

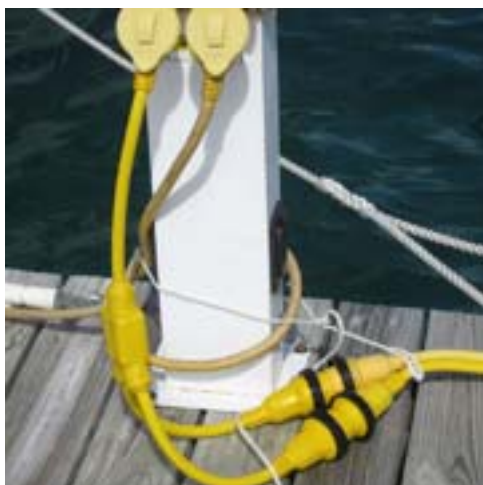
18th Trip Report – Friday, June 6, 2008
Nassau, Bahamas – Labor Day 2008

We got up at 5:45am to see Skip off to the airport – then we went back to bed. The only thing we had to do today was arrange with Stewart Cove's Dive Bahamas to pick us up. That dive operation is on the other side on the island. They are going to get us at 7:15am tomorrow right at the marina which is very convenient since I thought we were going to have to meet them at one of the hotels.

The harbor at Nassau is not a quiet place to dock. The boat rocked and rolled during the night and required more lines than usual to keep it off the dock.



Yesterday I learned something I was never taught in my years in Electrical Engineering school. It appears that if you need two 30 amp circuits and only have one, you can use a splitter.



There is something about this configuration that doesn't make sense – but at least it worked because the boat systems are on one circuit and the A/C is on the other. (The breaker box is locked, but when they came to turn it on, it appears that they have a 40 amp breaker protecting a 30 amp circuit. This is typical Bahamian electrical design.

Not quite everything was closed for the holiday – though this is a bigger holiday than I imagined. We were able to do some grocery shopping and were able to buy some gifts. We went to downtown Nassau where three cruise ships were in port. About 20% of the shops were open to take advantage of this business. The only restaurant that was open was the local Hard Rock Café – not what we really wanted.

When we got downtown, a parade was in progress. The local bands and dancers made up in enthusiasm what they might not have had in skill.



I regret not being able to attach the video. It was fun to watch!!

I've been working on using up our Bahamian money. While the US dollar is used interchangeably here with the Bahamian dollar, the same will not be true when we get back to the US. Most of the coins are the same size and denomination as ours. One exception is their dime, which is between our nickel and quarter in size and has scalloped edges.

Tonight we ate at the restaurant in the marina. We have to get our dive gear together and put the cameras in their housings for tomorrow's early start.

Saturday, June 7, 2008
Nassau, Bahamas

Stuart Cove's was right on the mark. They told us to be ready for a 7:15am departure from the marina and they were in the marina by 7:10am



Stuart Coves is a big dive operation. They pick up from all the major island hotels, including those on Paradise Island. To do so, they run a fleet of busses. The dive operation is based on the southwest corner of the island about 45 minutes from Nassau.



They do diving, snorkeling and run these little one man Subs. You sit upright on them with your head in a bubble. The dive operation is also a base for movie operations. A number of movies, including several James Bond movies, have been filmed there. Today a crew from "Bollywood" was filming an Indian remake of a water based movie.

The location for Stuart Cove's is actually the old set for "Flipper," the old TV series.



They handle a lot of people very efficiently, sorting people by their capabilities onto different boats, loading tanks and taking care of safety.



Note in the prior picture, the scuba tank is actually in the air. The boats are all Newton 46's – one of the best boats made for diving.

The good news is that this diving operation is far superior to Bahama Divers. The bad news is that the diving is ok, but I wouldn't book a trip to Nassau just to dive there. However, if I found myself in Nassau with time to kill, I would dive with them again.

We had a photographer on board. She did some really nice work. If you would like to see the photos, click on:

<http://www.photorelect.com/scripts/prsm.dll?eventthumbs?event=09JP06Y8>

With any luck, it will bring up the pictures she took of our two dives.

We had conch again for dinner. We figure we have only one more possibility of getting more and that is when we get to Bimini.

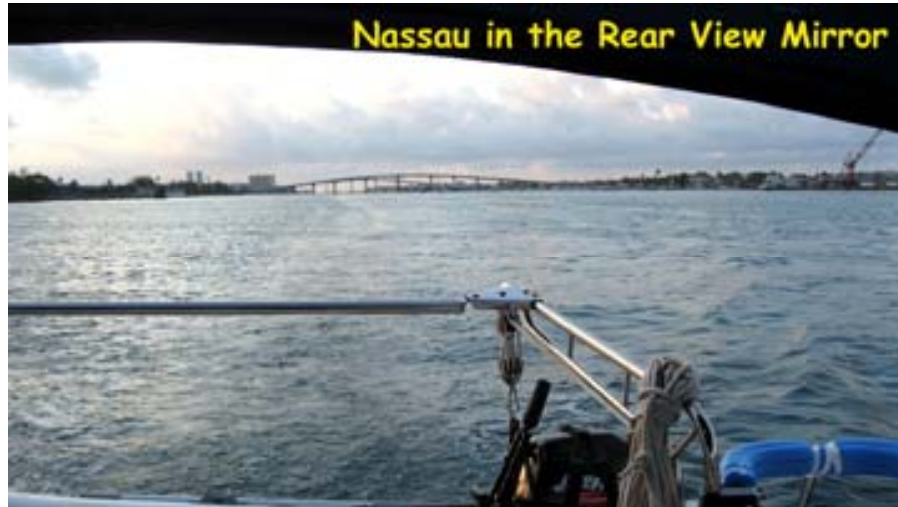
Tomorrow we leave Nassau for the two day trip to Bimini. As you may recall, this is a passage without land we can reach in one day. We will overnight somewhere on the Bahamas Bank. We will anchor in 15-20 feet of water a long ways from anything we could hit. We are anxious to see Nassau in the rear view mirror.

Jerry and Sandy
S/V Rum Daze

19th Trip Report – Sunday, June 8, 2008

Departed: Nassau, Bahamas	Miles Traveled: 85.0 nm
Arrived: Mackie Shoal, Bahamas Bank	At Anchor: 7:00 pm

We left Nassau very early – 6:30 am – hoping to make a lot of progress getting across the Bahama Banks. Happiness truly is seeing Nassau in the rear view mirror. Nassau has only a little of the friendliness that characterizes the Bahamian people, it is dirty (though there are significant efforts to spruce the place up), and it has a big crime problem.



Getting into Nassau Harbor involves contacting Harbor Control for permission. I have never heard anyone being denied permission, but I assume that when a cruise ship is coming in, they may be more cautious about the traffic. We got immediate permission to leave. I was somewhat surprised to find ourselves contending with a cruise ship at the narrow entrance to the harbor. Fortunately he was moving slowly while waiting for his pilot and we were able to get out of his way.



We had relatively light winds (from 5 to 12 knots) but they were on the beam so we were able to motorsail most of the day. The winds dropped too far to keep the sail full as we reached the evening hours so our last hour was on the "iron sail" alone.

Tomorrow we had planned on going into South Bimini and the Bimini Sands Marina. It was a very nice marina. Unfortunately, the tides are not right and we can't get in except near high tide. Since we want to leave early in the following morning for the crossing back to the US, waiting for a 4pm high tide is not an option.

We are now planning on going into North Bimini. If they have fuel, we will fuel up at the Blue Water marina and take a slip there for the night.

Monday, June 9, 2008

Departed: Mackie Shoal	Miles Traveled: 34.7 nm
Arrived: Cat Cay, Bahamas	At Dock: 1:15 pm

We started off the morning planning to go to North Bimini. However, we later concluded it might be nice to try out Cat Cay. It is further south than Bimini – an advantage when crossing the Gulf Stream – and the marinas in North Bimini have a significant current to deal with when maneuvering and docking. In any case, we changed our route on the fly and went to Cat Cay.

Cat Cay is a favorite stopping place for members of our sailing club when they cross from the upper end of Key Largo to the Bahamas. The island is privately owned. You can only go ashore if you are a guest of the marina or actually own property there.



This is not a cheap island. We were looking at the real estate offered for sale. A lot goes for \$1.85 million. Houses are typically \$3.5 million or more. A 30' slip in the marina goes for \$120,000 and an 80' slip goes for \$280,000. Diesel here was \$6.20/gallon – the most we have spent, though in all fairness, diesel prices have been rising rapidly in the last few weeks and this is the last place in the Bahamas we bought diesel. 13.3 gallons cost \$82.50. The guy right in front of us had a relatively small boat and only took enough diesel to get him to Miami where prices are cheaper. His 120 gallons cost \$744. Fortunately they do take Visa. Unfortunately, such charges have a 5% convenience fee added to them.

The marina is very nice. It has its own airport with a 3,000 foot runway so that your guests can meet you here and not have to make the Gulf Stream Crossing.



The island seems to have remnants of an old plantation. There are dry stacked rock walls around several, what appear to be very old buildings on the property. They have Peacocks for ambience.



They have two restaurants on the island. We only have one choice because the other requires slacks – something I am not carrying.

We have a very nice slip. Apparently, the club rents out the members slips when they are absent. Our slip was for an 82' boat so it gives us lots of room for our 40' sailboat.



Tonight we have to figure out where we are going next. We will cross into the US tomorrow and will probably stay either near Key Biscayne or near Key Largo. In theory, we will be able to clear both customs and immigration without having to make a physical appearance. For customs, you are required to order a decal and provide them with advance information on your boat. Then, when you get in, you call and they clear in the boat. That is what we did last year. However, we still had to make a physical appearance at immigration within 24 hours. As a result, we made landfall at a marina in Miami close to the cruise ship docks where we could report.

This year, in certain states, there is something called the "Local Boaters" option. We had to make an appointment with Immigration, take down our passport and register in advance. This should let us clear immigration also by phone – though they always reserve the right to make you appear in person. The option is available in Florida, but not in many other states. At one time Skip thought he might do the return trip and he tried to register in Texas. He couldn't. He actually arranged his flights so that he had time in Ft. Lauderdale to get registered.

Jerry and Sandy
S/V Rum Daze

20th Trip Report – Tuesday, June 10, 2008

Departed: Cat Cay, Bahamas	Miles Traveled: 51.2 nm
Arrived: No Name Harbor, Florida	At Anchor: 2:45 pm

We left Cat Cay to make the Gulf Stream crossing. Seeing the last of the Bahamas behind us makes the fact that we are going home really sink in.



The weather forecast was for winds from 5-10 knots from the Southeast. In reality, we had no wind and no seas. You could have waterskied from the Bahamas to Miami.



When we started the day, we thought we might get to Rodriguez Cay off Key Largo. It would have been an ambitious 80nm day. Unfortunately, with no wind to help us and with 2.5 knots of Gulf Stream to overcome, by the time we had crossed the Gulf we had concluded that we would not get to Rodriguez Cay until well after dark. As you may recall, we already tried that once on this trip and we decided to avoid it this time.

Crossing the Gulf Stream meant lowering the Bahamas courtesy flag and hoisting the yellow quarantine flag until we could clear Customs and Immigration for the US. Our Bahamas courtesy flag has served us well for two trips and I think it is time we replaced it.



There aren't a lot of places we can find a sheltered anchorage on the Atlantic side of the Keys (or at least that we know about) for a boat of our size and draft. So, we diverted to a place that had intrigued me, but we had not yet visited. The place is No Name Harbor, which is a part of the Bill Baggs Florida State Park.



The park has the oldest structure in Miami – the lighthouse. This park is on Key Biscayne, within site of both Miami and Stiltsville. It has an award-winning beach, hiking trails a restaurant as well as a harbor for overnight anchorage.



There was only one other boat anchored in this harbor for the night.

Once we got anchored, I went about clearing us into the US. Using the Local Boater option that I discussed in the last trip report, the process was virtually painless. I had to provide the registration numbers for both Sandy and I, make a declaration of what we had purchased and were bringing back into the country (spend less that \$1,600 and no fruits or vegetables), let them know where we were coming from and where we were currently located. I did not have to provide passport numbers, the boat documentation number nor the boat customs sticker number. We had previously provided all that information when we registered for the Local Boater option. With that done, I was given an 18 digit clearance number and told we didn't have to report in person. Sweet!!

Tomorrow we are headed for Rodriguez Cay. We will stop at the Pilot House marina and top off the fuel. With no wind forecast, we may have to motor the rest of the way home and after the Pilot House, our next possible fuel stop would be Marco Island – 36 miles from home.

Wednesday, June 11, 2008

Departed: No Name Harbor, Florida	Miles Traveled: 42.3 nm
Arrived: Pilot House, Key Largo	At Dock: 2:30 pm

On yet another day of calm winds and seas, we departed for Key Largo. On the way, we again went past Stiltsville.



Stiltsville is just over a mile due south of Key Biscayne and is a collection of houses that are literally built on stilts in very shallow water in Biscayne National Park that is located in between Biscayne Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. Before hurricane Andrew in 1993, there were over 20 structures that dotted the seascape. With sustained winds in excess of 190 mph., and much higher gusts of wind, many of the structures simply did not stand a chance against the power of nature. Although many of the structures have been through a dozen hurricanes over the years, it became one of our finer laws that the owners of the properties (or the leases) could not make any repairs to the structures, so, they would simply fall into disrepair. Some of the structures are in fantastic shape and make a wonderful place to gather with friends and family to enjoy nature from an entirely different perspective.

Our day was largely uneventful. Winds never exceeded 7 knots so what help we got from the sail was minimal. We weren't in a hurry since we had no plans to go farther than Key Largo. We did decide to go into the Pilot House Marina because I wanted to top off our fuel tanks after the amount of motoring we had done getting here from Cat Cay (16 hours.) We also

decided to take a slip at the marina to get access to the showers and get another chance to have dinner at the Florida Keys Conch House.

As I had previously mentioned, the canal into this marina is narrow and we need at least a mid tide to successfully navigate it. The tides are such that as long as we leave by around 7 am tomorrow, we should be ok. The early start is not a problem since we plan a long day to end up in the area of Cape Sable tomorrow night. The lighthouse that marks this canal that I had trouble finding on our way in last month, shows up well in the daylight. We had the fuel dock to ourselves when we got in and we got our usual slip right at the Pilot House restaurant.



The weather forecast is much the same for the next week. The expectation is for very light winds from the east or southeast of 5 knots with afternoon thunderstorms, mostly over the interior and east coasts of Florida. The XM satellite weather forecasts have gotten interesting, as there is now weather to show on the screen. Storm cells and storm paths are downloaded and updated dynamically. Hopefully, this will allow us to miss the worst of any bad weather. There was a big storm front with lightning showing right over Cape Sable this afternoon. Hopefully, tomorrow won't be the same.

Jerry and Sandy
S/V Rum Daze