Dinner was on the boat...grilled chicken, quinoa with wild rice, salad, and bread.

Wednesday, 5/31/17 ~ After a comfortable night of sleep we woke up to another rainstorm. Donna made delicious breakfast tacos. Then we went out in the dinghy to **Francis Bay Beach**, where we had our first big land adventure. We took a hike to **Annaberg Historic Sugar Mill**, an old sugar cane plantation. It was a nice walk along the road and through the woods. We went past a huge mangrove forest which had lots of small holes. We first thought they might be snake holes, but we discovered they were for the many crabs on the island. We saw the manchineel tree which is very poisonous. The fruit was once called "Death Apples" and can kill you if you eat it. You also do not want to stand under this tree during rain as water dripping from the bark will cause a very bad rash. We saw a very large abandoned windmill, ruins of the old slave quarters, the cistern area, and an old cook house where we sampled "dumb bread" (Johnny Cakes), and a delicious local fruit drink which was icy cold. On the hike back we spotted 3 deer and a rooster. When we arrived back at the beach we had a very nice cool swim and then went back to our boat for a good lunch of sandwiches before we started one of our longest trips. It was very windy and we motored through **The Narrows** to our next destination. If we had tried to sail this leg of the journey we would probably still be there! We were the only boat out for quite a long time as it was extremely windy with threatening skies.



There was rain all around us. It was an exciting ride with winds of over 20 mph coming right at us and HUGE waves. We saw the ruins of the old customs office on Whistling Cay at Fungi Passage. We went past the ruins at Annaberg which we had hiked to earlier. Rob pointed out **Waterlemon Bay**, which is very rocky but has great snorkeling on a calm day and is where one of his friends proposed to his wife. We went past **Haulover Bay** where old boats of the past would put ashore, unload their cargo and carry it overland to the other side at Round Bay. Once we rounded the far east end of St. John we went into





Round Bay, a very large bay with several smaller bays. We anchored at **Hansen Bay** and it was finally calm. There were 6 other boats here when we arrived, but 2 of the catamarans moved over to Long Bay. There were two older monohulled boats which looked like they had either large families or a sailing school group. The

teenagers were all having lots of fun, jumping off the boats, swimming, snorkeling, and playing games. The beach area here is owned by two women who set up an "honor bar" under their big shade tree. Donna and Rob have enjoyed going ashore in the past. After another delicious dinner, we had a peaceful night on the boat.



Thursday, 6/1/17 ~ This morning we went ashore by dinghy and one of the owners, Doonia, said that she was getting a food truck to set up soon, so the "honor bar" was not open today. We met a nice young couple from the Virginia area who had just moved down to St. John to live and open a day spa in Cruz Bay.



We walked a bit, took a nice swim from the boat, then we motored to **Coral Bay**. We had lunch at **Skinny Legs**, a really cute, funky bar/restaurant which reminded us a little of Schooner Wharf Bar in Key West. They served HUGE burgers and beers. After lunch, we did a little shopping in some of the shops, where Cindy bought postcards and a book on St. John. We did the long walk over to the other side of the bay (because there is only one dinghy dock) to the market for re-provisioning of the boat. It was a long, hot walk, but we did get to see a herd of wild goats, some wild donkeys and some chickens. We had a couple of drinks at **Aqua Bistro** before we trudged back to the dinghy dock and our boat. We watched the sunset and, due to still full stomachs, we had an early night to bed. Tonight, it was very windy and the boat



rocked a lot due to the winds and traffic in the bay. We also had two rain showers overnight.





Friday, 6/2/17 ~ After a light breakfast we pulled up anchor and motored to our next cove, **Great Lameshur Bay**. Cindy drove the boat thru some very windy, snarly seas with big waves. We traveled past Leduck Island, past Eagle Shoal, and around Ram Head into the



bay where we got a mooring ball in this very beautiful quiet bay. This is the area where the very first biosphere project took place in 1969. Cindy, Eddie, & Rob took the dingy in and hiked to the



Tektite Research Museum at VIERS (Virgin Islands Environmental Resource Station). This was a very interesting little museum and we must read more about this project. On the hike back we



saw a mongoose and a small Bananaquit. This is also the area where you can hike the Reef Bay Trail to see a waterfall and the petroglyphs. (We didn't do this.)



Donna had stayed back on the boat to relax and she made us a very delicious lunch of boat nachos. Then Cindy, Eddie, and Donna went for a nice snorkel and saw a Southern Stingray, some decent small, but colorful, corals and many



fish...Parrotfish, Sergeant Majors, and Blue Tangs. Then after boat showers, we relaxed until our dinner. Tonight's dinner was a Smorgasbord of pork chops, lamb chops, and "pie" with peas. It was very delicious. We had a nice night with just a brief shower or two.





Saturday, 6/3/17 ~ This morning Cindy & Eddie cooked a breakfast of scrambled eggs, toast, and fruit. We did a trash run and then began our journey back to **Caneel Bay**. This morning we sailed (YEA!). This was a long distance past Reef Bay, Fish Bay, Chocolate Hole, and Great Cruz Bay. There are some really large homes along the hillsides as this is an area that is not part of the National Park. There was lots of boat traffic as



we passed Cruz Bay where the ferry boats go. After getting a mooring ball we got cleaned up and took the dinghy into Cruz Bay



for Happy Hour at **Joe's Rum Hut**. We were excited to learn that there was the Virgin Islands Celebration going on with street faire and a steel drum competition. Several groups of young drummers were there, each dressed in their own distinctive colors. This made it quite pleasant to stroll around the streets looking a possible dining options. We stopped



for some drinks at another bar before we climbed the hill to the market. (Amazing how steep these streets are!!) We went over to



Mongoose Junction where we strolled through some shops and went upstairs to **The St. John Brewers**. Mongoose Junction is a lovely area which we would like to explore again. We had a

delicious dinner at **Rhumb Lines Restaurant**. Our meals had an Asian/Thai flavor. Back to the boat by dinghy. We had a good night's sleep.

Sunday, 6/4/17 ~ After a breakfast of blueberry muffins, we sadly loaded our gear into the dinghy for a quick ride back into Cruz Bay where we were able to catch the 11am ferry back to Red Hook Ferry Dock on St. Thomas. After our arrival, we got into a nice newer taxi for a very pleasant ride back to the



airport. This time the driver went a different route, and gave us a talk the entire time about the history, politics, and flora and fauna of the Virgin Islands. We checked in at the airport and waited for our flight which took off at 3:35pm and arrived back in Miami around 6pm. After getting our luggage we had no problems getting the courtesy van back to the Sheraton Airport Hotel for our car. Thankfully our GPS got us through Miami easily and once we hit Rt. 41 we were on our way home! We stopped at The Pit BBQ for a delicious meal and were pleasantly surprised that



they had a live Cuban band playing, with people salsa-dancing at the outside bar. We arrived back home to Marco around 10:30pm and were greeted by Kim who was at the house checking on the kids.

It was a great trip and we thoroughly enjoyed our time sailing and motoring around St. John with Rob & Donna, who are the ultimate hosts!

