

TINA

A Family Voyage – South Africa to Florida

Bruce Whiteley

This book is dedicated to Bruce and Dave and John and Nancy and Mary and Dale and Sally and all of the people who helped us on our way, but mostly to my Lampie, who didn't want to come along, but did anyway.

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Getting *Tina* Ready

At the university where I work in Durban, South Africa, the academic staff has a coffee room in which we sit and discuss such esoteric topics as the price of potatoes (and of everything else) or the quality of the meals in the cafeteria across the quadrangle (low, lower, lowest ever). Once at such a gathering someone mentioned the actions of one of my colleagues' neighbors, a woman who left her house by the front door every morning, walked around to the back door, came through the house, and exited by the front door again. She repeated this circle throughout the day, every day, with truly remarkable dedication, not even pausing for meals. She would eat in the evening after the sun went down and retire thereafter, presumably to gather her strength for the next day's journey.

The psychologist in our midst immediately diagnosed the lady's behavior as "abnormal" and suggested that she could be cured if she were strapped to a bed in a locked room and had lots of electricity shot through her body every week. My own reaction was one of sympathy. Nothing is insane if you do it yourself; did I not leave my house by the front door every morning, drive the usual route to the university, follow the same route to my office, my lectures, and the coffee room, then return to my front door every afternoon? True, my routine was a trifle more complicated than the lady's, but might that not indicate a greater degree of sanity on her part? To balance her advantage, however, I did have contact with my students, whose brilliance and stupidity have always amazed and excited me.

The only significant difference between the wandering lady's life and mine lay in the fact that she was constantly alone, while I had a wife, Walda; twin son and daughter, Philip and Karin; and Ouma, my mother-in-law, who usually spent the winters with us in Durban to escape the cold of her home in the Orange Free State. These people made that part of my life hectic, confused, chaotic, and entirely worthwhile.

The problem was to find some activity that would be exciting and challenging and that could be combined with family life. What better solution than to go sailing?

There were inevitably a few complications inherent in the realization of such a dream. Both Walda and I had teaching jobs. We were encumbered by the usual possessions – house, furniture, car – and we had never sailed out of sight of land. But these hurdles could be overcome if we put our minds to it. We had leave due and could apply for coincidental vacations of a year's duration. The possessions were only things that could be sold or stored. The business of sailing could be mastered easily. After all, we had owned a thirteen-foot dinghy ten years before, and we had crewed on larger yachts a few times. If we could arrange everything, we could travel over to visit my mother in Titusville, Florida, U.S.A., a nice long sail

If you want to go sailing, the first thing to do is to get yourself a boat. This is perfectly obvious and sounds simple, but getting a boat is a long, complicated process. This is mainly because boats are expensive. Some are more expensive than others, but none is cheap. If the purchase price is relatively low, you will make up for it by having to spend on equipment and repairs, and if the boat is in perfect condition for a circumnavigation, the price will be high. Further, "perfect condition" will have been defined by the present owner, not you, so you'll *still* have to spend to make her fit your requirements. If you have plenty of money, you can have your boat designed and built to suit you exactly, and then you will still have to spend because not even you know exactly

what you require. You will find yourself modifying this and adapting that and adding the latest thingamaboo until even plenty of money is not enough. That is why the big ocean races are won by rich millionaires. The poor millionaires don't stand a chance.

So, if you want to go sailing, you will have to reconcile yourself to spending money. How much you spend will depend on how much you have, and then you can try to borrow some more.

My wife and I did not have much money. Teachers never do. But we wanted to go sailing so we counted up our savings, decided that we might be able to afford a boat, and started to inspect what craft the market had to offer. Every weekend we would check out the ads, bundle the twins into the VW van, and then break the news to Ouma that we were going to look at a boat, and would she like to come along?

Ouma was about eighty at the time. She stands nearly five feet high in medium heels, weighs about ninety pounds fully dressed, and has more energy than you can find on the playground of a large elementary school. She also talks to plants.

Ouma talks to plants because she wants them to grow under her care. And they do. Twigs that are obviously dead begin to blossom after a conversation with her; tomatoes overcome diseases and bugs and glow with health; carrots must be planted well away from the house or the enthusiasm with which they grow might endanger the foundations. Early in the morning Ouma makes her rounds of the garden with a cup of tea in one hand and a knife in the other, chatting to the flowers and attending to the weeds with the knife. In the evening the garden gets another pep talk to help it through the night.

Ouma always joined us on our boat inspection trips, leaping into the ferry that would take us out to the boat, climbing over safety lines, into cabins, poking about in lockers, and frightening all who saw her because little old ladies just do not have the agility she displayed and she was certainly going to fall overboard eight or ten times from each vessel we examined.

Because Ouma did not approve of small boats, she kept up a steady stream of derogatory remarks while she clambered about the decks of someone's pride and joy. These comments were delivered in Afrikaans, which she erroneously believed no Natal resident could understand, even if he happened to be an Afrikaner, and in what she thought was a whisper but which, since she is just a little deaf, was clearly audible for fifty or sixty yards. So, while an owner would be explaining to me the beauties of his boat's rigging, Ouma would be bellowing at Walda, a foot away from her, that the cabin stank, the lockers were full of roaches, the coach roof was about to fall off, and she wouldn't take the boat if they gave her the purchase price with it.

We inspected boats for about a year and a half. We looked at trimarans, catamarans, and monohulls. We looked at wrecks that were barely afloat, partially completed craft, and luxurious yachts that we could not afford to maintain, let alone buy. We looked at boats made of wood, fiberglass, steel, Ferro cement. We listened to the spiels of owners and brokers and the advice of people whose knowledge of boats ranged from expertise to a vague idea that they were some how connected with transportation and water and the sails had something to do with the wind.

Sometimes we almost bought a boat. We wanted to make an offer on a lovely little cat, but found that there was already a higher offer in. We had a demonstration sail on a nicely finished Water Witch and then insulted the owner by offering far less than he thought his boat was worth. We haggled for a week with the owner of a very sweet steel

sloop and finally reached an acceptable figure, only to have the sale canceled at the last minute by his wife, who decided that she would never replace her boat for the money we offered.

It would have been a very discouraging business but for two facts: First, boats are fascinating. No matter what the condition or design, it is immensely interesting simply to poke around and see how things are arranged. One never tires of it. Even people who live on boats – and who, one would think, have seen it all – love nothing better than to "come aboard and have a look around."

And, second, we were learning the market. If funds are limited, it is necessary to know the value of a given boat in the context of a particular market so that you will not be too badly cheated. Compared to yacht sellers, used-car dealers are virtuous, straightforward, and honest, and we had to educate ourselves simply to survive. We also had to learn about a 10 percent sales tax that the South African government levies on yachts registered outside the country. Then there is a 25 percent import duty placed on the value plus the sales tax, so the total paid on an imported yacht is almost 40 percent higher than the purchase price.

While we were looking for the boat of our dreams, Ouma religiously scanned the newspapers, searching for articles dealing with anything remotely connected to disasters at sea. Did a fishing boat founder in heavy seas off the coast of Newfoundland? The paper would be triumphantly shoved under our noses and the column cut out and pinned to the curtain in her room with muttered comments about the dangers of the sea. In time these clippings accumulated to the extent that the curtain itself became invisible. There was no arguing with Ouma, not with the mass of evidence fluttering by her window. If we bought a boat, not only would we be ruined financially; we would be doomed.

But we persisted, and one day I found *Tina*. She was not very prepossessing at first glance – a big steel ketch 45 feet long with rust bleeding down her sides, square and squat in the water with the welds of her plates left rough and the plates themselves bent inward between the frames, giving her topsides a rippled effect. I climbed on her with the broker and she sat there in the water like a fixture, not even rocking to our weight the way most boats will. The first impression was of solidness and strength.

Below she was roomy and light. She had bunks for eight people in four cabins – provided four of the people were very friendly, since two bunks were rather narrow double beds. She also had a galley with a gas stove with oven and grill, a gas fridge, a bathtub, believe it or not, and plenty of stowage. And the price was only about 25 percent more than we could afford. I rushed home to tell Walda about *Tina* in a whisper because I did not want Ouma to get upset until after we had closed the deal.

Tina had been designed and partially completed by a certain Angelo Thomasino, who had gained a kind of fame some years before when he decided to sell the big ketch and sail to Rio from Durban in a twelve-foot dinghy. He put a deck on the dinghy, loaded some stores on board, and called the newspapers, who printed the story of the intrepid mariner in the Sunday editions. He waited another week or so and got his story in another paper; then he set out. In Durban Bay he hit a sand bank, which took off his rudder, and decided that this was not such a good idea after all.

He sold *Tina* to some people who wanted to convert the heathens somewhere. These people did a little work on her before they ran out of money and inspiration and then sold her to a pair of young Johannesburg businessmen who wanted a quiet, romantic

place to spend their weekends while their wives thought they were working at the office. These owners put in a bar and some wall-to-wall bedding before they sold to Noel Steffenson.

Noel did a great deal of work on *Tina*. He had wanted to sail her to Australia, but he had a heart attack that ended the plan and put *Tina* on the market again. When I bought her she was eight years old and had never been sailed outside of Durban Bay. It was June 24, 1976. We thought we would leave for America in early December. All we had to do was to learn how to sail her, learn how to navigate, put on some food, some crew, and some stores, and go.

Getting a boat ready for an extended voyage is a long, hard job. Like most undertakings, it is especially long and hard if you don't know what you are doing and have to learn while doing it. This was our case. We had five months in which to organize our lives and the boat and acquire knowledge enough to get us where we wanted to go. We threw ourselves into the task and in the first two weeks accomplished absolutely nothing.

This is as it should be. Any new owner of a boat will need time to explore his craft, to decide what he wants to do, and to establish his priorities. This involves crawling around in lockers and bilges and a good deal of sitting in the cabin thinking and discussing arrangements. And showing the boat to friends, some of whom will perhaps turn up later to help with the work. But at that time we did not realize the necessity of the getting-acquainted period and often felt frustrated to the point of panic when we realized that time was going by and nothing was getting done. There was so much to do.

One of the first jobs I undertook was to remove the fridge, an action that brought cries of dismay from friends and family, whose objections I overruled for two reasons. First, the fridge took up too much space. In order to have one-and-a-half cubic feet of cooled area, it was necessary to use up some twenty-seven cubic feet of boat. In the space the fridge had occupied I was able to fit three large drawers and a hanging locker.

Second, the fridge was powered by gas, which is dangerous because it is heavier than air. If a leak develops, it will find its way to the bilges, where the gas will accumulate and can ignite itself by static electricity simply by moving as the boat rocks. One pint can cause a glorious explosion. I was not happy with the gas stove for similar reasons, but the stove was installed and would have cost too much to replace, so I kept it. When not in use, the stove could be turned off at the bottle, but a fridge takes its gas when the thermostat tells it to, and the supply must be there at all times. Also, a gas fridge should be level to work properly, and there is no such thing as level on a boat, even at anchor.

I was not to regret the decision to remove the fridge, but I feel with hindsight that the stove should have gone as well. Twice during the trip the copper pipe that led from the gas bottle to the stove fractured, fortunately near the stove so that the break showed itself by igniting when the stove was lit. We were able to repair it because we could see it. Also, one disadvantage of gas is the multitude of bottles and fittings available on the market. More often than not they can't be interchanged and you are left with an arrangement that will not work because the local suppliers do not use your brand.

The argument in favor of a kerosene stove has, to my mind, a good deal of weight. The fuel is the least volatile of any; it is cheap and available anywhere; and you

can see how much you have. Cooking with kerosene makes even more sense if you use it for lighting as well. I installed one small oil lamp in *Tina's* salon before we left. We burned it all night, every night, on the trip and used less than four gallons of fuel. Often I wished that I had bought more lamps and had included kerosene running lights as well.

Once the fridge was gone the projects seemed to multiply like rabbits, and each job grew from a simple idea to the most complicated undertaking imaginable. Do we need a nut and bolt here? Easy. Get one. And two days later, having covered the town almost from end to end looking for that single bolt, I might, if I was very lucky, find what I needed. But usually I would have to compromise and accept the nearest substitute. Do I have an hour or so to put the bolt through a hole and tighten up the nut? Easy. Just run down in the car, spend fifteen minutes looking for a parking place, another ten waiting for the ferry to take me to the boat, a further twenty sitting in the ferry while the driver tries to fix the engine (which dies as soon as the ferry is in the middle of the channel), seven more minutes while the driver takes the ferry past *Tina* and out to the end of the line where his brother is waiting to tell him that he doesn't want to go ashore just then (a communication that takes eleven minutes), and finally to *Tina*, where I have just enough time to put the nut and bolt in a safe place, taking care not to let the ferry go away, because I know that the driver is going to leave me stranded there for forty minutes if I let go of his painter. I know that with a conviction that makes my own existence, and that of the universe, seem like idle speculation.

And there was always the problem of money. Do I need a double block for the mainsheet? Easy. Just pop across the street and buy one. But having popped across the street, I find that the block closest to what I require (the exact block I need is unavailable, of course) costs twenty-seven rands (about \$30). I must go away and prepare myself mentally to spend twenty-seven rands, which takes more time and adds to the feelings of frustration and panic.

After a while I became convinced that the most lucrative word in business is "marine" or one of its synonyms. All a manufacturer has to do is print that word on the label of his product and he can charge three times as much as he would get without it. Take a rubber band and call it "marine elastic" or a "yachtsman's utility strap," and it immediately becomes an expensive item. In the case of products that are actually made for yachts, these prices may be justifiable on grounds that the conditions under which they will be used require top-quality materials and workmanship, but until you learn who builds for yachts and who merely labels for yachts, you are likely to be cheated.

The problems of fitting out can be dealt with in three ways. The first and most common is simply to give up. Hundreds of boats throughout the world that were purchased for that dream cruise are still lying at moorings because the owners ran out of time and money – and running out of time and money is just an excuse for being overcome by and giving in to the frustrations of fitting out. Many of the uncompleted hulls in the backyards of the world tell the same story, the only difference being that those owners gave up before they got their boats into the water.

The second method is to take it easy and set a sailing date only when you are ready to go. That way you can take your time and really bring the boat up to scratch. The trouble is that the boat will never reach that state of perfection and you will never get away. I know a man who has spent three years fitting out. His boat is beautifully set up

and his equipment is the best, but he has never sailed her outside the harbor. He and his family spend their weekends modifying and polishing and their evenings planning with charts and pilot books, but it is doubtful if he will ever leave.

The third method is to set a date and – whether you get her out to sea under power, wind, or paddle – go. It is surprising how little you really need at sea. Further, if you are planning a cruise of any length, most of the absolutely essential equipment will be broken or lost overboard by the time you're halfway across and you won't even miss it. This was the method we adopted, not through any virtue but because we had no choice, once we had decided to go. We would do what we could in the time we had and finish the rest at sea. So, we accepted frustration and panic as part of boating and set to work, with the encouragement of our friends and family.

Said encouragement consisted mainly of dire warnings about the dangers of sailing interspersed with objections concerning the fact that we weren't experienced enough – the logic being that one should never sail across an ocean unless one has already sailed across an ocean. Ouma's newspaper clippings on the curtain of her room reported nothing compared to the calamities that awaited us. The children would die of seasickness; the boat would be attacked by whales; we would all get appendicitis; pirates would kill us and use *Tina* to smuggle dope into the U.S.A.; we would get lost; *Tina* would disintegrate; the Yanks would drop a hydrogen bomb in the South Atlantic just as we were passing through. The list was endless, and there was only one answer to the threats: "I hope not."

Some friends, however, did lend us physical and moral support. Dave Alexander and Bruce McDougal, for example. Dave taught me navigation and gave us many tips along with some excellent advice. He and his wife, Mary, a chemist, spent long hours helping us stock our medicine chest. Bruce went even further and volunteered to skipper *Tina* down to Cape Town. And Ouma, vociferously objecting to boats in general and our trip in particular, set to work covering bunk mattresses and making curtains. She even insisted on going along with us on our first sail outside the harbor.

In order to sail offshore in Durban, all yachts must pass an inspection by a member of the yacht club's Off-shore Sailing Committee and be recommended to the port captain, a system that gives him a kind of control over the boats for which he is responsible. We were inspected by one gentleman who gave us a list of things to be done and then re-inspected by another who gave us a second list. Finally, after a month or so, the two came together for a third inspection, at which time they chatted for a while before passing *Tina* as seaworthy. Then all we had to do was find a skipper who would go out with us, because once the boat is decreed fit, the captain must also be examined. The interesting thing about all this bureaucratic control is that anyone can sail anything inside the harbor, the busiest in South Africa, simply by paying a couple of rand to the Harbour Administration. It is rather like insisting that learners drive cars in the center of town during rush hour and stay off the open road.

I had started to take some classes in navigation from Dave Alexander, and when *Tina* got permission to "cross the bar," I asked him if he would be willing take us out. Since this would make it possible to take some sun sights under actual sailing conditions, he was very pleased to agree, provided he could bring some of his other students along. We made a date for the following Sunday.

Tina was crowded with would-be sailors, including our whole family and Ouma, for her first look at deep water. We dropped moorings, bumped the boat next to us and bent one of her stanchions, and motored out of the harbor. There was very little wind, so we motored with the sails up until the engine cut out. Then we sailed very slowly while we tried to get her going again. We employed the diagnostic system known as "hit-and-miss," which entails fiddling around with the thingy until it falls off and then adjusting the whatsit so that a copious stream of fuel pours into the bilges and gives off fumes that, coupled with the considerable swell and lack of wind to steady the boat, made it necessary for my helpers to join me in relays at the engine, two hanging over the rail and one below, holding his breath. Finally someone stated with considerable confidence that the lift pump was kaput. Since he was the only one on board who knew that there was such a thing as a lift pump and since its being kaput meant that there was no need to keep fooling around with the engine because it wouldn't start whatever we did, we were glad to accept his judgment.

With the engine pronounced incurable, I was free to give my attention to the next problem, the whereabouts of Ouma. It seemed that she hadn't been seen for a while. I finally located her on the floor, between the bath and the toilet, her arms wrapped around a bucket. She requested that I throw her overboard, but I only took her up on deck, where the fresh air did nothing to revive her.

Philip was asleep, but Walda and Karin were feeling the motion as badly as Ouma. Our guests were doing their best to help. Someone said that oranges were the best cure for seasickness, so Walda ate an orange. Someone else swore by dry bread, so Walda ate some dry bread. Coke was another infallible remedy, so Walda drank a Coke. Glucose sweets were also recommended, so Walda had some sweets. By the time we got ashore it was a question of which was worse – seasickness or acute indigestion.

Getting *Tina* through the narrow entrance to Durban Harbour, against what little wind there was, proved impossible. A heavy boat needs way to come about, and there just wasn't enough wind to get her going. So we took a tow from a passing motorboat and then sailed up to moorings.

The following Sunday, after a week of pestering a mechanic to fix the engine, we tried again. This time the engine cut out before we even got out of the harbor, but the mechanic was on board and was able to keep her going in five minute spurts that took us out across the bar and back to moorings, after a pleasant sail.

The problem was still being diagnosed as the lift pump, so I had it replaced, and our third Sunday found us putt-putting away smoothly out of the harbor! On our return we had to wait for a ship to come out. When the entrance was clear, I opened the throttle and the engine cut out. By that time I had learned what a lift pump was and did, and I had an idea of how to bleed the engine. I searched until I found a blocked fuel line just at the tank and cleared it, and we motored back to moorings.

That fuel blockage was to recur, but knowing about it meant I could fix it, and fixing it became so routine a job that we called it a "pit stop" and sailed with the assumption that the blockage would occur. And learning to make that assumption was a very valuable lesson. Never again would I motor around a crowded harbor with the anchor stowed away and the sails in their bags, as I often did during the first weeks we had *Tina*. The golden rule of boating, "if it can break, it will," had been forcibly demonstrated.

While we were learning how to handle *Tina* and how an engine works, I also pondered the problem of the compass. The owner of a steel boat will always be faced with this consideration, and *Tina's* compass was very confused indeed. Situated in the cockpit under a steel pilothouse roof and surrounded by steel, that instrument on some headings was 140 degrees off. When we turned in a circle, the compass would waver a bit, try to follow the way the bow was pointing, and then give up and attempt to catch up with the boat by turning around in the opposite direction, invariably going past the correct course and developing a spin that said clearly "Where am I? Where am I?" I certainly did not need a frustrated and panic-stricken compass, so I bought another and mounted it in a wooden box some two and a half feet above the pilothouse roof. The card was printed to be read in a mirror that was fitted in a pipe through a hole in the roof. High and away from the influence of the magnetic fields set up by the boat, this compass had no appreciable deviation, but the box caused a great deal of comment by people who thought it contained speakers for a hi-fi system.

Another box I made was to contain the four-man life raft and a bottle of water, a gaff, some fishing line, and other items suitable for a Panic Pack. Ouma called it a coffin and explained to visitors that, in the event of disaster, one need only jump in the box, nail down the lid, and enjoy a Christian burial at sea.

The work continued and the time went by. I fitted self-steering, replaced the salon windows, turned a skylight into a hatch, fitted shelves and fiddles to hold things in place, tuned the rigging, and made a Dan-buoy. These jobs became possible only after I bought a little Honda generator that could produce either 12 volts to charge the batteries or 220 to power my electric drill. It was a necessary buy not only because it made the work easier, but also because there was no possibility of starting *Tina's* engine by hand, and flat batteries at sea would have meant no engine and no lights.

Our domestic arrangements at the time were in an equally hectic state of disorder. We had a house full of furniture that had to be disposed of. Should we sell it? Rent it? Rent it furnished? Sell the furniture? Could we do any of the above? Were there buyers or renters who wanted our house? In the end, we were very lucky. A young couple bought the house; some of our furniture was stored with friends; and the rest was sold. On the first of November, at nine o'clock of a rainy evening, we moved onto *Tina* – wife, kids, and Ouma, who brought some celery plants in tins, which she placed on the deck where she could converse with them without getting out of the cockpit.

Living on board a yacht is one thing, but living aboard and holding down full-time jobs and sending two nine-year-olds to school every morning is another. We had to learn a whole new way of life and still maintain the trappings of the old one. Kids who go to school must be clean, and yachties are never clean in port. Clothes on a boat are functional, while those ashore are fashionable. Even the influence of the weather must be considered. You can hop out of a house and into a car without getting very wet, but if you have to climb into a ferry, ride through spray and rain, and then find your car, you are sure to arrive at work soaked and miserable. And if there is a wind in the night, a homeowner may have to get out of bed and shut a window, but the boat owner wakes up when he feels his craft leaping about like an angry mare and spends the gale wondering whether the moorings will hold.

Usually, though, the moorings do hold and the pleasure of a bright morning makes the nasty ones seem worthwhile, not so much by simple contrast as by the self-knowledge that emerges. The same is true at sea. Calm weather is wonderful not only because the gale is over, but because you know that you can cope with a gale and need not fear the next one quite so much.

Living on board had its moments of peace and beauty, too. At night, when the pollution of the bay was invisible and when the kids and Ouma were in their bunks, we would have a bottle of wine on deck and watch the lights and hear the distant noises of the city. Then it was good to forget about how much work still had to be done and reflect with a sense of utter amazement on the fact that we had gotten as near to our goal as to be sitting on the boat that was to take us so far.

One of the major problems that confronted us now was the question of crew. We felt that we could not handle the trip on our own and decided that two more hands would be necessary. We placed notices on the bulletin boards of the two major yacht clubs in Durban advertising the berths, and a friend placed a similar ad in the Cape Town club. Some applicants showed up to discuss the arrangements we had in mind, but most evaporated within a short period.

Our requirements were simple. We wanted someone who could afford three rands per day, the price of an airplane ticket from the United States back to South Africa, and about a year's free time. We were not particularly concerned about experience at sea, since the trip from Durban to Cape Town would provide that. These demands seemed easy enough to the applicants who came, but some other problem, or problems, usually had to be overcome. One young man wanted to write an exam at the university before he made his decision and would not be able to go until two weeks after we planned to leave. Could we wait? No. Another character had to ask his wife if he could come along. We never heard from him again. A Rhodesian lad wanted to come, but he did not have a passport and couldn't get one until he had served in the army, an occupation he wanted badly to avoid. Only a young lady named Susan seemed to be ready and able to scratch up the money and the time.

Susan came to the boat several times, bringing ideas and such items as plastic bottles, acetone, wool socks, and dried vegetables, which she thought might be of help. She gave notice at her job and started to sell her car. We really thought that she was planning to come along, but a couple of weeks before sailing she informed us that she was going on another boat. We were beginning to get paranoid about all these seeming rejections. What was wrong with *Tina*? What was wrong with us? Were people just making excuses because they could see plainly that if the boat didn't sink, the skipper would get lost?

Then, suddenly, we had more crew than we needed. Before she left, Susan introduced two young Englishmen to us. Graham and Trevor had been in South Africa about three months. They worked for one of the local magazines, where they were required to remove yellow teeth and pink eyes from the pictures of large-breasted dollies in bikinis originally designed for much smaller women. They were young and strong and enthusiastic, but they had never been on a sailboat before and there was a slight communication problem since they spoke with a Cockney accent so strong as to be unintelligible. All we had to do was find a common language and teach them everything

about sailing in two weeks. And, one morning as we were taking the kids to school, a young South African, Dave, turned up. He had seen our ad in the Cape Town club and had hitchhiked up to Durban to get a place on *Tina*. A friend of his, a girl called Jackie, also wanted to come and was waiting in Cape Town for acceptance. Neither Dave nor Jackie had sailed before, either.

Walda and I sat down and had a conference. We knew that life on a boat is crowded, even for single-handed sailors, and our ideal crew was six, the Whiteley mob plus two. Now we were carrying a possible eight. We had the accommodations for that many, but we would be falling all over each other if half the crew was not forcibly confined to their bunks just to keep them out of the way. *Tina* would be able to carry stores enough for that number of people, but water was limited to the 180 gallons the tanks held. If we were to be at sea for sixty days, we would need 240 gallons. We might be able to do it if we could carry 70 or 80 gallons on deck in plastic containers.

We decided to wait until Cape Town before making a final decision. The trip to the Cape would be made by five of us – Graham, Trevor, Dave, Bruce McDougal, and I – because my job ended earlier than Walda's and the kids would have to finish the school year. Walda and the kids would meet us in Cape Town; Bruce would return to Durban; and Jackie would join us in Cape Town. This would spare Walda and the children the trip down the treacherous South African coast and give the boys a chance to find their sea legs, learn how to sail, and perhaps allow Graham and Trevor to pick up a few phrases of the English language.

So we left the crew problem open and devoted ourselves to buying and packing food for the trip. Since we had never done a job like this before, we followed the advice of anybody willing to give it and supplemented our friends' suggestions with lists culled from books. This is perhaps the least satisfactory method of provisioning a ship and certainly the most expensive. We bought pounds of porridge because someone said they would never sail without plenty of porridge. Someone else insisted that dried potatoes were essential, so we bought pounds of dried potatoes. Did we meet someone who lived on textured vegetable protein? We bought pounds of textured vegetable protein. Bully beef was nice with crackers, said someone, and cases of both arrived. We varnished hundreds of tins to stop them from rusting, coded them by number because the labels were removed to allow the varnish to cover the whole tin, and made up a master list showing what was in all the tins. Then we lost the master list and had to unpack the whole works, find the list, and repack. In short,*we bought and packed until there wasn't any more money or any more space.

I had ordered two new sails, a genoa and a mizzen staysail, a month or so before sailing date. The plan was to spend some time testing these so that any adjustments necessary could be made before we set out, but the sails did not arrive on time. We would have to test them at sea.

Just to add to the confusion, the ship's head fell apart at this point. Spare parts were not available in Durban, and I decided to wait until we arrived in Cape Town before fixing that. After all, what do five men at sea need a toilet for? *Tina* had good, solid rails.

On Friday, December 3, 1976, *Tina* put to sea at about 11:46 a.m., bound for Cape Town. Now, I consider myself an enlightened, modern, educated man, free from the restricting bonds of superstition. I walk under ladders without a qualm, break mirrors,

spill salt, and open umbrellas indoors with an impunity born of confidence. But I will never, never, never again, if I have any choice at all in the matter, leave port on a Friday.

The Storm and the Crew

When Sir Francis Beaufort devised his famous scale of wind force, he should have included a minus measurement to describe the conditions existing when *Tina* left Durban Harbour. There was certainly much less than no wind blowing. I would say that it was not blowing with a vengeance. We motored out into that flat calm for twenty minutes before the engine cut out, then continued under power when I had cleared the fuel line. Billows of thick smoke soon brought me back to the engine to find that the pipe leading to the oil pressure gauge was dripping oil onto the hot exhaust pipe. We could do without the gauge until we got to Cape Town. We would just have to keep an eye on the dipstick. That was the first of *Tina's* instruments to give up. Others were to follow. In the early stages of the trip Bruce and I stood alternating two-hour watches with one of the boys. This was to give them a chance to learn what a compass was all about and to teach them how to hold a course. They picked it up quickly, and soon we were on straight two-hour watches, with eight off, an arrangement that gave us plenty of sleep, as long as nothing required a decision, like a ship about to run us down or a change in the wind.

By a change in the wind I mean the appearance of some sort of breeze. We motored all that day with the sails filled by the movement of the boat. Early the next morning a squall hit us and tore the self-furling jib to pieces. Then it was back to the same old putt-putt with only a slight puff to help us along. But the life on board was pleasant and easy. We lay about on the decks, drank beer cooled in the bilges, cooked what we laughingly called meals, and let the dirty dishes pile up in a large plastic bucket.

Then we were hit by The Storm. I was below getting some sleep when Bruce called me up to tell me that we were in for a gale. He had felt the wind change direction, moving around to the southwest and becoming colder, and had gotten the sails down before he called me. That had taken about five minutes. When I came on deck, the seas were already rising and the wind was cold and strong. We started the engine and tried to run before the seas, but found great difficulty in doing so because they came from different directions, and dodging to miss one meant that we caught another. Within ten minutes the full force of the gale hit us. It was as though a great, powerful lump of air threw itself at us, hooked itself into the rigging, and then tried to get away, complaining loudly all the time. There was no way we could keep *Tina* stern-on to the seas because they were so confused. They came from all directions and grew in size every minute. It was getting dark, too, and it is impossible to dodge waves if you cannot see them. We had plenty of sea room, so Bruce decided to switch off the engine and let *Tina* find her way through the storm by herself. She was the unknown quantity. How she would handle herself was anybody's guess and it was a very important question.

We made sure that everything was as tightly closed as possible and put the boards in their slots at the main hatch in case the cockpit filled. Then everybody did what seemed to him the best solution. Graham got himself a bucket, lashed it to the ladder in the forecabin, wedged himself in next to it, and remained there for thirty-six hours. Dave found a place on the salon floor where he was stepped on regularly, and Trevor hung himself between the bunk and the table in the salon. Bruce, who had never been seasick, felt a bit squeamish, took a pill, was sick, and went to bed. I remained in the cockpit to watch the seas and worry about shipping. I was very good at worrying about shipping,

but I couldn't see the waves in the dark, so eventually I went to bed as well. I could worry there just as effectively.

It was a roughish night and a noisy one, but I slept in a bunk without leeboards in fair comfort. In the morning I found Bruce at the wheel, trying to steer clear of a tanker, and I knew that we were in a storm. The tanker was completely awash at times and was just holding her bow into the wind, not moving at all. But dear, good *Tina* was coping beautifully. Big, fat, and solid as she looked and was, she still had plenty of buoyancy and rose to impossibly steep seas, broadside to the wind, leaned over, and eased down the opposite slope.

Most of that day I sat in the cockpit, drinking beer, eating biltong, and watching those waves. Often I'd say to myself "We'll never get over that sonofabitch and if we do, his bloody brother coming up behind him will swamp us for sure." That sonofabitch would be a huge, vertical, hissing, rushing, breaking mass of water, higher than the mizzen top. *Tina* would lean away from him, then climb, take the slap of his breaking crest on her chine, and allow him to rush under her with a patience that can only be called benevolent. His bloody brother would get the same treatment. During the thirty-six hours that The Storm raged, only two waves broke over the boat and the cockpit was filled only once. Some water came in through the salon hatch and a lot came in through the forecabin hatch, where it dripped on Graham, who would have contemplated suicide if anybody had taken the time to convince him that he was alive.

The Storm taught us three important lessons. The first was that gales end. Any landlubber knows this, but to reach this understanding with a sense of conviction has its own rewards. The second was true confidence in *Tina*. Given sea room and left to her own devices, she can take anything the sea decides to throw at her. And the third was that I do not get seasick, not a fact that will have any great influence on the universe, but it seemed important to me at the time.

Any coastline is dangerous, and all are regarded as especially dangerous by the local inhabitants, but the southeast coast of Africa is universally acknowledged as a "nasty bugger." This is because the Mozambique Current runs south and the strong winds come up from the south, creating the kind of seas we experienced. A good indication of the strength of the current is the fact that during thirty-six hours under bare poles, *Tina* made sixty-five miles against a wind recorded at seventy-two miles per hour.

Total storm damage to *Tina* consisted of two tears in the head of the mainsail, caused by flapping during the gale. Under mizzen and forestaysail, we headed into East London for rest and repairs, tacking against the wind with the motor going, as usual.

We were greeted by reports and news of disaster. Cloud Nine, a Durban yacht owned by one of the most experienced, dedicated, and knowledgeable sailors in South Africa, Dave Cox, had lost two men overboard during the storm and the rest of the crew had been taken off by the Sea Rescue Service. Another boat had been dismasted, and a third had received minor damage to its hull. *Tina* had been mentioned in the papers as "missing," "still missing," and "unaccounted for," phrases that seemed to imply, without actually saying so, that we were all dead. Bruce and I hastened to call our wives, but they were out, of course. Wives are like policemen in that they are never around when you need them.

I called my friend Franco with the idea of conning him into buying us dinner – not a very difficult task since he is notoriously generous and is ideally situated from the point

of view of a mooching friend. He runs the restaurant at the East London airport. His reaction was typical: "Bruce, you bloomin' mongrel; why you're not drowned?" And then he told me that he would fetch us and feed us.

For an inexperienced yachtie, one of the most pleasant things about sailing occurs when you stop sailing. A hot shower, a steak, and a feeling of having braved the savage deep all serve to give the sense of being something incredibly special, an adventurer of extraordinary talent and courage. One tends to forget the realities of beer, biltong, buckets, and big waves, and to regard the myths in the newspapers as what really happened. This romantic view disappears as soon as one puts to sea again, but it does have an influence, in the beginning. Later one tends to separate shore life and sailing into two distinct categories. The showers and steaks still maintain their value, but they are not part of sailing, and the pleasures of the one are not dependent on those of the other. We spent the following day repairing the torn mainsail and doing odd jobs about the boat, including carting fifteen gallons of fuel from a gas station up the road. *Tina* does not have a fuel gauge, and we measured by dipping a stick down the filler pipe. This filler pipe entered the tank at the side, near the top, through an elbow, and the stick would reach only as far as the elbow. Therefore we could not know how much fuel we had unless the level was very near the top of the tank. If the end of the dipstick was wet, the tank was almost full. We had left Durban with a full fuel tank and had used the engine almost constantly, except during the gale. The fifteen gallons gave us a wet dipstick and we assumed that the consumption was about a gallon per hour, an estimate based on pure guesswork because we had not recorded the engine hours.

After a good dinner at one of the local restaurants, we put to sea that evening and ran into more calm air. It was putt-putt all night, until a breeze came up in the morning and we hoisted all sails, including the new genoa and the new mizzen staysail. The genoa was a bit of a problem for two reasons: in the first place, the halyard was too short. It was the same halyard that raised the self-furling jib, but that sail had its own wire stay, while the genoa hanked onto the forestay. The halyard reached easily to the deck by the mast where we attached the head of the jib, but it was much shorter out by the forestay where the genoa was. In order to raise the genoa, I had to stand on the pulpit and reach up high to attach the halyard. In the second place, the hanks were too small, so they jammed as the sail was being raised.

Because of this, two people were needed to raise the genoa, one to pull on the halyard and the other to free the hanks as they jammed. Once the genoa was up, the inadequacy of our winches became apparent. They were both too small, and one of them could not pull in the sheet at all. We had to sweat it in by hand.

But, ah! We were finally sailing, and *Tina* was bumping the needle on the log up to nine knots when she came down the waves. The new sails were beautifully cut and really seemed to enjoy pulling the boat. "It's too good to last," we shouted joyously. And it was. The wind shifted, so we had to strike the mizzen staysail, and then the main ripped right across at the head, between the two tears I had sewn in East London. Under forestaysail and mizzen, with the motor working away, we headed into Port Elizabeth.

We arrived at night, dropped the anchor next to Sea Jade, a Durban yacht on her way to the races in Cape Town, and all climbed into the dinghy. With five grown men on board, the little boat had about an inch and a half of freeboard, and the row ashore was

accomplished with hilarity provoked by imminent sinking and the proximity of civilization. On land, all was closed except the clubhouse of the Sea Rescue Service, where the volunteer members greeted us with cold beer and hot showers. From them we learned that there was no sail maker in Port Elizabeth, but there was a lady who had a sewing machine and was reported to be a good hand with sails.

The next morning a breeze came up. *Tina* started to drag her anchor, so we tied up next to another yacht by a vacant section of the pier. This made it much easier and more convenient to get ashore and do the necessary work.

After a check on all the sails, I took the main, the mizzen, and the forestaysail in a taxi to Mrs. Gurdlestone, the lady with the sewing machine. She lived in a distant suburb of Port Elizabeth, in a shady old house surrounded by gardens and filled with bags and bags of sails she had repaired or was about to repair. With the races soon to start in Cape Town, every yachtsman in Port Elizabeth had brought in his sails to be fixed. In spite of this workload and the fact that she was leaving for a holiday in a few days, she agreed to do my repairs as quickly as possible. She did an excellent job and charged me very little.

While checking the bilges for beer, I discovered that one of the engine mountings had broken and needed welding. I called my old mate, Eric Ehinger, who not only found me a welder on that Saturday morning – a feat akin to discovering a diamond on the streets of New York – but paid for the job as well.

At this point, we were a bit over a week out of Durban. We should have been in Cape Town by then. Time was becoming important because Bruce had to return to Durban on business and Walda and the children were waiting for us in Cape Town, ready to set out across the Atlantic. All the breakages and the lack of wind were holding us up, and the pressure was mounting. I was becoming decidedly nervous. Out of self-defense, Bruce and the boys devised a phrase to cool me down so that I would stop running around in circles. "We're only cruising" became a motto of sorts and was invoked each time a holdup promised to delay us still further. It was a much-used motto as we motored out of Port Elizabeth and continued under power with only intermittent spells of wind, usually from the wrong direction. We rounded the southernmost tip of Africa, Cape Agulhas, and then Cape Point, into the teeth of a brisk northwest wind that never blows in the Cape in December but was certainly blowing that December. Just as we cleared the Cape Point light, the engine cut out and I popped below to clear the fuel line. It was very much a routine job by this time and usually took only a couple of minutes. I disconnected the pipe from the tank and stuck a piece of wire up through the tap and into the tank, keeping one hand on the tap so that I could turn it off when the fuel started to gush out. But this time the fuel refused to gush out, in, or anywhere. I jabbed and poked with the bit of wire, but still no gush of fuel. I climbed into the cockpit, opened the hatch, and dipped the stick into the filler pipe. There was a wet inch or so on the end of the stick, indicating that the tank was almost full.

"Looks like plenty of fuel," I said to Bruce, showing him the wet end of the dipstick.

"It's a fantastic engine," he answered. "It doesn't use any fuel. The stick measures the same as it did in Durban and Port Elizabeth and we've been running it for at least a hundred hours."

After that, it took only a short while to discover that we were well and truly out of fuel. We had been deceived by a treacherous elbow at the bottom of the filler pipe, an elbow that trapped just enough fuel to wet the end of the dipstick so that we burned up our last ounce of diesel while thinking that we still had plenty.

Fortunately our sails were in good shape and the freak northwest wind would undoubtedly switch around to the southwest shortly and enable us to sail up to Hout Bay, only a few mites off, where we could fill up again. We trimmed sail and started to beat our way up the coast.

We beat for forty-eight hours, going three or four miles out to sea on one tack and nearly hitting the beach on the other. Against wind and current, with a foul bottom, we made only yards good each time and many of them were lost when we came about without winches. We would come about, grabbing as much sheet as we could, luff while we got some more in, fall off to get some way on and luff again, repeating the process until the genoa was trimmed. It was a job that needed all hands. The tack toward the land was doubly discouraging because not only did we find ourselves looking at the same hunk of beach we had left behind a few hours ago, but we could see how much the combined effects of leeway and sloppy turning were costing us.

Toward the end of the second day we pulled down the genoa and set the forestaysail. This was a much smaller sail, and we hoped that the lack of pulling power would be made up for by the ease of tacking. We had given up the idea of beating up to Hout Bay and were trying to hold our ground until the wind switched.

The wind did not switch. It increased in strength and blew us back toward Cape Point. In the middle of the second night, Bruce woke me with the news that we were about to go on the rocks at the Point and that it might be a good idea to get the genoa up and hope that it would pull us off. The wind was blowing well above the twenty knots maximum that the genoa was made to handle, and the sail might be blown to pieces as soon as it was set, but it was our only hope.

Standing on the pulpit to attach the halyard to the sail in those seas was like being on the business end of those old dunking stools that an enlightened England once used to punish scolding wives. Up went the bow and I was in midair. Down she came and I filled my boots with blue-black water and was thoroughly sprayed from head to toe. It is amazing, however, how quickly one can work when properly frightened; I got that sail on in two dunks and a shake. By that time the whole crew was on deck and we sheeted in smartly. *Tina* began to edge away from the rocks, the genoa holding together and pulling like mad.

We gave up the attempt to proceed to Cape Town and turned into False Bay, heading for Simonstown. It was either that or get blown halfway to Antarctica, and it was already cold enough where we were.

First light found us at the bottom, or north, end of False Bay with Simonstown to windward and Gordon's Bay to leeward. We did not know if Gordon's Bay had fuel and shelter. We only knew it was a lee shore, and it was doubtful if we would have any better luck beating to Simonstown than we had had trying to get to Hout Bay. But a passing fishing boat responded to our signals and sold us five gallons of fuel. Using a piece of plastic tubing, I connected the fuel line directly to the opaque plastic bottle that contained the five gallons from the fishing boat. With this setup I could see exactly how much fuel

we were using and could also make sure that we used all we had by tipping the bottle so that the engine sucked out every drop.

It took us almost three hours to cover the few miles to Simonstown Harbour. For the last forty minutes of that time I sat below, holding the precious fuel bottle at an angle and answering Bruce's worried queries about how much was left.

"How much, Bruce?"

"Half a gallon, Bruce. How close are we?"

"Pretty close." A short pause, and then, "How much, Bruce?"

"A pint. How close are we?"

"Almost there."

When we dropped anchor we had half a cup of fuel left. We burned that up in one minute when we saw that the anchor was again, dragging and *Tina* was backing onto the construction site of the new breakwater – a mass of concrete with reinforcing rods sticking out of it. The police launch that had escorted us in took our line; we tied a plastic bottle to the anchor chain and cut it; and we were towed ignominiously to a vacant mooring buoy, where we made fast.

Two hours later, Bruce left us to fly back to Durban. The normal seven-to-ten-day trip to Cape Town had taken fifteen days and we were still not there. Twice Bruce's alertness had pulled us through tricky situations. He had gotten the sails down before we were hit by The Storm, and he had seen the sneaky rocks off Cape Point in time to allow us to pull off. I was sorry to see him go and very grateful to him.

But he was replaced by Walda and the kids, who joined us in Simonstown. It was good to see them all again and I was glad that they would be able to sail at least part of the way to Cape Town when the wind changed.

Jackie, our remaining potential crewmember, joined us as well. She came on board at the moorings, felt squeamish, and refused to go below. Within fifteen minutes she demanded to be rowed ashore, and Dave took her off in the dinghy. I had my doubts about her then and insisted that she too sail on the last leg to the jumping-off place. Once we left Cape Town, she would be with us until we reached the United States. There was no place that she could be signed off on the way. I wanted to see how she reacted when we were sailing.

We stayed at Simonstown for three days, waiting for the wind to change and loading more stores that Walda had accumulated. The police brought us our anchor and chain, with the plastic bottle still tied on, and a quick examination explained why it had dragged, both at Simonstown and at Port Elizabeth. The flukes were rusted solidly to the shank and would never dig in unless the anchor happened to fall in the right position on the bottom. It obviously hadn't done so. We would fix that in Cape Town. I set up the spare anchor to be used in an emergency.

We made sure that the tank was full, full, full of fuel and motored out of the harbor with confidence when the wind finally shifted. All we had to do was beat out of False Bay and then tear up the coast to Cape Town in front of a strong southwest wind. It seemed simple enough, but when I gave my first order as skipper, it was plain that something was wrong.

"Up main," I shouted, and the two English boys looked at each other as if to say "Main?" Dave turned to Walda and asked, "Which is the main halyard?"

"How the bloody hell should I know!" she exclaimed.

And these guys had been sailing for over two weeks! I wondered if they had left their wits ashore or had forgotten everything. It was only later that I realized I was being unfair to them. Until then either Bruce or I had been active during sail changes and they had not been properly trained to react quickly and efficiently on their own.

When the correct halyard was finally selected, they leaned on it, but the sail could go only about a third of the way up. It was jammed somewhere at the masthead and, because the sea was too active, I was not about to send anyone up the stick to find out why. So we motored out of False Bay under mizzen and forestaysail, and then turned, switched off the engine, and raced up the coast at a steady six knots, past the beach we knew so well from the previous attempt and well offshore to avoid a repetition of our near collision with the rocks at Cape Point.

It was a rough sea, and cold, and the newcomers felt the motion strongly. Little Karin climbed into a bunk with a bucket and a look of utter misery on her face. Jackie sat on the pilot house roof until she was thoroughly soaked, cold, and sick, and then passed out in the salon. Walda joined Karin and they shared the bucket. Even young Philip went below and curled up with a decidedly squeamish look on his face.

I put the three boys on two-hour watches under my supervision that night. This was a very busy shipping area and I just did not trust them to steer and keep a proper lookout at the same time. As I mentioned earlier, I'm very good at worrying about shipping and, with the family on board, this talent was intensified.

It was a cold, wet night, but first light showed the east side of Table Mountain, which looks nothing like Table Mountain. We motor-sailed across the seas, taking more water over the deck than we had during *The Storm*, and made our way through the bay to the yacht basin. We were met by the club launch, which I nearly ran down while making a turn. When we tied up to the jetty we were eighteen days out of Durban. Much of *Tina's* light blue paint had been washed off the topsides and the darker blue undercoat showed in patches. We looked as though we had been halfway around the world, and, after the cold and sleepless night, I, for one, felt the same way. But we had gotten to the jump-off point. All we had to do was rest a bit, clean the bottom and repaint the topsides, fit new winches, replace all the halyards, find out why the main had jammed and fix it, rewire the spreader light and rearrange the navigation light switches, buy charts and flags, fix the anchor, fit baffles for the forecabin and salon hatches, make leeboards and fit them, have the self-furling jib repaired, and get the self-steering operational. Then we would be on our way. We just needed a mooring and then we could get to work.

"There are no moorings," said the man in charge. "You can stay at the jetty for a couple of hours, but then you'll have to go somewhere else."

"Somewhere else" turned out to be next to a barge on the opposite side of the basin, near a factory, but close enough to the clubhouse so that showers and bar could be easily reached.

The run to Cape Town had shown me that our earlier fears in regard to crew were justified. The population explosion aboard *Tina* was not merely uncomfortable; it was a disaster. We had to thin out our numbers or forget about the trip altogether.

It was not a difficult decision. Jackie could not come. She had felt queasy in Simonstown at moorings and had been 'incapacitated on the run around the point. Perhaps she would overcome this after a week or two at sea, but that meant that we would

be carrying a sick passenger whom we would have to take care of, instead of an active worker. I had enough patients in my own family and did not need to import another at the expense of precious space.

Of the three boys, the most intelligent and interested was Dave. He would be a top hand one day if he continued as he was going. Trevor and Graham I considered as a team, with a slight edge in competence going to Graham. At a conference with all hands but Jackie, it was decided that Trevor would leave us. I paid him back the money he had put into the trip and considered the crew situation well established. But a day or so later Graham and Dave demanded another conference and informed me that they were leaving as well, without explaining why. The old paranoia of Durban reasserted itself. Was it a lack of confidence in me? In the boat? Did the children bother them? All sorts of possibilities were raised, but we never did get an answer. We only realized that we were without crew and that there was a great deal of work to be done, and done without help. There are two possible courses of action at times like this: give up, or become irrationally stubborn and persevere. The latter was really the only answer. We could not leave *Tina* in Cape Town, and we could not take her back to Durban. We had to go on with the voyage, and, if we had to do it alone, we would do it alone.

It was pleasant on *Tina* when the boys had gone. There was space and privacy for the first time in a month. I spent Christmas day in a bunk with a high fever, brought on by some boils I had picked up on the way down, but I recovered the next day and was able to work when we took *Tina* around to the slipway and hauled her out of the water.

That was our first attempt to handle *Tina* on our own and it worked well. Walda threw off the forward line; the wind took the bow around; Philip cast off the stern line; and we were on our way. We tied up next to a fishing boat that evening, and next morning we were hauled easily out. One look at the bottom told us why we had made so much leeway trying to beat around Cape Point. The growth was two inches thick in places and at least one inch thick everywhere. We scraped great piles of encrusted animal life off the sides and bottom and covered ourselves with the worms that had been living there so long. It was a dirty, smelly job that the children enjoyed immensely and for which I hired two men to help. We cleaned, painted, and anti-fouled the bottom, sanded off the light blue that remained on the topsides, and painted *Tina* a deep red. I checked the rudder and found a loose bolt, which I replaced, and tightened up the nuts on the engine cooling grid. I worked on the toilet and got it functioning again, and put on some new zinc anodes.

When she went back into the water, *Tina* was a new boat. She gleamed brightly and, more important, she handled beautifully. It was simple to turn her in the tight corner by the slipway and she slid through the water at six knots with the engine only ticking over. Never before had she been so responsive to the helm.

On New Year's Eve a man named Steve came on board to apply for the crew's berth we were advertising. We chatted until midnight and then listened to the hoots of the ships as they greeted the New Year. Steve stayed on board that night and I put him to work the following day. Our first job was at the top of the mast to discover why the main had not gone up when we left Simonstown. On *Tina* one is not hauled up the mast. One climbs, using a halyard or topping lift with a chair slung on. The person on deck merely wraps the rope end around a cleat and makes fast, a simple job, but one which requires a certain alertness and rope know-how. I was glad to have Steve tailing when I went up.

At the top, the problem was obvious. The main forestay and two backstays were attached to rings welded to steel bars that were held by two bolts going right through the top of the mast. One of those bolts had sheared and the bar of steel was jamming the main halyard block. It was very frightening to think about what could have happened if we had been able to raise the mainsail, or if the jib had been used in the wind we had coming up the coast on that last leg. The forestay and backstays would surely have gone, and perhaps the mainmast! I put in a new stainless steel nut and bolt with a sigh of relief.

Steve stayed with us for a few days while all parties underwent a kind of mutual inspection to see if we would be able to get along. He was a good worker and had had some sailing experience. He seemed to be a decent chap and I was pleased to sign him on after the probationary period. We decided that we would not look further for crew, but would go with Steve as the only extra hand. Our previous experience with the boys had made us wary about overcrowding and one hand seemed plenty after we had gotten used to the idea of going it alone. No sooner had we made this decision than a head with lots of blond hair and a big smile appeared in the hatch and announced. "Hi! I'm Sally."

Sally had not sailed much, but she had been to sea on her father's boats and claimed that she could cook. She seemed a happy type of girl and was very keen to get a berth. After a short chat with her, we promised to reconsider the crew question and asked her to return the following day. Steve, with a gleam in his eye, reminded us that we had wanted two hands and pointed out that a ship's cook is an important position that was as yet unfilled. I decided to leave the final decision to Walda.

Sally joined us the next day and moved into the forecastle with her guitar and backpack. She immediately demonstrated a talent that made her a valuable acquisition: she made delicious Irish coffee.

With two extra hands working full time, the job of getting *Tina* ready was speeded up and there came a day when we had actually reached that state. Except for visas and clearance, Steve was experiencing some difficulty obtaining his passport and Sally's was at the U.S. Consulate, being processed for her visa. We had been warned not to take any crew who did not have a valid visa and a return ticket. Anybody who entered the United States on *Tina* would be my responsibility if they did not have their papers in order, and I would have to pay any costs involved in getting them back to their country. Sally went into town to get her passport and Steve went to get his. They were to be back at ten o'clock so that I would have time to go through the business of clearing the ship and crew. Sally was back at nine, but Steve was not. We waited all day for him but he never appeared. That evening we received a telegram: "Regret visa not granted. Have a good voyage. Steve." Back to square one. Okay, we'd go with Sally only as crew. She was willing, but she did mention an American she had met, a young man who had sailed into Durban and was looking for a berth.

The business of clearing Cape Town is a tripartite lesson in dealing with frustration. One must clear with the port captain's office, with the immigration office, and with customs. All these officials have their offices in different places, and most yachties have to walk from one office to another, some three or four miles, if they know the correct order and visit the immigration office first, then the port captain's, and then customs. Any deviation from this order means extra miles, since customs will not clear you unless you have been cleared by the port captain, who will not clear you unless you

have been cleared by immigration. Luckily I had done some research in the shower room at the club, where I had the whole process explained to me by an exhausted skipper who had gone to customs first and been sent to the port captain, who sent him to immigration, who sent him on his way. I was also lucky in that I was driven to the offices by John Frank, a man we had met while we were on the slipway and who adopted us and aided us in many ways.

At immigration the officials were helpful. I gave them a list of the crew and they gave me a form on which I had to list the crew. There were five names on the list – four Whiteleys and Sally Embleton. But there were only three passports. This caused some confusion and a great deal of shuffling of papers until I pointed out the reason: the children were included in my passport. That problem was solved, but, "Who's Embleton? Where's Embleton's passport?" Embleton's passport was discovered under the papers that had been shuffled about, was examined and returned to me. Have a nice trip.

There were more forms at the port captain's office and more at customs, where our bonded stores became a slight problem. I had ordered fifteen cases of beer, one of scotch, and one of rum. These had been processed by customs, but not delivered to the ship. I had to take my clearance certificate to the chandler's before they would bring the booze. That was my fourth and last stop. I could leave any time within the next seventy-two hours. If we did not get away by then, I'd have to go through the whole business again.

That afternoon the bonded stores arrived and were packed into one of the cabins, evicting the kids by sheer mass. It looked like an awful lot of booze. Some of the beer and all the scotch had been for Steve. Now that he was gone, I would have to steel myself to the task of drinking it. I steeled myself, and, in a burst of generosity, I ordered Walda and Embleton to steel themselves as well.

We were ready. We would leave the next morning.

The next morning the wind was blowing hard from the northwest. It would be right on our nose, and we would battle just to get out of Table Bay. I decided to wait for a change of wind. There was no sense in fighting it out at sea; we would get just as far by waiting and leaving with a fair breeze.

The American that Sally had mentioned turned up while we were waiting for the wind. He introduced himself as Dale "Shipwright," and I thought that with a name like that we couldn't go wrong. I later discovered that his name was Schipporeit and that he had been nicknamed "Ship Wreck." Dale had come to South Africa aboard a yacht from the Seychelles. He had signed off in Durban and hitched down to Cape Town. He had planned to leave for Johannesburg that night at midnight, driving up with some friends right after a party on the beach. We had a quick chat and offered him the berth. He went away to think about it and returned around eleven that evening to accept the job. We were once more fully crewed.

And the problems of crew were well and truly over. Looking at our experience with hindsight I can only ascribe the presence of Dale and Sally to good fortune – undeserved, but gratefully accepted. Anyone who has read Eric Hiscock will know what the ideal crewmember is like. Hiscock's description of a voyage will include something to the effect that "I went below to write in the log and Susan brought us into the harbor, cleared customs, careened the ship, scraped the bottom and anti-fouled her and made us

some supper." There is only one Susan Hiscock, but Dale and Sally came pretty close to that ideal. They were good companions, hard workers, and devoted to and interested in the trip and the boat. On a scale of one to ten, I would rate them about thirteen.

Eight yachts were waiting to leave Cape Town at that time. Because the northwester lasted so long, we all had to clear customs twice to keep within the seventy-two-hour limit. There was always somebody listening to the weather reports, or calling the weather office at the airport, or reading the newspaper trying to find out if the wind was going to change. None of these sources ever agreed on what the weather was going to do, and sometimes I doubted whether they knew what it was doing at a given moment. We held conferences on the club jetty, in the shower room, in the bar, trying to find out if anyone had heard anything that coincided with what anyone else had heard, and all the time the northwester kept blowing.

But not even a northwester that never blows in Cape Town in January can blow in Cape Town in January forever. One morning the smoke from the factories was blowing the other way. We took the laundry off the safety lines, lashed on the dinghy, topped up the water tanks, and motored out to the ringing of the club bell. The sails went up smoothly in Table Bay, and we switched off the engine and sailed out, past Robin Island and heading for St. Helena. It was January 15, 1977.

Only one of the eight boats that left that morning passed us. Detractors might say that this was because we were the seventh to leave, but I let the record speak for itself. Only one passed us.

To Sea and to Luderitz

The first couple of days at sea were used for settling in. The wind was fitful but from the right direction and the seas were easily handled. Karin suffered some from seasickness, but this was expected. Our main discomfort at the time was the cold at night and the shipping. It was very busy and the ships seemed to come in flocks, several at once, and then a spell when there were none. I did not have the self-steering at this time because I wanted Walda and Sally to learn how the wheel felt. They caught on very quickly and soon we were standing two-hour watches, with either Dale or me standing by in case there was a ship in sight.

Early in the evening of our third night at sea, under genoa, main, mizzen staysail, and mizzen, the wind began to pick up and *Tina* started to foam along at eight knots, nudging nine. She was straining and eager to go and the vibrations of the rigging made a humming noise that could be heard throughout the whole boat, like the sound of a guitar from inside the instrument. I had just relieved Dale at the wheel and had asked him to adjust the self-steering vane for the first time. We were sitting in the cockpit congratulating ourselves on how well it worked when there was a sudden snap and the backstay nearest me disappeared. I grabbed the wheel and turned *Tina* into the wind to take the strain off the sails before the mast went, and Dale raced for the main halyard and got the sail down faster than it had ever been dropped before. I dropped the mizzen staysail and mizzen while Dale, Sally, and Walda fished the genoa out of the water. Then we held a brief inspection. The masthead fitting I had repaired in Cape Town had come off completely, both bolts having sheared, and the masthead light had been ripped off as well. That much we could see in the dark. What other damage had been done to the mast or the rigging would have to be assessed in the morning. We kept a ship watch for the rest of the night and went to our bunks to get what sleep we could.

That was not much. Without the sails to steady her and with the seas building up, *Tina* was not a comfortable resting place. Everything that was not properly stowed fell out onto the floor and the bags of fruit and vegetables that were hanging from every hook slapped back and forth as the boat rolled. It was cold and we were discouraged by the break.

When light came, we had a look at our position. The mainmast was held up by the forestaysail stay, a bit of wire that ran from the bow about halfway up the mast, and the fore and aft shrouds on either side. The mast would remain upright, but it could not support a sail without being endangered. We could not go on to St. Helena like that, not when we were only a couple of hundred miles from Saldanha Bay, where we could get a welder to repair the damage. So we put on the engine and motored south, against wind and current.

We motored for twenty-four hours, going very slowly but making eighty miles, according to the log. My sun sights, however, kept putting us farther and farther to the north. Something was very wrong and I assumed my navigation was at fault. I would take a shot, work out a line that showed us to be in an impossible position, check my figures, check the procedure, and then take another shot because we simply could not be where the line put us. The next shot would produce a line right on top of the first. It was not until the second day that I believed my shots and realized that the wind and current were taking us north faster than the motor was driving us south. I explained my conclusion to

the rest of the crew and proposed two alternatives: we could try for St. Helena as we were, or head for Port Nolloth on the coast of Africa, just south of Southwest Africa. "Whatever you say, boss," they responded, cheerfully passing the buck back to me. So we headed eastward toward Port Nolloth.

I then had another look at the mainmast. The halyard was still in place on its block. One end of it tied to the stern railing would operate as a backstay and the other end could be fastened forward to become a forestay. We would then be able to raise the little forestaysail and the main, if we could rig a halyard. We fixed the stays in that manner, but the jury halyard was a problem. I remembered a short piece of stainless steel wire rope that had been on the boat when we bought her and poked around until I found it in one of the lockers, under some food. Everything in the lockers was under some food. This bit of rope had two loops on the ends. If we could wrap it around the mast and put a block through the loops, we could run a halyard over the block and raise the main, reefed right down, to be sure, but better than no main at all.

Going up the mast in those seas would be no joke, and Dale demanded that he be allowed to do it because he did not know how to navigate and if I fell the whole lot of them would be lost. This made sense to me, but I pride myself on my climbing ability so I did not give in graciously. But I did give in.

We used the forestaysail halyard to get Dale up as high as the cross-trees. He wrapped the wire rope around the mast, attached the block and then pushed the whole affair up as high as he could reach. I put my weight on the halyard and pulled. As long as there was some pressure on the halyard, the wire would hold. Ease it and the wire would slip down.

We reefed the mainsail and then tried to pull it up, only to find that the halyard block was not high enough. Even reefed, the luff of the main was too long. We had to get the wire higher.

The second try was my turn. Dale's shins were bleeding all over my freshly painted boat from the bashing they had received against the mast and I felt guilty about letting him do all the dirty work. I went up in the chair and then climbed out of it to stand on the crosstrees, clutching the mast as though my life depended on it, which it did. By shinnying a short way up the mast I was able to raise the wire rope to what I thought was an adequate height. I was right. We raised the main and watched it fill. The boat was sailing again, and much more comfortable.

It was an odd-looking rig. The mainsail was not big enough to lift the boom, so that spar was laid on the railing. When we wanted to change tacks, we had to lift up the boom and carry it across to the other side of the boat. When we flew the mizzen staysail, tacking was very complicated. It was drop the mizzen staysail, carry the boom over, change the backstay from one side to the other, and raise the mizzen staysail.

The winds died once we had some sail up and our approach to Port Nolloth took about a week of flapping about and making only a few miles a day. I was very concerned about the fuel situation at that point. I had no idea what Port Nolloth was like, how big a town it was, if it was a town, and what was available there. If we could not get fuel there, I wanted to be sure that we had enough to get in at one of the other ports on the coast. So we put up with the flip-flop of the sails and the low mileage and left the engine switched off.

With the calm seas and easy motion we were rid of the seasickness at last. Karin emerged, ate something, and took a look around her. The sea was quite pretty, and hey, look at the seals.

Because the children were missing school, we established a schedule of lessons to try and keep them up-to-date. Walda taught history, Afrikaans, and health and science. Dale undertook math in a weak moment and had to learn the New Math himself before he could teach it to the kids. Sally taught geography and guitar and expanded the course to include recorder as well, after the kids' birthday when they each received one. I took the English. With this curriculum they were kept busy six days of the week, and Sunday became a holiday to look forward to.

Life was easy with bright, sunny days and cold nights. I think the most important thing we learned in those early days was the true meaning of "we're only cruising." We were shedding shore life and all the trivia that go with it and learning to accept the realities of our condition. We were very late, far behind schedule, and not even heading toward our *destination*. Somehow, it did not seem to matter very much.

In Cape Town we had picked up a rat whom we had named Steve after our deserter. He came out sometimes at night for a stroll on the deck and enlivened the watch by serving as quarry in a rat hunt. The hand on duty could grab the gaff or a mop handle and chase him up and down the side decks, swinging madly and knocking off small chunks of paint. Steve was too quick for us, though, and we had to resort to poison, which he ignored for a long time but finally partook of and died a smelly, 'orrible death. I found him expired under the kids' bunk, where my nose had led me, and we buried him at sea amid cheers from all hands. I suppose he wasn't a bad chap, for a rat, but his habit of crawling over sleeping bodies had alarmed the females more than a few times and hence his funeral lacked the proper reverence and solemnity of such occasions.

The sun sights that I had doubted for so long turned out to be correct a few days after we turned toward Port Nolloth. It was then that I picked up the beacon on my radio direction finder (RDF) and knew that Port Nolloth was right in front of us. The RDF works with a system of sending stations, scattered worldwide at strategic locations. Each has its own Morse code call sign, which is listed, along with the frequency on which it is broadcast, the times, and the range, in the Admiralty List of Radio Signals, vol. 2. When you are within range of one of these stations, you listen for the signal and then turn the antenna of your radio until you hear the minimum strength of the signal. When this occurs, the antenna is pointing at the sending station. Ships that have powerful, sophisticated receivers can pinpoint a station with great accuracy, but the typical yachting has a set that -will give only a fair idea of the location of the sender, especially if the signal is weak, when the minimum can be found in an area of 10 or 15 degrees. It is for this reason that we used the RDF as a handy aid, but treated it with suspicion.

I had never learned Morse code, so using the RDF involved looking up the call sign in the book, looking up the Morse for the call sign, and then finding the station on the radio while repeating the Morse to myself so that I would not forget it. I would come running up from the salon with the radio in my hand, singing the call sign to myself and doing my best to ignore distractions.

"Dah-dah-dit-dit dit-dit-dah dah ..." "Morning, skipper." "Dit-dit-dah."

"Daddy, Philip took my pencil!" "Dah-dah-dit-dit..."

"Want some coffee, boss?"

"Dit-DIT-DAH DAH ..."

By the time I had learned the call sign well enough to escape having to look it up every time I wanted to use the RDF, the others knew it as well, and I would emerge with the radio to be greeted by a chorus of "Dah-dah-dit-dit" rendered by all hands. It was not long before the song had a title: "The Port Nolloth Blues." Later we were to have "Alexander's Ragtime Bay," "The Luderitz Lullaby," and "The Cape Canaveral Caper."

Other terms found their way into the ship's vocabulary. A knot that was such a complicated conglomeration of twists and turns that it took twenty minutes to untie was named after its creator and called an "Embletonian," but a particularly tasty dinner of an exotic nature, such as a peanut and onion casserole, was not "cooked" or "prepared." It was "Embletonized." The context of the word eliminated confusion.

Also connected with Sally was an item of apparel she often wore. It was a piece of printed material about two yards long and four feet wide that she had picked up in Cape Town for eighty-six cents. She used it as address, a gown, a towel, a scarf, and a blanket on hot nights. Searching for the best term to describe this multipurpose bit of cloth, I came up with "garment" and to this day Karin refers to any sarong-type wraparound as a "garment," which shows how easily a generic term can become specific.

A gust of wind we called a "puff" – a word better suited to describe the friendly airs 'we had. When it passed, we were "de-puffed." The condition existing when the wind was just about to die was designated as "ante-de-pufferantistical."

A "captain's knot" was a knot that did not hold. This shameful phrase was born when I caught the second fish of the trip. I got him to the side, where Dale gaffed him and then I put a line through his gills and tied him to the rail. Just as Sally was going below to heat up the pan, he jumped off, taking the line with him. The groans of disappointment died after a relatively short period, but I was never to live that knot down.

It took Dale some time to understand the South African term "just now." It is a beautifully vague expression and applies to the immediate future or any time within the next day or so. If I said that we would re-lash the spare anchor "just now," Dale would prepare himself to get to work in a minute or two, only to find that I intended to do the job after a beer and some dinner, if there was time before I was due in my bunk, and some time the following day if there was not. We had to explain that he must not confuse "just now" with "now-now" which means right away.

In an effort at precision the term "a bit" was employed, usually in connection with sheet adjustment. Easing the main very slightly was to let it out "a bit." A fairly substantial alteration was "a bit and a bit more." A drastic change called for the order "seven bits and a more."

The self-steering was christened "Hermann the German" because we were near what we called Southwest Africa, mainly out of habit; it is called Namibia by the United Nations and it used to be called German Southwest Africa. The name stuck because Hermann possessed the Germanic qualities of hard work and devotion to duty. Sometimes we had long conversations with him, when there was nobody else around to talk to, but our intercourse was usually restricted to shouts of encouragement when the wind was doubtful and mild reproaches when it died. "Atta boy, Herm. Hang in there, baby!" Or, "Come on, Herm, find us a puff."

Hermann had originally been installed on Bruce McDougal's yacht, *Aquarius* and had been to Rio and back a couple of times, making him the most experienced crewmember on *Tina*. But he was too heavy for *Aquarius* and had never been used really, so Bruce traded him to me for a set of navigation lights. Hermann consisted of a large plywood windvane and a long rudder that operated independently of the ship's rudder. Once the boat was on course and the sails were trimmed, the wheel was lashed and minor variations of course were corrected by the wind blowing on the vane that turned the rudder. This was the theory. In fact, the rudder was too big and the wind had to be very strong before it could turn the vane. We overcame this problem by attaching a small trim-tab to the aft edge of Hermann's rudder. Then the wind turned the vane; the vane turned the trim-tab; and the motion of the boat through the water caused the trim-tab to turn the rudder, which turned the boat. The process sounds cumbersome, but the reaction was instantaneous and Hermann was the best helmsman aboard.

Our watch routine evolved during this time. In the beginning, the night watches were parceled out after the evening meal on a grab-bag basis. There were six two-hour watches and whoever wasn't sleepy would volunteer for the first from eight until ten. The second, third, and fourth would be claimed in a like manner and then the circle would begin again. Later we stood three-hour shifts, an arrangement that guaranteed everyone at least six hours of sleep at some stage of the night and allowed a glorious nine hours for the first and fourth watches. But the volunteer system was obviously unfair. The treasured fourth watch had to be equitably shared before it became a bone of contention, so we developed an alternating system: first watch one night, second the next, then third, then fourth. A further refinement was the afternoon nap for whoever had the first shift that night.

That system worked well. The duties of the hand on watch were to keep an eye on Hermann, who struggled in light winds, and to watch out for ships and substantial changes in the weather. Everyone on deck at night wore a safety harness, a rule that needed no enforcing since anyone but a stupid idiot can see the danger of falling overboard from a boat, and none of the idiots on *Tina* were stupid. If one of the children made a short trip to the rail, he or she had to make sure that whoever was on watch realized it by saying something and getting an answer. It would be too easy to be focused on a ship three miles off and fail to see a little figure fall over the side.

The watchkeeping routine had some inherent rewards. For one thing, it was fair. For another, it was varied enough to prevent a feeling of stagnation. Often someone would shout gleefully, "Yippee! I'm on fourth watch tonight," and be answered by groans from whoever had second or third watch. And third, it did not stifle any generous impulses. If the person on watch was not sleepy or cold, or if it was a particularly beautiful evening, he could "give an hour" to the next watch, who would invariably pass it on. It was an interesting little honor system that was never, to my knowledge, discussed at all. If you felt like staying up for an extra hour, you knew that each person following your watch would get that much more sleep. And it was clearly understood that the hour was a gift. We did not lend time.

The children stood watches as company, either together or singly, at times they themselves chose. The only restriction I imposed was that they stand only one per night, which was necessary to overcome the urge to "stay up all night." Philip would often sit with Sally to gaze at the stars, and Karin liked fourth watch because it meant that she

could make the coffee at dawn. Nights when I had first watch became story time for both of them. We went through *Oliver Twist*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar*, *Great Expectations*, a couple of Hammond Innes novels, and *King Solomon's Mines*, to name but a few.

During the daylight hours we did not have any routine. Whoever felt like it would sit at the wheel and call for relief when it was needed. Since the helmsman's seat is the most comfortable above decks, and since Hermann did all or most of the work, it was no hardship being the driver. One could read, chat, sew, or merely lie there, if the sun was on that side of the boat.

The dining habits of the crew were established as well. Neither Dale nor Sally would touch breakfast, but the Whiteley mob often partook of some cold cereal, drenched in milk made from powder and sweetened with brown sugar. Sometimes we made porridge. We had enough of that on board to feed a hundred people, but it was usually too much of a bother to dirty up a pot just for a few plates of hot mush.

I understand that for those who do not enjoy breakfast the spectacle of another person busily stuffing himself with the dedication of a true slob is somewhat hard to take. I confess that my early morning appetite is usually what they call healthy, and I often scolded Sally when she brought me only a meager bowl of breakfast. One morning, however, she produced a salad bowl filled with cornflakes, floating in a quart of milk and enough brown sugar to cause an outbreak of diabetes in a small city. A true glutton will rise to such a challenge and I did manage to consume her offering, but I also took her point and ceased complaining.

Lunch was always a cold buffet. We had plenty of crackers and some canned cheese, and these formed the basis of the midday meal. We would add whatever happened to appeal, some bully beef, a tin of tuna or of beans and mixed vegetables, or whatever fresh vegetables there were.

The evening meal was Sally's major achievement. She would dig around in the stores, select a few tins, and later emerge in the cockpit, where we took all our meals, with a steaming concoction, to the applause of all. Her meals were imaginative and varied and her use of spices turned the bland, uninteresting contents of tins into tasty dishes.

The afternoon was dishwashing time. We had a plastic baby's bath lashed to the hatch cover of the lazarette and we threw the dishes into it as they became dirty. Since we only washed up once a day, there was always a good deal of rattling around as the boat moved. Dale and I alternated on the dishwashing chore, using seawater, and the children stowed the clean dishes away, Philip working as Dale's helper and Karin as mine.

Five o'clock was the happy hour, a ceremony religiously attended by Dale and me, with intermittent participation on the part of the women. I had graciously allowed Dale to buy half of Steve's Scotch and half the beer, so we attacked the booze on a drink-for-drink basis, each of us trying to protect his investment. The beer would be taken in the same way, but without regard for the hour. The pubs were always open somewhere in the world, and by drinking beer we saved water. We saved a lot of water that way. Thirty-four cases, not counting what we saved when we were ashore.

I did not have a chart for Port Nolloth nor for any of the ports on the western coast of Africa. When we finally came close to the town, we saw that the business of entering would be tricky in the extreme. At first we could see nothing but a hazy mass of grey

houses, neatly barricaded by a long line of surf and apparently uninhabited. As we closed with the land, the houses took on some individuality, but the grey haze remained. We could see some boats between the surf and the beach and assumed that there must be an entrance, but the line of surf seemed solid from one end of the town to the next. We moved parallel to the beach, about a mile out, until we saw what looked like a break in surf at the north end of the town, and then headed in.

Through the binoculars we could see that our break was indeed an entrance. There was a single red buoy either on the beach or near it and a large delta on a mast on the shore. We looked for other marks and saw hundreds of them, but these were in our imagination and would disappear with dismaying regularity. As we moved in closer, we could see that Port Nolloth was not a harbor but an area of beach sheltered by a reef. The question was whether the entrance was a permanent one or was subject to the tide. Perhaps the locals only went out at high tide and perhaps it was low tide at the moment of our approach. We had no table to tell us and the hazy beach showed no distinct line that could be taken as a high-water mark. Or perhaps the break we were approaching was not an entrance at all but merely a low point in the rocks. Perhaps the real entrance was much farther south and we were running into some kind of false gateway set up by the sea in one of its particularly sneaky moods.

As we moved in closer, we could see that the red buoy was in the water, not on the beach. Obviously, it was a marker, but one marker does not help much unless you have-specific information about it. Two are needed to mark a channel and we could not see another. If only one of the fishing boats that we could now see clearly behind the reef would decide to go put a line out somewhere, we could follow his course, but the town was asleep and nobody was putting to sea.

We were in very close by this time. The surf was breaking on either side of us, huge rollers coming in quickly. It was plain that we would be able to get to the red marker, but then what? Would we be able to get out again if the depth finder showed too little water? Would the fuel line block just when we needed power?

"Captain chicken," I announced. "We'll try Orange River mouth."

It had taken us a week to get to Port Nolloth, and we all wanted to get ashore, fix the masthead fitting, and move on. But there was no sense in wrecking *Tina* just because we were in a hurry. We were only cruising. We would try Orange River mouth, and if we could not get in there we would try Luderitz, and if that didn't work we would try Walvis Bay.

We left Port Nolloth behind and the wind died. It was the old flip-flop all over again, but now we had picked up a good strong current and the next day found us sixty-five miles up the coast. We were getting into the diamond area and at night the size of the operations was a constant source of amazement. Watching the shore from about five miles out at dusk we would see only desert with an occasional mound to mark a mine. As darkness came the whole area lit up like a good-size city so that we often thought we were passing our goal. The RDF, however, always relieved the confusion and we became inured to the sight of thousands of lights in the middle of nowhere.

The radio beacon brought us up to Alexander Bay, but we did not even bother to enter. From our position the place seemed to contain two houses about eight miles apart, and the bay itself was blocked by a line of surf. We had been doing some research in the children's geography books and it looked to us as if Luderitz was the place to head for. It

was described as a port with a very active fishing industry – just what we needed. We moved on up the coast.

This was a very busy area as far as shipping was concerned and the shore was hostile in two ways. Nature had made it as desolate a stretch of beach as one could find and subject to some pretty tough storms. Man had added to the problem by creating what is probably the tightest security network for any area of its size in the world. Unauthorized people do not land on the beaches here. There are too many diamonds lying around. Dale had heard somewhere that if anyone did manage to get ashore through the surf and rocks, his boat would be confiscated and he would be allowed to leave only after careful searching and interrogation. We never tried to verify that theory, but we were buzzed by a helicopter overhead as we drifted by. The pilot circled *Tina*, gave us a friendly wave, and flew back to shore.

The Benguela Current that was pushing us up toward Luderitz comes from the South Pole and is very cold. The night watches were spent huddled in oilskins to preserve as much body warmth as possible, but the only real protection at night was found in bed. On the other hand, the days were sunny and the beer in the bilges was lovely and cold.

The radio beacon for Luderitz is at Diaz Point, some eight miles from the town itself. We spotted this point late in the afternoon and eased our way in, looking for the town. We were heartened by the fact that the navigational aids on the point were considerable. There was a light and there were several masts and some houses. It appeared to be a sizable undertaking, which would suggest a busy port, but there was no sign of Luderitz.

When we rounded Diaz Point, it was almost dark and we could see some lights that looked like a town, but we were too late to attempt an entry that evening. We would lay off and on during the night and see what the place looked like the next morning.

Laying off and on is a perfectly safe procedure in a situation such as ours. You sail around for a few hours in the dark and approach the shore only when you can see what you are doing. But at midnight Sally came below to tell me that she had measured the wind at thirty-three knots and didn't I think we had too much sail up? That is the irony of sailing. We had been flopping about the ocean for twelve days without anything like a steady wind, and as soon as we got near a port we had a moderate gale. We took down the main and headed toward the shore under mizzen and forestaysail, and the wind died when we were in the shelter of Diaz Point once more. It was a nerve-wracking night for me. Ahead of us were the lights of Luderitz, a safe distance off, but there were black patches that might have been unpopulated areas, or hills blocking the view from the bay, or islands. If they were islands, we could not know how big they were or how close to us. On the port side was the rest of Africa, an invisible mass toward which the current might be pushing us. Our only point of reference was the light at Diaz Point, and that was too far away to be of much use. I was very glad to see the dawn.

The ideal way to enter a strange harbor, even if you have a chart for it, which we did not, is to follow another boat in. If her skipper knows what he is doing, you will be led to a safe place by a safe route. If he does not know what he is doing, he will wreck himself on a rock, which you can then avoid. We were lucky that morning in that a fishing boat entered right in front of us and led us to where we could see another yacht, which led us into the harbor where we tied up at the jetty and switched off the motor. We

were in a small harbor across which we could see the yacht club and possible hot showers. It was Saturday morning, which meant that I might be able to find a welder and have the fitting I wanted made.

Officialdom in Luderitz was informal and helpful. The port captain gave me a couple of forms to fill in, "when you have a minute" and called the customs for us on the phone. They came down, took a look at what was left of the bonded stores, told us not to sell any, and left. How simple clearance can be.

One of the visitors who came down to have a look at the strange yacht was Leon Fourie, who was a chemist in the town and a yachtsman at heart. He mentioned to Walda and Sally that he had a key to the yacht club and was bundled into his car without further ado and forced to drive them over to the showers. Dale told Sally to give a yell if there was hot water, and the morning stillness was soon broken by an ear-stretching "Yahoo!" from across the bay.

The main job, however, was the masthead fitting. The old system of bolted plates was an obvious bummer. What we wanted was a strong steel cap to fit over the whole top of the mast and enable us to attach each stay to a different shackle, instead of both backstays and the antenna all leading from one. To have this made I would have to measure the top of the mast. I was preparing to go up when a man called Clay arrived and asked if we had anything for the local paper. We did not, but he seemed glad to chat and told us where we could get some welding done.

I took my measurements and then drew a sketch of what I thought would work. The fitting would consist of a flat piece of steel on the top with two-inch flaps on the sides. Fore and aft of the mast would be longer pieces of steel, an inch wide and six inches long, between which the main halyard block would be able to run. These strips would be bolted through the mast to anchor them. Jutting out from the top would be another flap to take the shackles for the stays and the blocks for the foresail halyards.

As I walked through the gate with the sketch in my hand, Clay picked me up in his van and drove me to one workshop, which was closed, and then to another, which was open. The man in charge took one look at my drawing, told me it was a small job, no problem, and he'd do it on Monday. Then Clay drove me back to the harbor and explained to me that his name was Chris. Clay was a surname.

Dale and I had our turn at the shower at the yacht club and then he and Sally went to look for a pub while the Whiteley mob was taken out by Chris and Leon to have a look at the area around Luderitz. We went to Diaz Point, where Bartholomew is said to have landed and raised a cross on his way around the Cape. It was a wild and windy piece of rock from which we could see many of the coves and islands around Luderitz and little bays with sandy beaches. It seemed to me a magnificent place to keep a small boat in which to go fishing or simply sail around.

Before we left Diaz Point we picked some mussels. These were beauties, four to six inches long, out of the cold, cold water. That evening in Leon's flat above his chemist shop we had them steamed, fried with two or three sauces, curried, swimming in garlic butter – an endless procession prepared by Mesdames Clay and Fourie and washed down with some excellent wine. Leon and I had done our best to include Dale and Sally in the feast. We had searched all the pubs in town. One was across the street from Leon's place and the other around the corner. We found them in the second, where they elected to stay.

The bars in South Africa are off-limits to women but those in Southwest Africa are not, and Sally was enjoying her first stop at a bar.

Sunday found us doing odd jobs about the boat. One of the pieces of angle iron used to keep Hermann stiff had broken and that was removed so that it could be repaired. Then there was the engine box. *Tina's* engine is in the middle of the salon, covered by a box that serves as a table. The forward side of the box is hinged and one need only lift the box to expose the engine. The arrangement has the advantage of making the entire engine easily accessible, but it also means that the salon is noisy and smelly when running under power. The hinges of the box had been bolted to the sole, but the movement of the boat had put a strain on the wood and pulled the bolts loose. Dale and I spent a morning fitting an angle iron in place and attaching the hinges to it, instead of to the sole.

That afternoon we all repaired to Leon's for a beer before going to the Clays' for dinner. Leon had a chart of Port Nolloth and it turned out that our approach had been right at the entrance to the area behind the reef. We could have gone in safely had we continued as we were. Still, I did not regret having turned around that afternoon. It was the right decision at the time with the data available. Besides, if we had entered Port Nolloth we would have missed Luderitz, and Luderitz was good.

We met Mr. and Mrs. Both that afternoon. He was the commodore of the yacht club at the time, a job to which Leon was later elected, and very apologetic about not welcoming us earlier. Mrs. Both was one of those ladies of boundless energy, enthusiasm, and charm. She conversed rapidly and uproariously in English, Afrikaans, and German and invited the whole lot of us up to their house for a crayfish dinner on Tuesday evening. She was still telling jokes in three languages as she bustled her husband down the stairs and into their car.

The feast on Sunday evening was followed by an excursion on Monday in Chris's van. Although he is not a native of Southwest Africa, he dearly loved his adopted landscape and took pride in showing it off. It was a wild, raw desert, constantly changing and asserting itself, making one aware of its personality. One doesn't view a desert the way one views other natural scenes. What you see from an Alp, for example, is there before you – picturesque, beautiful, imposing, but something you look at. The desert inspires a more kinesthetic reaction. You feel its presence.

We were aware also that this was diamond country. When we stopped on the road a helicopter came over to check us out, perhaps the same one we had seen at sea. Chris told us that the area a hundred yards on either side of the road was safe, but people who went farther into the desert could be arrested. He had had to apply for a special permit in order to take us to an old mining town, Kolmanskop, that he thought would interest us. It was a ghost town now, sinking slowly into the desert. Many of the rooms we looked at were full to the ceiling with sand, while others were exactly as they had been left, allowing for some change through the influence of time. The odd thing was that most of the buildings were in reasonably good condition. It would have been possible to live in the mess hall, for example. The kitchen was old, but the stoves appeared in good shape. The theater might have been used a month earlier, and the skittle alley was operational. We rolled a few balls down the echoing alley and quoted Shakespeare from the stage. Things do not disintegrate in the desert. Iron does not rust and wood does not rot. But the sand engulfs and the wind blasts and someday Kolmanskop will be gone, buried in the dunes.

On the way back from Kolmanskop we stopped at the Luderitz golf course. It is a well known fact that golfers are fanatics, but this was ridiculous. There were no fairways, and the greens were marked by flags that seemed necessary more to prevent the players from getting lost than to mark the holes, which were full of sand. Before making his putt the golfer had to dig out the hole and then use a special tool to smooth out the sand between the ball and the hole. It would be like playing in a huge sand trap.

On Tuesday the masthead fitting and Hermann's bracing irons were finished and we painted them for installation the next day before going up to the Both residence for the promised dinner.

Crayfish, or South African rock lobster, is an elegant delicacy. The creatures abound in the cold waters around Luderitz, and the locals fish for them during the season and stock up their freezers. They use a cone-shaped net attached to an iron ring that is lowered into the water with a piece of bait tied to the net. When the ring is pulled up, the crayfish is caught in the folds of the net. A boat makes the job easier, but the creatures can be captured from the rocks.

We enjoyed a magnificent spread and then the children went out to play and we adjourned to the lounge. The liquor bottle was passed around until the adults were all laughing at subtle puns in German, which no one understood but which sounded funny at the time. Then it was all hands, including the Boths, down to *Tina* for some of Sally's Irish coffee.

In the morning we were all feeling very delicate. Sally leaped over the side in an unsuccessful attempt to revive herself while the rest of us contemplated more certain means of suicide. Eventually Dale got me up the mast, and I was struggling to install the new fitting when Mrs. Both came striding down the jetty, bringing us a few personal items that we had forgotten at her home – my hat and watch, Walda's jersey, Sally's coat, and Dale's shoes. She was not in the least daunted by the evening's excesses and shouted greetings to me atop the mast in a bellow that would have done credit to a sergeant major. What a pity, she said, that we could not stay for another week or so and go fishing with them. I was glad we were setting off the next day. Another week of her hospitality and stamina would have been too much for all of us.

In Luderitz the dawn comes sneaking in over the desert and catches the harbor by surprise. The water lies still and glassy and the sounds of the town can be heard over great distances. Even the gulls perched on rocks covered by a thick layer of guano are taken unawares and only begin their noisy day when it has been light for an hour or so. This condition of stillness persists until 11 A.M, exactly, when the wind comes roaring out of the southwest to exchange the sand in the town for new sand it brings over from Diaz Point. It was this fine wind, which Dale called the "Luderitz slingshot," that popped us out of the harbor and sent us scudding on our way toward St. Helena like a cork out of a champagne bottle. *Tina* was a sailboat again, with her new masthead fitting and Hermann securely in place. She was manned by people who had a pretty good idea of what they were doing and who had established a routine for life at sea. Her stores were well stowed, her water and fuel tanks full, and she had four new cases of South West beer on board. Surely nothing else could go wrong.

Luderitz to St. Helena

The wind that blasted us out of Luderitz lasted for a day and then began to ease off into a pattern of gusty puffs followed by near calms. These were difficult conditions for Hermann, who likes a strong, steady wind, and the rest of the gear took a battering as well. Nothing will eat up sails and ropes as quickly as flapping and we were constantly repairing small rips and tears, usually in the machine-sewed seams. Terylene is a wonderful material for sails. It doesn't rot and it is immensely strong, but the stitches that hold it together are not imbedded in the material; they stand out and beg to be chafed apart, which the wind is glad to do.

We were looking for the southeast trade winds as we pulled away from the coast of Africa. They were supposed to be strong and steady and would take us to St. Helena on a nice reach. But it was five days before the wind shifted to the right direction, and then it was weak and fitful. It was only after a week of sailing that I was persuaded to admit that these were the trades and even then I insisted that the name was a misnomer.

An annoyance that was to plague us for the entire trip became apparent during this period. This was the lack of a pole to boom out the jib. If the wind blows from the stern of a sailboat, the mainsail will blanket the jib so that it flaps uselessly, even in a strong wind. The usual procedure is to put the main and jib on opposite sides, holding the jib in place with a stick. Because we did not have such a stick we had to keep the wind on the quarter, and this meant we could not take the direct route to our destination. We had to zig-zag downwind and this imposed two difficulties. In the first place, we had to travel farther. This is not necessarily a bad thing. Any boat will reach faster than it runs and it is sometimes quicker to take the long road. If you can increase your speed 25 percent and your distance only 20 percent, it pays you to reach. The winds we encountered, however, were so light that the difference between a reach and a run was minute in terms of speed and yet considerable in terms of distance.

In the second place, our wandering course was to test my navigation. I have already mentioned the effect my experience had on us after the masthead fitting broke. My failure to believe in my sights had been expensive as far as time, fuel, and morale were concerned. Once I did believe in the position lines, they had been correct, but we had been following radio beacons from that time until we arrived in Luderitz and we had had the coast in sight most of the time, so we would have had to work very hard to get lost. But there was no beacon on St. Helena and it was all alone in the middle of the ocean with no landmarks around it. I decided to stop worrying about ships and to devote all my anxieties to navigation.

Modern methods of celestial navigation are accurate and easy to master. If you can add and subtract, you can work out a sight. It is true that the sequence of steps seems a bit awesome at first, but it is simple if you use the proper form. The tricky part is the actual shooting and, strangely, the timing. Ashore we do not realize how rarely we require the time accurate to the second. If you have an appointment at 4:30, 4:28 is as good as 4:33. But at sea that five minutes represents a seventy-five-mile error.

Learning to use the sextant is a question of practice. I was told once that midshipmen undergoing training are required to take a thousand sights before any degree of accuracy is expected. What you are trying to do is hold a moving object, the sun, on

the edge of another moving object, the horizon, while standing on still another moving object, the boat, with your instrument supported by one more moving object, your arm. But shooting the sun becomes easy with practice. It is like swimming in that a detailed breakdown of the separate motions sounds very complicated, but the athlete performs them smoothly without thinking about them. And, as in swimming, a theoretical knowledge of sighting is not enough. If you explain the sport to a novice, he will sink when you toss him into a pool. With a sextant, however, there is usually enough time to practice before you drown.

We used the most basic navigation systems on *Tina*; the noon sight and the Mark St. Helier method of finding a position line. The noon sight is the easiest and most rewarding because it gives a fix, a point on the chart that you can measure from to see how far you have come and how far you have to go. This system involves two concepts, *zenith distance* (ZD) and Greenwich hour angle (GHA). The former is used to find latitude and the latter to find longitude.

Zenith distance is the distance, expressed in degrees, between your position and the point on the earth directly under the sun. If you can find this distance when the sun is on the same meridian as you are, you can work out your latitude. You watch the sun through the sextant until it ceases to rise. Then it will pause for a moment before starting on its trip downward to the west. When it is at its highest point, it is on your meridian. After making the necessary corrections to the altitude your sextant gave you, you have a figure called the true altitude. Subtract that figure from 90 degrees and you have the ZD. Now you know where you are in relation to the sun, and the Nautical Almanac tells you where the sun is in a column called Dec, for declination. It gives the latitude you would have to be standing on to have the sun directly over your head, and it gives it for every hour of every day of the year.

Now you know where you are in relation to the sun and where the sun is. All that remains to find your latitude is to study the nature of those relationships and add or subtract the Dec. and ZD figures. If, for example, both the sun and the boat are on the same side of the equator (Lat. and Dec. Same Name), your latitude will be ZD plus Dec. It takes, say 15 degrees from you to that spot directly under the sun (your ZD) and 20 degrees from there to the equator (the Dec), so you must be 35 degrees from the equator. That is your latitude.

If, on the other hand, the sun is on one side of the equator and you are on the other (Lat. and Dec. Contrary Names), the ZD will cover the distance from you to the equator and from the equator to that spot directly under the sun. Because you are only interested in the first part of that distance, you subtract the Dec. from the ZD to get your latitude.

One of the interesting points about *Tina's* trip was that we experienced three of the possible relations between her, the sun, and the equator. In the beginning, the declination and her position were both south (Same Name: Lat. = ZD plus Dec). Then we passed under the sun and had a few days between the sun and the equator (Lat. = Dec minus ZD). And then we crossed the equator while the sun remained on the other side (Contrary Names: Lat = ZD minus Dec). At about 5:15 on March 20 (the sun crossed to the north of the equator and it was Same Name again.

The usefulness of knowing your latitude should never be underestimated. It would be possible to find your way to a given port with that information alone, even without a chart. If island A is on, say, 24°S, you sail along until you reach that latitude, turn left,

and proceed into port. It is a lot easier if you can fix your position, but you could get by with latitude alone. Joshua Slocum wrote that he navigated with an old alarm clock that had only the hour hand and worked when he "boiled it." If this is true and not merely the old sailor's sense of humor, he navigated right around the world using latitude only.

To find longitude, the Greenwich hour angle (GHA) is used. This is a measurement of the sun's progress around the earth, starting at the prime, or Greenwich, meridian and going around to the west. When the sun is right over the zero degree longitude, the GHA is zero. An hour later, the sun has moved over to be directly above another line of longitude to the west of Greenwich and the GHA is one hour. Since the sun goes around the earth in twenty-four hours, that single hour takes up one twenty-fourth of the entire circle, or fifteen degrees ($24 \times 15 = 360$). Therefore, if you know the Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) when the sun crossed your meridian, you can compute your longitude.

A couple of minor difficulties are involved in this computation. Longitude and GHA are different in that the latter starts at zero and goes right around to 359 degrees, 59 minutes, and 59 seconds, while the former goes east and west to meet at 180 degrees. Also, the sun is not a very good timekeeper and doesn't reach the same point at the same time every day, so the Nautical Almanac must be consulted. It tells you where the sun is every day under the heading GHA.

But these are truly minor complications. If the sun passes your meridian before noon GMT, you are east of Greenwich. The GHA will be, say, 346° , which you subtract from 360° and you know your longitude is 14° East. If you are west of Greenwich, the sun will pass you after noon GMT.

Obviously, the crux of the problem here is the exact time when the sun is on your meridian. I have already mentioned that the sun rises to its highest point and then remains there for a while before starting down into the west. This pause varies in duration from day to day and can last several minutes. It is necessary to find the exact second when the sun is on your meridian, and the solar coffee break confuses this. Is it there when the sun reaches its peak or when it starts downward? Or some time in between? The answer is some time in between, and a method of determining the time is called "The Equal Angles System." You take a sight fifteen minutes or so before noon and make a note of the angle. After the sun has passed over your head, and you have been watching it get to your latitude, you set the sextant to the same angle and wait until you see the sun come down to it. When it does, you note the time again. The average of the two times will give you your exact local noon, GMT. Look up the GHA for that time in the Nautical Almanac and you have your longitude.

On *Tina* we would take four or five sets of sights, which we called brackets, and the resulting noon times would be within a few seconds of each other. If one noon seemed out of place, say twenty seconds away from the others, we would discard it as inaccurate and average the remaining noons. Usually the four times would be within a ten-second span, but once, and once only, I managed to get three noons equal to the second. That was a triumph I never let the others forget.

Knowing the importance of time for longitude, I had purchased a digital quartz watch that ran on batteries with a life of about a year. It was a satisfactory item of equipment because the seconds could be read as numbers, rather than little lines on a dial. The only problem was that navigation required greater than normal use of the watch and

the batteries gave out long before their year was up. Of course I had not anticipated this and we had no replacements on board, so we had to use Dale's watch and a stopwatch. We set it every day to BBC time checks, which we picked up on the shortwave radio and left it on GMT. Ship's time was kept on a clock mounted on a bulkhead in the salon.

The ideal timepiece for navigation is not, to my knowledge, on the market. It would be a shockproof, waterproof, antimagnetic mechanical chronometer. The dial would include clear markings for the minutes, and the minute and second hands would reach to those marks, not simply pointing at them as with most watches. It would have a mechanism that would permit setting the second hand, as well as the minute and hour hands. It would also have a button that could freeze the hands so that you could study the time, make a note of it, and then press again to have the watch automatically catch up with the time. In short, it would be a tough, dependable, easily read watch that could pick out a second in time and hold it without losing track of time's progress. Such a device would make navigation even easier than it is. It should cost about \$7.95 so the sailor could afford to carry a few spares.

Our noon sights were satisfactory most of the time. They gave us a daily fix for very little effort. If the sun was obscured at noon, it usually didn't make much difference. It was, after all, a big ocean. But the inherent drawback is that you don't know where you are at, say, ten in the morning, or four in the afternoon, unless your dead reckoning is exactly on, which it never is. For that circumstance you use a position line.

Working out a position line is a good deal more complicated than the methods outlined above. What it boils down to is a comparison of the real or true altitude of the sun with what that altitude would be if you were where you thought you were. You take a guess as to your position, and the book *Sight Reduction Tables for Marine Navigation* tells you what the altitude of the sun would be if you were there. The actual altitude that you got with your sextant will be either greater or less than the one in the book. If greater, you are closer to the sun than you thought. If less, you are farther away. The problem is that the result of this exercise gives you a line, not a fix. You could be anywhere on that line, and you must plot two or three lines and see where they cross before you get a true reflection of your position. That takes time because you must wait for the sun to move to avoid getting one line on top of another.

It all sounds easy because it is, but I needed a successful landfall to achieve a sense of confidence in the system. I could feel myself getting better with the sextant, and was beginning to be able to tell when I had a good sight and when I was looking at the back of a wave. But only seeing St. Helena on the bow would convince me that I was doing everything correctly.

As we zigged and zagged across the sea, the routine consolidated itself. The business of bathing, for example, reached a point of nonchalance. Early in the trip everybody was warned when a bath was about to be taken on the foredeck. Eyes were carefully averted and the bather was cautious to preserve modesty. In those days the water was cold and the bath would be very quick indeed. Throw a bucket of water over your head, lather up with shampoo in frantic haste, rinse off with another bucket, and dress as fast as possible. As we moved farther north and out of the Benguela Current, the water warmed and it was nice to drip dry in the sun with the consciousness that nobody

was awkwardly looking the other way. Nobody was looking your way, either. Nakedness became unimportant.

We had our first proper swim one day when the wind died completely. We did not like to stop even our slow progress and it took a real calm to persuade the skipper that a swim was in order. We were a bit worried about sharks out there in the middle of the ocean and devised a system whereby Dale dove in and the rest of us watched to see if he would be eaten up. If he survived a few minutes in the water, the entire crew would join him. He was called "Sharkbait" on those occasions.

It was interesting and fun to swim about the boat in water that was free of all visible pollution. *Tina* looked strange from that angle and her bottom could be seen clearly. The kids would dive from the pilothouse roof, insisting on having everyone's attention before doing so, and then clamber up the side, using the swell to help them.

There was always the nagging worry about sharks, though, and we tried to keep at least one person on deck as a lookout. At one such swim stop, Karin was on deck by herself and suddenly began to scream "Shark!" in a very convincing tone. I happened to be near the ladder at the time, so I pushed Sally and Philip out of my way and climbed up on deck in record time. There, about forty yards from the boat, was a fin sticking out of the water. But it wasn't moving, and it looked very unlike what I thought a shark's fin should be. It turned out to be a pair of dolphin, very sleepy and very much in love. They lay in the water, rolling against each other contentedly and ignoring *Tina's* intrusion with the obliviousness of true lovers. It was touching to watch them cuddling out there, miles from anywhere.

They were soon joined by some small whales, also lazy, but moving slowly across the ocean. We had seen this kind of mixture before when we were overtaken by a huge mob of dolphin and whales. The dolphins were massive, easily eighteen feet long, and swimming as if they had an appointment some two hundred miles away for which they were already late. How many there were was impossible to tell, but they came roaring past us for ten minutes and never paused to do more than twist onto their sides and glance at us. Often dolphin will stop to investigate a boat or even play with it, diving inches from the bow and twisting out of the way at the last minute. But the big school had important things to do and did not slow down at all. A swimming dolphin is beautiful to watch and we were all on deck to applaud their speed and control when we noticed that there were some even bigger characters coming up astern. These were humpback whales in a playful mood. They would surf down the swell or dive and come charging upward, shooting their whole lengths out of the water and splashing down like manned space vehicles. Some liked to stand on their heads and slap the water with their tails. We could almost hear them chuckling with delight, and *Tina's* decks resounded with shouts of encouragement.

Wildlife at sea was a constant source of amusement. Something was always going on. Once, at dawn off Port Nolloth, I had seen a long line of seals, about twenty yards wide and five hundred long, packed tightly and moving with purpose across the water. I was first alerted to them by the strange hissing sound, of their swimming and only when they came closer did I hear the usual puff of their breathing. There must have been several hundred seals there, going off to feed somewhere special. Individual seals or groups of three or four had been plentiful, but never such a mass of seemingly disciplined soldiers all going in the same direction.

Whales, too, we saw fairly often. Usually the little humpbacks, thirty or forty feet long, some sedate, some playful. Once we spotted two really big whales courting, about two hundred yards away. They lay on their backs playing patty-cake with flippers that were fifteen feet long and standing on their heads to show off their flukes. We were all rather glad that they were too busy with each other to come and investigate us.

Birds were always there, even in mid-Atlantic. None of us knew enough to identify them and we did not have a book aboard that could help us, so we contented ourselves with chatting to individual birds in very bad imitations of their cries. At one point a tired old fellow spent the night perched on top of Hermann's windvane. We called him "Admiral Bird" and were glad to extend to him the hospitality of the ship.

But the dolphins were with us most often and were the most welcome. On moonless nights we could hear them sighing around the boat or see them shooting through the water like torpedoes, leaving trails of phosphorus criss-crossing the bow and under the stern. They were company on the lonely watches and good to talk to. The only drawback of their visits was that they would remind me of the idiotic twits who capture these animals, put them in a plastic pool with three feet of water, and train them to dance with silly hats on their heads and bouquets of plastic flowers in their mouths. The irony is that the audiences do not realize that they are witnessing the complete perversion of grace, control, and dignity when these trusting, friendly creatures are turned into clowns by people whose idea of humor is limited to the banana peel and the custard pie. Seeing the shows made me cross, but remembering the shows with the animals free in front of me made me furious.

We moved toward St. Helena very slowly. Sometimes we would bet on the day's run, sitting around in the cockpit after supper. The distances would be recorded in the log, and the winner was to get a round of drinks when we hit the island. To indicate the speed of our progress, Sally was a winner with an estimate of fifty-five miles, and Walda won twice with thirty-two miles and forty miles. The round of drinks was beginning to look pretty good at this time because we had experienced the first of several catastrophes. We had run out of beer. I threw the last empty bottle over the side and Dale and I watched it sink with funereal feelings. Would the scotch and rum hold out until St. Helena?

Creeping across the ocean meant that very little strain was being put on the ship and gear, but some things did "break. The stiffening bar that held Hermann broke in the same spot that had been repaired in Luderitz. We tied it up with the same piece of wire rope that had held our jury halyard and fitted a turnbuckle. It held but was still subject to vibration. One of the shrouds broke part of the weld that held it to the deck, and the main halyard tended to jam on some occasions. We improvised temporary solutions where we could and left the rest to be fixed on shore, if we could find a shore.

Fifteen days out of Luderitz I was seeing St. Helena all around the horizon during the day and mistaking stars for lights during the night. The noon fix put us 110 miles away from the island, but I was looking anyway, knowing I would see nothing. In my anxiety on the morning of the sixteenth day I started shooting position lines. They showed us to be about fifty miles away and an unusually steady wind was helping us eat up the distance. Half an hour before noon I took four shots as brackets for the longitude and was busy with the latitude shot, watching the sun rise and waiting for noon when I happened to glance forward and saw a great big blue hunk of land right on the bow. Land

ho! And just where it was supposed to be! The sun and sextant combination actually works. Sally dashed below for the last of the scotch and we all had a celebratory nip, not only because we were close to land, but also because it was the land we were looking for. One nice thing about an island like St. Helena is that it is the only one in its area. There is no mistaking it for something else.

We were thirty-five miles off when we saw the island and sailed through the afternoon and early evening to come up to it. The wind was giving us about five or six knots, so there was no sense in switching on the engine. We would just burn up fuel without any appreciable increase in speed.

It was dark when we approached James Bay, the little harbor of the island, but the leading lights were clearly visible and I was willing to attempt an entry in darkness. We would pull in slowly and drop the hook in a clear space, which would not be too difficult to find because there would not be many boats in such an out-of-the-way place. But when I turned the switch, the engine groaned once and then sat silently, ignoring my curses. The batteries were dead. I decided that we would sail in.

We moved carefully in the dying wind until we were where the chart showed us to be in six to seven fathoms. We judged our position by guessing the distance to the lights of cars around the harbor. When we could see the license plates, we thought we were pretty close. There was no sign of other shipping, no boats, not even a dinghy, so I told Dale to drop the hook. He let it go, and I heard the rattling of chain for what seemed like a very long time. We did not seem to be moving, but *Tina* was not pointing into what little breeze there was. She lay broadside to. I grabbed a flashlight and went up to the bow to have a look. The chain was vertical, so we let out some more. It was still vertical, so we let out still more. And more and more, until all sixty meters were in the water, straight beneath the bow.

I got out the handbearing compass and took a reading on one of the lights on shore. Five minutes later the same light gave the same bearing, so I assumed that we had come to a stop. I did not like the way *Tina* was lying broadside to the breeze, or the vertical anchor chain, but we seemed to be safe enough for the night. I decided that we would keep an anchor watch and charge the batteries until morning, when we could find out where we were.

We got out the little Honda and started it up. It made a lot of noise, but we were going to need that engine in the morning. I took the first two-hour watch and spent my time with the handbearing compass, staring at lights on the shore. There seemed to be a lot of activity, with many cars racing along the harbor road and then rising almost vertically up the hill behind the town.

It soon became obvious that we had not stopped. We were not dragging quickly, but we were moving. The bearings would change every fifteen minutes or so. Only a degree or two, but they changed. Because we were inching along parallel to the north edge of the island, we were in no danger. We had nothing but open sea to run into, but a sudden change of wind or current could change that and it was worthwhile to miss some sleep just to make sure.

I ran the Honda until its gasoline was gone and then filled it up again and tried the engine. Nothing. So I restarted the Honda and the racket went on. It was only after I had gone below for some sleep that Dale discovered the problem. The generator was not

charging because the fuse for the 12-volt circuit was blown. He put in a fuse and in two hours, when he awakened me, we had an engine.

We also had two ten-year-olds. It was Sunday, February 20, and the children's birthday. We celebrated with a breakfast of vetkoek, a kind of South African muffin fried in a pan, and then opened the presents. Each got a recorder and some books, requested when we were in Cape Town, and each had been busy for days under Sally's supervision making the other a gift. Karin made a toilet bag for Philip to put his soap and toothbrush in, and Philip worked up a bag for his sister to keep her jewelry in. Sally had gotten a purse for Karin and a kite for Philip, but Steve, the rat, had eaten the kite, so this present was deferred until Sally could find a suitable replacement.

When the festivities were over we set about the task of getting the anchor in. It was an eighty-pound hook and nearly two hundred feet of chain were out. So much weight was hanging straight down beneath the bow that it was all we could do to inch it in on the antique winch that adorned *Tina's* bow. Dale and I spelled each other, turning the handle twenty times, and it took fifteen minutes, four blisters, and a lot of sweat before we could see the anchor. There was a bit of mud on it, so we must have been touching the bottom, but we certainly had not been holding.

As we moved into the bay, I thanked my stars for the failure of the engine the previous evening. The place was crowded with small boats moored in a spiderweb of lines that criss-crossed all over the water. Had we come in we would surely have fouled the prop if we did not actually sink a few skiffs. We were looking for a place to anchor when a rowboat pulled over and told us to follow it to a mooring, where the boatman took our bow and stern lines and made us fast. He said he would call the port captain and answered Dale's anxious query: No, the pubs were not open on Sunday.

The port captain, immigration officer, and a police representative came out to us within the hour. None was in uniform, but all wore neat casual clothes. They were on their way to church and were feeling less than energetic because they had been to a wedding the night before. This explained the motoring activity I had noticed during the preceding darkness. But they were polite, friendly, and soft-spoken as they answered our questions in an accent that was a combination of Irish, southern United States, and English while they drank some coffee in *Tina's* salon. We were the fifteenth yacht to stop that year. Our friends Knobby and Mary Clarke on *Maia*, who had left Cape Town weeks after us, had departed St. Helena the day before we arrived. There were showers at the landing. The water in the bay was safe for bathing. The beer cost between seventeen and eighteen new pence a bottle, depending on where you bought it and what brand you liked. There was no bus service on St. Helena, but you could hire a beach buggy or a taxi to tour the island. Fresh bread would be available on Monday. There was a cafe that would be open that afternoon, but we would not be able to change money until the savings bank opened the next day.

When they had gone we had a swim in the clear, warm water. We were about fifty yards from the landing and my first introduction to the famous steps was made in a swimsuit. To get ashore at St. Helena one must climb out of a dinghy or other small boat onto steps that emerge from the water, but there is often a considerable swell. The locals had hung a rope on a steel bar and the system is to wait until you are on top of the swell, grab the rope, and swing ashore. It is a surprisingly efficient method of dealing with what

could be a tricky problem. The rope serves as a support that is flexible enough to overcome the movement and steady enough to enable you to keep your balance.

Since the pubs were closed that day, Dale and Sally decided to stay aboard and do some work while the Whiteleys went ashore to have a walk.

Dale rowed us ashore in the dinghy and we swung in on the rope. We walked along the harbor road, crossed the bridge over the moat, and entered town through the gates of the old castle that had been erected back in the days when Napoleon was in exile and half an army was stationed on the island to guard him. The immediate impression was one of quiet and cleanliness. There were shade trees around a cobbled square, administrative offices in the castle to the left, and a church to the right. We entered and spent some time reading the plaques on the walls, in memory of officers who had died on the island, or en route from the island to India, Cape Town, and other points east. These were fascinating records of the British Raj and the East India Company, telling in a way that was both quaint "and touching of fever, violence, and war that had confronted the men who served the empire.

Our first unofficial conversation was held in the shade of the square with a brown-skinned woman who was minding a baby in a push-chair. She asked where we were from and we told her that we were South Africans. "Oh, you don't like black people," she said. It was not an accusation or even a statement, really. More a question designed to start a conversation. It had long been our experience that while the politicians of the world rant on either side of racism, some damning the whites and some the blacks, some shouting for integration and some quoting God to justify segregation, people somehow manage to develop relationships anyway and the world-shaking pronouncement from this capital or that has no influence at all when two individuals meet. "Sure, we like black people," we said, and she smiled and began to tell us about her island.

St. Helena produces nothing for export and there are not enough jobs on the island to keep the people employed. Many of the young men go to Ascension to work, but the young women have a unique kind of problem. Many are unmarried mothers and they must put their children up for adoption before they can leave. This is because many youngsters were left without guardians when their mothers went away and the administration had to take care of them. Our young lady was in that position. She wanted to go to England to find work, but the child in the push-chair had to be legally adopted before she could go. She would have preferred to let her parents, who were willing, look after him, but she could not do so. She was trapped until she gave her child away.

We left her with our sympathy and walked up the quiet street to the cafe, which was located in the back room of what appeared to be a private house. We could tell that it was a cafe because the door was open. Inside, the proprietress refused to take our South African money but told us to help ourselves to whatever we wanted and pay her tomorrow when the bank would be open. When she heard that it was the children's birthday, she popped into her kitchen and brought out half of a cake she had just baked and wrapped it up for us as a little present. Another customer who was there at the time stopped us later in the street and handed us a paper bag containing two small loaves of bread, some soft drinks for the kids, and a beer for me. We saw her tell a friend that the youngsters were twins off the yacht and that it was their birthday. The friend dashed inside his house and emerged in seconds with a bunch of bananas for us. We were well laden when we returned to the boat.

We found this kind of friendliness and generosity characteristic of the islanders. Ask directions of a passerby and he will take you where you want to go. If a shop lacks what you want, you will be escorted to the competition and the problem explained for you. Need a job done, and somebody's brother has a friend who will do it. Later, when we arrived on Ascension, we heard the islanders called "Saints" and heartily agreed that it was no misnomer.

Monday morning I awoke to a strange flapping noise and went on deck to see what was going on. There was Sally whispering exultantly, "I got him. I really got him." There, flapping in the cockpit, was a good-sized fish she had hooked with the gaff. We had him for breakfast.

We went ashore early that morning and changed some money at the bank. Then we paid our debt at the cafe and repaired to the hotel and some cold beer. In a glass. With beads of sweat on the outside. And a nice head. It was truly lovely.

I organized some new angle irons to replace the arms that had broken on Hermann. At one place I bought the irons and at another had them welded. The job was done quickly and efficiently and the irons were installed that evening. They lasted the rest of the trip and we had no more trouble with Hermann.

To tour the island that afternoon, we decided to hire a couple of beach buggies. Dale and I went up to inquire about them and found ourselves talking to a gentleman in a backyard. He had three buggies, one of which was already rented, another of which didn't have a battery, and a third that was in perfect condition if you discounted the fact that it was falling apart. The one without a battery was easily fixed, said the gentleman. "I'll take a battery out of one of the other cars." He began to walk about his yard with a spanner in his hand. "I know I've got another car around here someplace," he said.

It was arranged that I take the buggy that was in "perfect condition." The passenger's seat was broken, so our friend stuffed some foam rubber into the hole and pointed out that it was more comfortable that way than it would have been if it hadn't been broken. The fact that the right headlamp was hanging on by a wire and bumping against the fender was not important since neither light worked anyway and we were planning to return the vehicle before dark, weren't we? The clutch was acting up a trifle, but it would be fine if I gave the engine plenty of revs. That's why there were holes in the muffler, so I could hear the revs clearly. I had to be sure to leave the vehicle in gear when I parked because the hand brake was not too reliable and not to worry about the tires because the machine couldn't go very fast. At least the brakes were in tip-top condition. On the right side.

Driving that muddle of parts held together by wire and tape was the most dangerous undertaking of the entire voyage, including The Storm. St Helena is a volcanic island, and its narrow, tarred roads wind up and down the sides of steep hills. In strategic locations are spots wide enough for two cars to pass. The car going up has the right-of-way, and down-coming cars are required to pull over into a wide spot to allow the other to pass. But I learned this only after our tour was over and I had broken the rule several times because the buggy would stall when it was stopped and could not be started again unless it got a bit of a roll downhill. Luckily all the roads on the island lead up and down.

I roared up to the hotel, stalled, loaded Walda and the kids into the buggy, and roared away again, after telling Sally that Dale would collect her as soon as he and our friend had found the other car with the battery. We climbed up and up out of the town

with engine at full speed in second gear on the flatter stretches of road. The island, which appears bleak and forbidding around the lower areas, showed off its lush vegetation as we climbed higher. By the time we got to Longwood, Napoleon's house, we were surrounded by green fields and driving under tall trees. There were vegetable patches around the houses, and goats, sheep, and donkeys grazed on the verges.

Longwood itself was mildly interesting but somehow lacked that special atmosphere that gives some monuments the power to connect with the past. It contained a few of Napoleon's personal possessions – a slipper, a plate, a coffee cup, and a great supply of paintings, engravings, and prints that could be seen in any good book about the emperor. What struck me most was that the little man had been unhappy in these surroundings. There he was in a pleasant home in a magnificent climate, with uninterrupted sea views on all sides, a happy population around him, and he regretted that he was not freezing on the Russian plains or fooling around with the lives of people in Europe.

We left Longwood and followed a taxi full of Russians to the governor's residence. The Russians had come ashore in the morning from a trawler that lay at anchor just outside the bay. There were ninety-two of them and they filled the town and the island in two groups. One took over the hotel and consumed vast quantities of vodka and the other marched through the streets in squads of five or ten, all carrying suitcases that they filled up with nylon lingerie until there was not a pair of panties to be had in Jamestown. Fifteen years previously when Walda and I had hitch-hiked into Leningrad, we had seen the same avid desire for Western synthetics. It was amusing for us to discover that tastes had not changed.

The governor's residence is an attractive house set on the edge of a meadow against the backdrop of a wooded hill. It looked as though the architect had tried to make it as splendid as most such places are but had failed, and the result was a fine old house that was conscious of the ridiculousness of its colonnades but had learned to live with them. We entered the grounds and had a chat with Jonathon, the tortoise reputed to have been there during Napoleon's days. He came charging up to us in search of a handout and allowed the kids to pose with him for a snapshot as long as they scratched his chin for him. We later learned that he was an imposter, a mere stripling of eighty or so years who had replaced the original Jonathon in order to keep the myth alive.

We lunched and roared from the governor's residence to the top of the hill overlooking Jamestown. On the cliff over the harbor were some guns, rusting away slowly, and we had a good view of *Tina* far below us, looking neat and trim in the distance. We could also see another yacht approaching the island, which gave us an idea of how we must have appeared. At least they had timed it better than we had. They were arriving on a weekday, when the shops were open, and while it was still light. Their engine was working, too.

We were on top of the hill that supported the most famous attraction of St. Helena, the 699-step Jacob's ladder that runs up the almost vertical face of the cliff. Philip and Karin had climbed the steps the previous day on their own, because Walda and I had long had the ambition not to go up and we were happy to fulfill it. The "ladder" is a narrow concrete stairway with handrails made of water pipe on either side. I suspect that it was built to enable the gun crews on the heights to get down to the pub and reflected

that it required real dedication on the part of a drinker to face that climb after he'd had a few.

While we were at the top of the steps, a small girl with a large box started down. She balanced the box with one hand and herself with the other on the railing and descended in a series of short quick runs between which she would pause and stand looking at the view while she got her breath. That was one way of getting down. Before she had reached the bottom, we witnessed another. A young man came to where we were standing and pulled on an old shirt over the neat sport shirt he was wearing. He lay back with his shoulders against one railing, arms outstretched, and grasping the pipe with his hands. Then his feet went up to the other rail, legs crossed, with one foot pushing on the pipe and the other hooked under it. And down he slid, effortlessly, braking with his hands and feet. He shouted to the girl with the box as he approached her, and she sat down on the step to allow him to slide over her head and down to the bottom. From the top we saw him take off the old shirt that he had used to protect the sport shirt from the rust of the pipes, and saunter on his way. We looked away from him just in time to see Philip lean his shoulders back against one rail, arms outstretched, hands gripping the pipe... "No way. Back to the beach buggy, me lad. We're going."

We had missed Napoleon's grave on the way to Longwood, so we retraced our route back through the town and up, up, up again into the green countryside. Napoleon is no longer on the island. He had been buried there after his death and exhumed, after negotiations between Britain and France, to be entombed in Paris. The site of his first grave is still there, however, down a long, shady, grass-covered road near a spring. There is a slab of marble surrounded by a wrought-iron fence in a cool, quiet niche between some hills. The caretaker emerged from the tall grass around the grave and gave us a refreshing glass of water from the spring that had also served the emperor, and we walked back up to the buggy.

We returned the vehicle to our friend, who seemed amazed that we had survived, and dined at the hotel that evening. Eating out in Jamestown requires a good deal of forethought. You must book several hours in advance, not because of the crowds but because the cook needs to know how much meat to take out of the freezer. When we entered the dining room, we found that we had doubled the clientele and the place was almost full with the four of us and the other four. It was a pleasant room with nautical decor, a huge ship's wheel, and various prints of naval engagements. The food was excellent plain cooking, steak and kidney pie and plenty of it. Paying for it was a bit of a problem because the manager could not be found and he was the only one who could take our money. "Come around in the morning," the waitress suggested, with complete trust in our honesty.

We went to the movies that evening, as a treat for the kids. The film was some nonsense about vampires and witches, but the theater was entertaining. It was a barn full of benches, no chairs, and the admission price depended on whether you wanted a seat with a cushion or not. We splurged and sat in the most expensive seats for about twenty-five cents each and were soon chatting with our neighbors and other people who came over to see if we had had a good day, how we liked the island, how the dinner was, and how long we would be staying. When the show began, everybody scurried back to their seats. The place was a hum of conversation as the titles were screened. The sound of beer cans being opened began as an isolated pop and built up until it seemed that everybody

was about to avoid dying of thirst. This was to recur during the course of the show. Every now and then, somebody would get thirsty and open a can, and the sound would act as a stimulus to others. The little girl on the screen was sticking pins into a wax effigy of her father, who was screaming with pain and rolling about, and the theater was filled with the sound of popping beer cans.

We returned to *Tina* that night exhausted. The grueling battle with the sea was nothing compared to the strain of sightseeing.

Tuesday morning we met the people from the yacht we had seen entering the previous day. She was *Quazar*, a Durban boat twenty-two days out of Cape Town. We had seen her in Durban, but had never met Eric and Syd Collins and their family. They reported the same weak winds we had encountered and we spent some time complaining about the idiots who drew up the maps showing a nice easy downhill run when there was in fact so much calm. But there wasn't much time for visiting because *Quazar* needed work and so did *Tina*.

With Hermann repaired, we turned our attention to the rigging. The wire was not new, but it was stretching and it took an entire morning to get tuned because we had to shorten chain with a hacksaw. There was trouble with the main halyard as well. It would sometimes jam and I went up the mast to find out why. The block through which the wire passed at the top of the mast was not as tight as it should have been and the halyard was slipping off and jamming between it and the mast itself. Dale and I worked out a release with the topping lift that I hoped would work, but there wasn't much else to do.

Filling the water tanks was another interesting task. There was just enough room in the dinghy for Dale and me and the eighteen-gallon container we used to ferry the water to the boat. It was simple to get the empty container from *Tina* to the steps where the swell had built up and was breaking, but the full container did not cooperate at all on the return trip. We struggled from the tap to the steps, launched the dinghy – which leapt about in the swell – and stood there, holding the big bottle of water and wondering how we were going to get it into the little boat. Should one of us get into the dinghy and the other pass the bottle? It seemed like the only answer, but whoever was in the boat would stand a good chance of finding himself under a lot of weight, or in the bay; or both. "You get in the dink and I'll pass you the bottle," I said. It was close but the job was done without any damage other than a couple of squashed toes. That did not bother me too much; they were Dale's toes.

We returned to the hotel for another meal that evening and afterward succeeded in trapping the manager in "a storeroom, where he reluctantly took our money. Then it was back to *Tina* and an early night. We were planning to leave the next morning.

Our early night turned into a late one when we invited John Sowden over for a nightcap. He was sailing single-handed on his second circumnavigation and had some good tips for us. One of these pertained to our route. We were already very late and the hurricane season in the West Indies might give us some trouble. Our planned route called for a stop at Barbados, but John pointed out that we would save a lot of time by going straight to Florida. We would miss the problem of getting around the bulge formed by the islands that lie in a chain pointing eastward at Antigua. But it was a very long pull from Ascension to Florida and the hurricane season was not a real threat. There had been one storm in May about fifty years before, which made the odds in our favor. I decided to postpone a decision until we arrived in Ascension.

The next morning we loaded on three cases of soft drinks for the children and a case of scotch for ourselves and headed out, bound for Ascension Island.

Ascension

I had taught Dale how to navigate on the way to St. Helena, and the leg to Ascension was to be his practical examination. I was to stay out of his way and make no comment until we ran into either Africa or South America. I had no qualms as to Dale's ability, and, more important, I now had full confidence in my own. If he ran into trouble I knew I would be able to set things right. And, since Ascension has a radio beacon, I would be able to check him out as we came closer. By this time, *Tina* was well and truly shaken down. The routine for life at sea was well established and we fell into it within a mile of St. Helena. The watch schedule continued where it had left off and the regular duties were picked up as though there had been no break. My own feelings were of complete confidence. Navigation would give us no trouble. Shipping was light and there was plenty of water around us. The weather was warm, the days bright and sunny, and a moon was beginning to show itself. We had even learned to accept the lack of wind. If the seven-day trip to Ascension was to take us two weeks, it would take us two weeks. We had been unable to find a suitable piece of wood for a jib boom at a reasonable price on St. Helena, so we were still jogging downwind, logging more miles than were necessary, but that only provided a challenge for Dale as navigator. We were sorry to say goodbye to that strange little island of St. Helena with its beautiful people, but we were glad to be at sea again. The division between life on board and shore life had been made in all our minds, and we were getting the best of both worlds simply because we had developed the right attitude. After the first couple of days out of St. Helena we made very bad time, covering only seventy or eighty miles per day. The log for this period contains even more "flip-flop" than previously, but it also reflects the peace in the minds of all of us. There are many entries like "beautiful watch," "lovely moon," "easy seas." This was cruising as it should be – lying on the deck in the sun, reading, pausing for a swim every now and then, and fishing half-heartedly. I trolled a lure for two days before I found that the hook had been lost and a fish would have had to tie himself on the line for me to catch him. It did not make much difference, though. I had caught only two fish so far, and one had escaped. Fishing without a hook was typical of the captain's angling technique, and the crew spent a lot of time thinking up remarks at my expense. At least it kept them off the streets.

Tina was beginning to look a bit weather-beaten by this time. The red of her topsides that I had applied so laboriously in Cape Town was being washed off in patches, exposing white that I had not even known existed. The anchors lashed to the deck were bleeding rust streaks down the side decks and out the scuppers, and the bottom was sprouting a considerable growth in spite of the recent antifouling that was supposed to last six months. But the rest of her was doing well. We were spending less and less time on minor repairs and had even brought most of the chafing under control: The main halyard was still giving trouble at odd times, working well now and jamming later for no apparent reason. The arrangement we had with the topping lift managed to free it, but sometimes it took five or ten minutes. It looked as though the stop at Ascension would be for rest and recreation, not much work. We would only have to scrape the bottom.

Eleven days out of St. Helena I was on third watch, casually examining a pale star rising in the west just on the bow. For half an hour I watched it, and then realized that stars do not rise in the west and that it was either a ship or Ascension Island and, since it

seemed stationary, it had to be the latter. Dale's navigation was right on and I congratulated myself on being such a good teacher, taking all the credit for his success and ignoring his aptness as a pupil.

The moorings at Ascension are even more exposed than those at St. Helena, which at least has a bay. On Ascension they are protected by the island because they are on the leeward side, but they consist only of buoys secured offshore. When we arrived the mail ship was anchored in the roadstead, off-loading cargo onto barges that ferried back and forth to the shore. A passing boat directed us to a vacant mooring, and we made fast. The job we had planned – scraping the bottom – was taken care of for us at no expense and very thoroughly. Several hundred small black fish converged on *Tina* and ate off all the growth in about three minutes. The third fish of the trip was caught when Karin put her hand in the water and grabbed one of the little creatures, but I insisted that she return it to the water. We certainly were not going to eat one of the guys who had saved us so much work.

We were a good quarter of a mile offshore and would have to make two trips in the dinghy to get everybody onto the island. It was Sunday again, but we had been assured by our pilot boat that the pub was open, and all adults were anxious for a cold beer. Philip and I were to stay on board while Dale took the others in and came back for us. But they had not gone twenty yards before they were picked up by a motor-boat, and Dale returned to fetch Philip and me.

There are two methods of getting ashore at Ascension. You can use a rope-and-step combination like the setup at St. Helena, or you can land through the surf on the white beach next to the steps. As we pulled in to the shore I took one look at the steps and elected to try the surf. The steps were much steeper than their St. Helenian counterparts and the swell was breaking strongly against them. We could land at them, to be sure, but I did not think we would be able to carry the dinghy up because they appeared to be too narrow. The surf, on the other hand, seemed easily mastered, so we waited for a wave and then swooshed up on the sand. I leaped into what looked like knee-deep water but which reached to my armpits, and then struggled to hold the dinghy against the backwash with one hand and the ship's papers aloft and out of the water with the other. Dale and Philip were so busy laughing at my discomfiture that they were no help at all. It was only when the next wave filled the dinghy and soaked them that I could persuade them to help me pull it up on the beach, above the high-water mark.

Dale headed straight for the town and the cold beer and Philip and I went looking for Walda and Sally. They had found a shower, cold water only, but fresh water, and were joyously lathering themselves in turns. It seemed they would be busy for a while, so I hurried off to join Dale before he consumed all the beer on the island*. I had to find the police station as well, to enter officially. I never got that far. Dale called me into the Exiles Club as I walked by and presented me with a frosty can that I contemplated in admiration for three seconds, ordered another, and then downed. The club was quiet that afternoon, with only a dozen or so "Saints" from St. Helena sipping and tossing darts. They inquired where we had come from and then asked the question we were to hear often during our stay: "You like St. Helena?" They were proud of their island and pleased to hear our glowing praises. And, I suspect, a bit homesick. They were earning good money on Ascension, but it was a synthetic life. Some of the men had brought their wives

over with them, but the majority lived in all-male surroundings in barracks and were looking forward to the return trip home.

Dale and I were just getting used to the taste of beer again when the girls drove up in a car and told us they were going up to the American base for some lunch. The driver would return for us as soon as he dropped them. He was a "Saint" and we were to discover that the innate kindness and generosity of the home island was not lost in the transfer to Ascension.

The driver returned shortly and took us to the Volcano Club on the American base. This was a large building decorated in Modern American PX and comprised a snack bar, a booze bar, and an outdoor movie theater. It supplied such glorious items as hamburgers, pizzas, hot dogs, delicate French fries, steaks, and beautiful fresh salads. And beer. Every time we turned around somebody put a can in front of us and asked how we liked St. Helena. It developed into a long, hard party that alternated between the bar and the snack bar. There was a short break when a young man named Denny took us in shifts to his room for hot showers. He lived in the barracks, which provided clean and spacious accommodations, each room well air-conditioned and having its own bath.

The kids ate as much ice cream as they could hold and went to the free movie that is held every night. The rest of us played bingo in the bar, which was no easy task, considering the dimness of the light. After a while Dale announced that he was going back to the boat and nothing could dissuade him. We were not to worry about him. He would swim out and leave the dinghy for us. He told us later that he had gone down to the beach with every intention of doing that but had decided to wait for us when he found that there was no sign of *Tina* in the moonless black of the roadstead. Having visions of himself swimming off blindly out of sight into the night, missing the boat, and waking up miles away in the morning, he lay on the sand for a while and fell asleep. When he awoke, the dinghy was gone and he was cold, so he crawled under a tarpaulin that covered an inflatable boat and slept in comfort for the rest of the night.

Meanwhile, back at the club, Sally had made a conquest. A young man named Peter wanted to continue the party and offered to drive the Whiteleys down to the steps, an offer gratefully accepted. I had some misgivings that Peter might have designs on Sally's virtue but consoled myself with the reflection that it was, after all, her virtue – not mine. I need not have worried. She reported a restful night in a real bed, guarded by Saints.

Launching the dinghy through the surf on a black night after unwonted dissipation was accomplished with hilarity. The waves were not very large, but they had a good push behind them and the dinghy was full of water as well as Whiteleys before we got beyond the line of breakers. Philip and Karin bailed with their hats while Walda concerned herself with some last-minute amendments to her will and I rowed to where I thought *Tina* might be if she hadn't broken loose from her mooring. We found her at last and climbed tiredly into our bunks. As I fell asleep, I reminded myself that I would have to clear into the island first thing in the morning.

At the club the previous evening we had met a gentleman named Paul Scou who introduced himself as a frustrated yachtsman. He was one of the scientists at the NASA tracking station on the island and had offered to show us the sights the next day in a borrowed truck. He was waiting by the steps that morning as we rowed in through the surf. This time I waited until I was sure there were only a couple of inches of water under

the dinghy. I did not plan to leap out into four feet of foam and wave again. When we touched, I put one foot over the side, felt the bottom, and stood up. A wave caught the dinghy, on which my other foot was firmly planted, and I ended up flat on my arse, much to the amusement of Sally and Dale, who were watching from the steps. I wondered what I would be able to do the next time. Capsize the dinghy before I got to the beach?

Paul loaded us into the truck and started on the tour. He told us as he drove that he had ordered his dream boat, a Nicholson 34, and that it was in the process of being delivered to English Harbour, Antigua. When I asked him about the approaches to that famous haven, he pulled up next to his room in the barracks and ran in to get a chart of the island, which he lent to us along with a courtesy flag. That made the decision on where to go from Ascension much easier. We would take a break in the long pull and stop at Antigua.

Ascension has a landscape as close to that of the moon as any on earth. The vegetation is very sparse among the lava outcrops and craters and was burnt by the sun when we were there. Only as you ascend the hills does this change, and the highest peak shows a rich green to the visitor below. We drove up toward the tracking station where Paul worked, passing occasional small signs on the side of the road: "Ben's Bump" or "Larry's Leap" they said, indicating that someone had had a traffic accident at the spot marked. It seemed a hard way to gain immortality.

We paused at one spot on the road from which Paul pointed to some trees growing just under a cliff high up the hill. Those had been planted in the days of sail. The location had been carefully chosen and the trees were well sheltered. They were to grow straight and tall to be used to repair the spars of sailing ships.

The NASA station itself was an impressive array of computers housed in air-conditioned sterility. There was the constant buzz of the machines and the calm movement of the technicians. We had no idea what we were looking at, but we had seen it all before in science fiction movies. Because it was complicated and futuristic, the scene had a certain appeal. The illusion was lost, however, when we watched one of the scientists run through a practice procedure to prepare for a satellite that was due in a few minutes. This consisted of one action. He stuck what looked like a normal cassette into a computer and the machine did the rest. That did it as far as the romance was concerned.

We went outside to watch the radar track the satellite coming over and had a look at the view while we were waiting. We were high above the water and could see a little cove that Paul had often eyed as a good place to keep a boat. It was from here that he practiced with his sextant, working out his sight with a 1600-foot dip.

When the satellite came over, it was as anticlimactic as the practice we had watched in the building. The big cones picked up the signal and inched in an arc across the sky. No fuss, no bother.

We followed the narrow, twisting road up to the top of the highest hill on the island, the green mantle we had seen from below. This was known as The Farm. In the club the previous day Paul had mentioned it as an interesting part of the island and had referred to a bamboo grove, which sounded very out of place on the lunar landscape of the lower areas. But my ears had perked up at the thought of a long, strong, flexible pole to hold out our jib. When I mentioned my requirements to Paul, he agreed that there was a chance of getting a good-sized piece of bamboo. He made the mistake, however, of asking the police if we could bring one down and they refused in a frenzy of bureaucratic

indignation. No vegetation was to be "exported" from the island. There might be a bug hiding in it that would wipe out an entire civilization. The fact that *Tina* would be at sea, well out of sight of any land, for thirty days at least, during which time the bug would be subject to frequent immersions in salt water, baked in hot sunlight, and prostrated by seasickness made no difference. No pole was to leave the island.

We parked the truck a short distance below the farm and walked up the road past some huge porkers dozing in their sheds. The air was cool up there, and the vegetation lush. Near the top was the farmhouse, a neat cottage surrounded by lawn and trees with beds of flowers separating the domestic area from the more businesslike gardens that grew the vegetables and the greenhouses full of tomatoes.

There was a cottage that was rented out to people who needed a break from the pressures of work among the computers below and another building that housed the workers. We walked up the road farther, through a crude tunnel that had been chopped out of the soft rock, and turned a corner to meet the farmer, Peter Chrichton. Our introduction to this dedicated man was effected without ceremony.

"Head her off," he shouted as we came around the curve, pointing to a sheep on the bank some twelve feet above our heads. I climbed the bank and inched along toward the animal, which had a choice of two routes – through my legs or back into her pen.

"Grab her as she comes by," shouted Peter. Now I had not traveled all that distance to be caught in a stampede and thrown off a high bank, but I put on a brave face for the benefit of the children who were watching from the road and took a step toward the outraged beast. She retreated into her pen.

Peter took us on a short tour of his farm. Up high there the rain was trapped by the hill and the air was often full of moisture, so the fields and meadows were thick seas of grass waving in the breeze. We passed a thick stack of bamboo poles, and I couldn't help but regret that the police had refused to let me get one. When Peter heard the story he was indignant at the slur cast on his bamboo.

"There's nothing wrong with it," he muttered. He called to one of the Saints working at a fence a short distance off. Was the man going down that night? No, he wasn't. Well we must try to think of a way to get a couple of those sticks down to the beach. "We'll just throw them there and you can pick them up without telling anybody."

It was a simple plan, born of a farmer's independence and pride in his produce, but for some reason it did not work. We searched the beach that evening and for the next two days, but there were no poles. I can only suppose that transportation was not available.

Peter led us to the top of the hill and then through a fence and down some steep grassy slopes in a short-cut to his house. Once there, we enjoyed a cup of tea and a chat until we noticed that the children were missing. I bellowed and walked about looking for them until they appeared on a motorcycle driven by a Saint. For them, the ride on the bike was the high point of the visit.

Paul drove us back to the Volcano Club and bought us lunch. He was on the midnight-to-8 a.m. shift at the station, and it was getting past his bedtime. We went into town with him to return the truck to its owner, a South African called Lofty because he appeared to be about nine feet tall, and then we went to the Cable and Wireless Company to call the anxious people in the States and South Africa. We got through in minutes on amazingly clear lines and spoke to my mother in Florida, whose greeting was limited to

"Is that my idiot son?" Then we called Walda's father in the Orange Free State; he was glad to hear that we had not drowned yet and would tell Ouma so.

That afternoon I finally managed to find time to make my way to the police station to clear into Ascension. I realized that I had been blatantly discourteous in not approaching the authorities earlier, but most of the people I talked to had said that there was no hurry – time was easy on the island. The superintendent I spoke to confirmed this and shrugged off my apologies before getting into what he called his "little speech." He seemed like a man who wanted to do his duty, but who knew that many of the rules he had to enforce were unnecessary in the context of the island. It was an area loaded with expensive secret equipment, but it was also very isolated. I suspected that his rejection of my bamboo export permit was part of this. Had he not been asked, he would probably not have made any great effort to stop me from taking a pole, but once it was brought to his notice, he had no choice.

Yachts are not allowed at Ascension, he told me, without the previous written consent of the authorities. This was for security reasons. Since it was the only hunk of ground in a big ocean, however, an exception to the law was granted for rest and recreation for three days. Yachts from Communist countries were not allowed to avail themselves of this exception. No one without a security clearance was allowed on shore after dark unless accompanied by somebody who had a security clearance, and most of the Saints who swarmed all over the island and without whom the essential services of the place would collapse, were without clearance. When I thought of our midnight row to the boat and Dale and Sally asleep on shore without the required supervision, I decided to keep my mouth shut.

No crew member was allowed to leave the ship at the island unless there was a real emergency, such as serious injury, in which case the patient would be flown out on the next plane at his own expense. There was no provision for the accommodation of any person not employed on the island.

There was no drinking water available for yachts since all water was distilled from seawater and tightly rationed, but the twenty-five gallons allocated to prisoners in the jail could be ours if we took it in our own containers, because there were no prisoners in the jail.

There was no fuel available but we might be able to buy some from one of the gas stations if we needed it.

The list was a series of ironclad regulations with loopholes built in – No, no ... but.

That evening, after dinner at the club and a movie for the kids, we returned to the beach and the dinghy laden with goodies purchased in the PX and bags of fruit handed to us by Saints who wanted to give the children some apples, some oranges.

The surf was a bit bigger and stronger than on the previous night and all the luggage made the dinghy heavy. I loaded Walda and the twins into the little boat, waited for a wave, and then shoved off and leaped in, grabbing the oars as quickly as possible. The whole trick of getting off the beach was to move out quickly between the waves. A good shove, smartly ship the oars, and two rapid pulls usually did it. But this time the shove was not good enough. I fumbled for the oars in the darkness and a wave caught us, dumping the whole lot into the water and sending the dinghy flying up with it onto the sand. Oranges and apples were spewed into the surf. The oars went off in opposite

directions. Shoes simply disappeared, and an entire rucksack headed for points north. I cut a nasty gash in one big toe chasing after the dinghy, which looked as though it wanted to make the trip on its own. The whole family was soaked and convinced that we would never make it back to *Tina*.

By chasing around on the beach and shouting at each other we managed to collect some of our belongings and assemble the oars, oarlocks, and dinghy. But Walda's confidence in my launching ability was severely shaken and she refused to risk her and the children's lives again, so I told her to go to the steps and wait until I got the dinghy through the surf and came to pick them up.

The empty dinghy was launched without a hitch. I even picked up a few of our possessions on the short row to the steps – one of Walda's shoes, two of mine, an orange, and a couple of apples. One of the fishermen near the steps had caught and cleaned a moray eel, which he gave to Walda as she passed him. This was loaded into the dinghy along with the kids and the salvaged items. Then began the long pull out to *Tina*.

We were sopping wet, covered with sand, and a bit overwrought from the spill as we pulled into the darkness. We managed, however, to pick out *Tina*'s silhouette and were fairly close to her when the black water astern of the dinghy was broken by some creature that rose out of the water about a foot, giving off a hissing sound and a slight splashing noise. I was the only one facing in its direction and could see that it was not a dolphin, but the rest of the family had no doubts about it. It was a shark. Not only that, it was a great white shark. And it was about to tip us over and devour us all. This information was acquired in three seconds on a black night while looking the other way. The creature was identified, its species established, and its intentions determined. In order to grasp fully the amazing capabilities of the human mind, it must be noted that all this was deduced after only one viewing of the film *Jaws*.

Walda and Karin both let out loud whoops and started to climb out of the dinghy onto *Tina*, still some ten feet away, while Philip asked repeatedly what was going on. He had been looking for the yacht and had missed the drama. I was busy trying to quiet things down and answer Philip while bringing the dinghy to the boat. On shore Dale and Sally had heard the commotion and were staring into the blackness, wondering what was wrong and whether they should try to get out and help us.

We got to *Tina* without being eaten and loaded what goodies we had saved onto the boat. Walda tossed her eel into a bucket, and Karin, wishing to wash off some of the sand clinging to her and afraid to dive into the water because of the shark, tossed the eel into the water when she tried to fill the bucket. That took care of our breakfast. It was one of those nights.

As I rowed back to pick up Dale and Sally, the sea monster appeared again. Now, with my back to the lights on the steps, I could see a bit more clearly, but he was still not distinct. The part of him that showed above the water was about a foot long and six inches or so in diameter. There was obviously more of him beneath the surface because the water was disturbed around him. If he was a shark, he was a small one and had no business trying to tip me over. He looked more like an eel but I did not expect an eel to come out of the water. And the hiss was puzzling. He had to be an air breather unless I was confusing exhalation with some fishy battle cry.

He followed the dinghy toward shore, his path marked by the ripples in the water six feet behind me. When he emerged for the second time on the return trip, I decided to

employ a technique I had found effective when dealing with dogs and drunks. I slapped the water with an oar and hissed, "Piss off." He disappeared.

Once in the circle of light around the steps I shouted a description of our visitor to Dale for his identification, but he was unable to come up with an answer. The Saints fishing there were adamant, however, and insisted that the creature could only be a shark. The mystery was solved the next day. Dale spotted a big sea turtle swimming around *Tina*. I had forgotten that Ascension is famous for them and was sorry about my rudeness to the curious and friendly old fellow, but his long, scrawny neck suddenly appearing from the sea had been alarming.

The area around the steps was awash with apples, oranges, shoes, and other items of clothing, and I collected all our belongings before Dale and Sally climbed into the dinghy. I even found Philip's rucksack containing his knife, the loss of which he had felt strongly. We made the final trip of the night eating a pizza Sally had brought from the pub.

Tuesday morning found us ready to set off on the long leg of the trip – except for some shopping and a few postcards. The latter was easy but the shopping included the purchase of some beer, and that took a bit of time. We had to get fifteen cases from the club to the steps and from the steps to the boat and we relied on the help of the Saints to do so. They came through as usual. The beer was transported to *Tina*, and our friends would not even accept a six-pack in payment.

It was three in the afternoon when we were ready to go. The beer had been stowed in the bilges and the fresh vegetables in the bath. Letters had been posted and the passports collected from the police, duly stamped. The engine had responded immediately to the key and was ticking over smoothly in neutral. It had been a good stop. Very little work had been needed on the boat – only some tuning of the rigging and the fitting of a line on the main halyard. The idea was to keep the halyard taut while the sail was being raised, thus holding the halyard in the block so it would not jam.

Since there was almost no wind that afternoon, I decided to experiment with the new arrangement while still at moorings. I held the line taut while Dale raised the main, and it shot up smoothly. We were congratulating ourselves on having solved that problem when a gust of wind came swooping around one of the hills and filled the sail. *Tina* responded eagerly. The only trouble was that we were still attached to the mooring buoy. I raced to the sheets and let go, but the breeze had turned us broadside to the wind and we were on a good reach. Dale and Sally struggled with the mooring line, but they were too late. *Tina* sailed up to the nearest barge, gave it a good thump, and climbed up onto it to hook the bowsprit stays over a protuberance near the barge's engine. Dale freed the mooring line, but we were still hooked onto the barge and it was several agonizing seconds before I could pull us off with the engine.

Once free, we circled into open water and gave the wheel to Walda while I went forward to see the extent of the damage. Only a complete idiot puts up a sail while at moorings that are too crowded to allow room to swing on the entire length of the chain. The calm conditions should not have fooled me because I knew that there is always a puff around the corner just waiting to zap a careless skipper.

Tina's bowsprit had been held by two welds, one right at the bow and one on a bracket bolted around the spar. Both had been torn loose, but an examination of the welds showed that they had been almost rusted through in any case and would probably have

broken by themselves if the bowsprit had not been well stayed. Aside from a badly twisted turn-buckle on the stay that had hooked, that was the extent of the damage. On the stem where the impact had been greatest a couple of square inches of paint were gone, but the rest of the boat had lost so much paint that the lack was barely noticeable. We could not, however, set out over three thousand miles of ocean without a bowsprit, so we turned and tied up to the same buoy again. The barge had been made to withstand bashings against other ships and against the rocks around the steps and there was not the slightest indication that *Tina* had harmed it at all. After a few minutes we decided on a suitable entry for the log: "Bruce bashed barge and buggered bowsprit." I thought the alliteration captured nicely the anger and disgust I felt for myself.

The problems involved in getting a welder and his equipment out to *Tina* were too many to contemplate, so Dale and I opened a beer and tried to figure out another way to secure the bowsprit. We threw suggestions back and forth until Dale came up with an answer. If we could have a foot welded onto the bracket, we could bolt that to the deck. That would secure one end. The forward section could be wedged in the hole formed by the running strakes where they met at the bow. All we had to do was take the bracket ashore and find someone to weld it for us. Dale had the answer to that as well. He had been befriended by a Saint named Jackie who was employed in one of the workshops on the island. Jackie was going to be playing darts that evening at the Exiles Club. We could go ashore and ask.

Arranging for repairs that evening was easy. Jackie took a quick look at the bracket, understood what was required, and promised to do it for us first thing in the morning. Getting back to the boat was a greater problem. In the first place, there was the hospitality of the other Saints in the club, who were offended if we did not have a beer with them, and in the second place there was an American technician who asked to be informed about our problem. "Wadda ya need done?" he asked. We showed him the bracket and drew the solution for him. Then he delivered a confused lecture on either his fishing prowess or the expertise of a friend in launching a boat with a crane. When his glance fell on the bracket in Dale's hand he looked piercingly into my eyes and asked, "Wadda ya need done?"

When he went to the bar to refill his glass, we made a break for the door, but he caught us there and demanded to know what we needed done. "We're okay," I said. "All fixed up."

"Good," he answered. "Glad to be of help." He waved us benignly out of the club. I wondered vaguely if the next lecture would have incorporated the previous one and concerned the methods he and his friends used to catch fish with a crane.

Jackie was as good as his word the next morning. The bracket was welded quickly and efficiently and even the bolts to attach it to the deck were supplied. There was no charge. Dale and I worked through the early afternoon to reassemble the bowsprit, and the final result was sturdy and altogether satisfactory. We cast off the mooring line and motored out to sea before raising any sails and waved goodbye to Ascension as we headed north. Dale wondered aloud what welding we would need in Antigua. "The masthead fitting in Luderitz, the brace for Hermann in St. Helena, and the bowsprit in Ascension. What's going to break for Antigua?"

"How about the rudder?" I said. "Cheers!"

"Cheers!"

Antigua

We left Ascension with a fair and steady breeze, but were immediately aware that we still needed that pole. We could go due north or a few degrees north of west, but we could not steer to the northwest because the sails would flap. After two or three days they began to flap anyway, because the wind dropped. We were approaching the area known as the doldrums, a band of light to nonexistent airs around the equator. The doldrums can be anywhere from ten to four hundred miles wide. John Sowden, the single-hander, had told me at St. Helena that on one of his crossings it had not been there at all and on another it had taken him ten days to go fifty miles. Robin Lee Graham recounts how he spent three weeks becalmed, reading *The Ancient Mariner*.

It was for this belt that I was saving our fuel, and I continued to do so while there was the slightest hint of a breeze. We had burned up about ten hours of fuel after Luderitz. Most of this had been used for charging the batteries, but we had motored into and out of St. Helena and Ascension. I calculated we had about one hundred and twenty hours left, including the eighteen gallons lashed to the mast, but not the ten gallons hidden away in the bilges. That was for emergencies. At five knots we would burn thirty-six to forty gallons per day and cover one hundred and twenty miles. If the doldrums were four hundred miles wide when we hit them, we would have enough fuel to motor across them and still be able to charge the batteries.

As we pushed northward our progress was slowed daily by the dying winds. The cable that operated the log snapped before we hit the equator, so our daily run could be determined only after the noon fix was plotted. This also meant that we had to estimate our speed, which is not difficult, but we found that we were hopelessly inaccurate at deriving a figure for the day's run. When we thought we had done well, the figure might be seventy miles and when we assumed a low mileage it would be up over a hundred.

All the books I had read on navigation had stressed the importance of dead reckoning, which gives a position derived solely from the distance traveled in a given direction. Without a log there was no way except our feeble guesswork to determine the distance, so we had no dead reckoning. According to the books, this was a serious loss. But for our condition it did not signify much more than relieving us of the chore of entering the mileage in the log. We had plenty of water around us and could sail for a week without a fix if we had to. Had we done so, we would probably have gone a few miles farther than necessary, but that was not important. We were only cruising. We did not need an hourly record of distance. And, anyway, dead reckoning had proven, itself inaccurate and confusing before, when my inexperience had led me to believe the log, not the sun, and had cost us a day or so of futile motoring. I would not make that mistake again, because I had learned to distrust the log.

In short, dead reckoning was useful only in a negative way. Once you have established your position, you can find how far away you are from where you thought you were. This may help you determine the strength of a current or the leeway of your boat, or any force that is turning you off your course, but if you don't need that information you don't need dead reckoning. We got along without the log very nicely.

We sailed into the doldrums, experiencing a steady decline in wind strength that eventually forced us to motor more and more. It would be nice if there was a firm dividing line on either side of the doldrums so that you would know precisely when you

were in or out of them, but of course there isn't. Periods of calm increase in number and duration until you find that they last all day and night. While this is happening, the sailor is working pretty hard with the sails. Up they go for a breeze and down they come for a calm, because they will flap to pieces if they are not filled. With this sort of thing happening four or five times a day, it was soon plain that the improvised solution for the main halyard was not only unsatisfactory; it was dangerous. If we were hit by one of the squalls that frequently occur in this region we would not be able to drop the mainsail quickly enough to save it, or the mast. I decided that I would throw out the existing system and hang a new block at the masthead to carry a new halyard.

Climbing a mast at sea is no joke because the "motion of the boat is exaggerated the higher you go. A slight roll on deck becomes an arc of six or eight feet at the top of the stick, and this can knock a climber out of the chair or bruise him against the mast. Aside from this movement, however, it is really no more dangerous than it is when the boat is still. The mast and rigging do not suddenly become weaker because the boat is moving, and your weight at the top is less of a strain than that of the sail the mast is designed to carry. It is a lot more work and more difficult because you have to hang on all the time, but it is not more dangerous. I must have climbed that mast eight or ten times at sea in the course of our trip, and each time I would keep repeating to myself, "It's not more dangerous. It's not more dangerous. It's not more dangerous."

Walda evolved a system to cope with these climbs. First she would insist that there was no real reason for climbing the mast at all. We could get by as we were. So what if we couldn't raise or lower the sail? When this approach failed, she would suggest that Dale go up, not me. But I was the better climber. Dale had carelessly allowed a crane to fall on him some years before and after three years of operations and hospitalization he could do anything he wanted to, including climb the mast, but I had the edge on him as far as agility was concerned. And I needed to satisfy myself that the job was done as I wanted it to be.

Once convinced that the mast was going to be climbed by me, Walda would go below where she could not see the operation and remain there until it was over.

With the new halyard fitted, sail handling became a simple job. We raised and lowered the main with pleasure, never ceasing to wonder at how smoothly it moved up and down. But we were soon to put down the main and leave it tied to the boom as we motored for three days, stopping only to clear the fuel line or to swim.

It was hot in the doldrums, the only air stirring being that caused by the movement of the boat. The swell of the sea continued, but the surface appeared oily because it was un-rippled by any breeze. We moved in a grey-white haze that softened the atmosphere and stifled us. Below decks the boat was filled with the stink of the engine and the salon in particular was uncomfortable because of the heat radiating off the box. We put up the awning and spent most of our time under it to keep out of the sun. At night the forecabin was habitable if the hatch was left open and the door separating it from the salon was kept closed, but the best place to sleep was on deck.

We did a lot of swimming during the days, but I hated to stop because each hour of standing still meant one more hour before we would be sailing again. It was not a nice place to be, and I felt that the sooner we were out of it the better.

We sighted a ship while we were motoring through the "dollys," and they came over to have a look at us. It was a Spanish trawler and we waved and dredged up our

rusty Spanish for the crew lining her decks. After returning our greetings, they tossed us a line to which some ninety pounds of fish of various sizes were attached. We hauled in smartly and returned their line before we waved goodbye and left them. They had been generous and friendly, which we appreciated, but they had given us too much fish. We had fish at lunch and dinner for two days, dried some strips of fish, pickled some steaks, and still had to throw some away because it spoiled.

We picked up a pilot fish around this time, a funny little fellow wearing stripes who investigated *Tina* carefully before he took up his station at the bow. He was there for several days, much to the amusement of the children, who constantly ran to make sure he was on duty. I doubt if anybody knows what makes these guys tick. They got their name because they swim just in front of sharks, but they will attach themselves to anything fairly big and slow. What they think they are doing up there is anybody's guess, as is the reason why the sharks never seem to eat them. I believe there is some sort of psychological quirk that demands they be out in front, like a politician busily making important decisions under the impression that he is guiding his fatherland through difficult times when in fact the country is getting along quite nicely on its own. Or, like a super-subtle CIA man, he is following from in front. In either case, once we made a pit stop and he had gone when we started up again. I had a vision of his reaction. I saw him swimming along happily until he glanced over his shoulder and saw we were no longer there and then shouting in panic, "Omigod! I'm lost."

The navigation classes continued as we motored on. Once Dale had learned the game, he taught Sally and I worked with Walda. They picked up the sextant quickly and were verified in their shots until they felt confident enough to take charge for a week on their own. We decided to let everybody have a week as navigator on the understanding that I was to take over when we got close to Antigua. If a navigational foul-up was to occur, it was to be my privilege.

With the new system in effect we noticed an interesting phenomenon that is hard to explain except in terms of my own clean living and goodness of heart. When I was navigating, we had wind, or at least more than when the others were doing the job. A look at the log for this period will show daily runs of 100 to 120 miles, with an occasional 130 or so on especially good days. When I relinquished the sextant the runs slowly dropped to 90, 80, 70, right down to 45 miles per day. At one time, when Sally was navigating, we lost the wind completely and had to motor, and when I took over the next day we covered 119 miles under sail. This became a standing joke on board and whenever the wind looked like it was in an ante-de-pufferantistical situation, there were cries of "Give the sextant to the boss!" The eerie thing was that it worked, and I always found a wind.

The doldrums divide the southeast tradewinds from the northeast trades and we knew we were on our way when these breezes began to steady in on us. In the southern hemisphere the winds had been weak and we hoped to find them stronger with the northeasters, but they were just as gentle. The only improvement was in their direction. Because they were a bit north of east, we did not have to zig-zag around the ocean as much as we did before and could stay on a steady reach. We remained on a starboard tack for nineteen days, during which time we may have adjusted a sheet every three or four days, mainly to remind ourselves that we were sailing.

We had minor repairs that we had to attend to every once in a while, but nothing that could stop the boat. The batteries, for example, were not holding their charge. After motoring for three days, they should have been fully charged, but during the middle of the night the compass light got dimmer and dimmer, until we needed a flashlight to read it. This was awkward but not an emergency because we did not have to watch the compass at all times with Hermann on the job. It did mean, however, that the navigation lights were not working, and this worried me. All you need at sea is to have the running lights give out, and immediately three hundred ships will appear on the horizon, all on collision courses with you. I do not know who installed the electrics on *Tina*; I suspect the previous owner. I do know that he made a serious mistake that I had not had time to rectify. There were no fuses. All the lights were wired directly off the battery isolation switch, and the result was that a short circuit could be anywhere on the boat, happily draining the batteries and starting small fires. The only hint that Dale and I could find as to the cause of the battery drainage was a light in the port cabin that did not work. We traced the wiring and found a piece with badly cracked insulation leading to that light. We replaced it and charged the batteries with the Honda until they had enough juice to start the engine, which we ran for an hour to bring up the power. That evening found the compass light getting dimmer and dimmer, nevertheless. Something else had to be at fault.

Tina has three batteries, all interconnected. These are normally charged by an alternator on the engine. We suspected the worst and tested the power output of the alternator with a bit of wire. It gave a nice spark. That was all right. Perhaps the problem was in the batteries themselves. If one of them was losing its charge it would drain the other two and we would have three useless batteries. There was no way we could test the individual batteries because the hydrometer on board always read the same, whether they were fully charged or too flat to start the engine. So we employed a process of elimination and were lucky on the first try. After disconnecting the large battery from the two smaller ones, we charged them with the Honda and the engine, and the compass light was bright and steady until we turned it off in the morning. That ended the electrical problem but not the worry that it would recur, and I religiously saved the last bit of gasoline to be sure that I had enough to run the Honda for a final charge in case the engine would not start as we approached Antigua. It was never necessary.

When we were well out of the doldrums, on a warm, bright night with plenty of moon, I relieved Dale and heard that he had been bombarded by flying fish during his watch. I experienced the same thing when I took over. A whirring of wings and a thump against the coachroof would be followed by frantic flapping on the side decks. They hit the sails, the rails, the compass box high on the pilothouse roof, and the burlap beer cooler on the aft deck and even dove through the main hatch to clobber Dale in his bunk. We could hear the splashing of the fish pursuing them all around the boat, and efforts to rescue them from suffocation on deck were futile because they were snapped up as soon as they hit the water. They ranged in size from about three to ten inches. We collected twenty or so from the deck in the morning. Cleaned and fried in oil until crisp, they were delicious.

Later in the day, Philip used a flying fish for bait on his handline and got a fish in seconds. I gaffed it for him and we pulled it on deck. It was a tuna of about twelve pounds and all on board were grateful for him. A suitable entry was made in the log and

we looked forward to a fresh fish dinner. Philip, flushed with success, put out another flying fish as bait and landed another tuna. And another. The bait did not even have to hit the water. We could see the school of tuna following the boat and we watched them converge on the bait while Philip held it over the rail, preparing to toss it into the water. As the tail of the flying fish touched the water, the tuna would leap up and strike it, sometimes taking only half the bait and missing the hook. That made no difference, because the next in line would hit the hook greedily and be landed. It required fast gaffing to get the tuna because they often went under the boat when they were hooked and the line would be broken when they rubbed it against the sharp edge of the chine. We lost many hooks that way, but we caught enough fish to make the loss insignificant. In fact, we became heartily sick of fish dinners. That school followed *Tina* for fifteen days, and left us only when we arrived at Antigua. We came to call it our "garden" and would pick a fish whenever we wanted one. Fried fish tonight? Sure. And half an hour before dinnertime we would put out a line, instantly pull in a fish, clean it, and send it down to Sally to cook. There was never any doubt and we found we could catch them just as easily with a bare hook as with bait, so we used the flying fish to play with the tuna. After tying the bait onto a hookless line, we would try to see who could keep it in the water the longest. The tuna were so voracious and fast that the bait never lasted more than a few seconds, in spite of our efforts to jerk it away. Occasionally we could pull a greedy tuna half out of the water before he would let go, but usually they bit the bait off in a trice. For this game, a thoroughly dried flying fish was the best. He would be hard and stiff and the tuna took much longer to bite him off.

The tuna were so dependably ready to be caught that there was soon no more challenge in landing one. So I filed the barb off a hook and ruled that the gaff was no longer to be used. The fish had to be caught with a bare barbless hook and brought to the deck without aid, but it made no difference. We continued to haul them on board whenever we felt like it. Were it not for the problem of storage, we could have loaded *Tina* to the point of sinking with tuna.

Sometimes, having filleted a fish for dinner, we would drag the carcass behind on a rope to see if a shark would take it. Only once was this bony offering accepted and that was by a swordfish, not a shark. He was very cautious and made two or three passes before he showed a flash of white and took off the whole works. He never took another carcass, but he did attack some laundry we were dragging to get clean and ate one of Sally's shirts. It was obviously not very palatable because he did not return. There were two days of celebration on this leg of the trip – Walda's birthday and Easter. The former was observed by gifts of wine from Dale and Sally, smuggled aboard at Ascension, and the children's gifts and mine. I stood Walda's watch for her and refrained from shouting at her for the entire day. The latter was observed by an Easter egg hunt, organized by Dale and Sally. We had run out of eggs long before, so we hid tokens to be redeemed in the form of ice cream at Antigua. It was run as a contest and won by Karin, who found two more tokens than Philip. One token was marked with a star and worth twenty-five cents.

Eggs were not the only things we were running out of by this time. The beer lasted about two weeks out of Ascension and the biscuits that formed the staple of our lunches were all gone as well. All the fresh vegetables and the potatoes had been consumed, except for one squash that lasted until we got to Florida, where it was confiscated by an official from the Department of Agriculture with our blessings.

Except for Walda, all the adults on board were smokers. We rolled our own cigarettes out of preference, and had stowed away a fair quantity of tobacco and papers in Cape Town. In spite of additional supplies loaded at Luderitz and St. Helena, we eventually ran out of paper and were watching the tobacco situation carefully. Now a smoker will smoke as long as there is some method of holding the tobacco together. We experimented with pages torn from the children's comic books, the thin leaves of a Spanish-English dictionary, wrapping paper left over from *Christina's*, anything that looked and felt as though it might work, including toilet paper, which doesn't.

The best turned out to be pages from Sally's airmail stationery pad, which became public property and rested on the salon table to be cut up as required. Dale tried to manufacture a day's supply at a time, using glue, which tasted decidedly evil, but the system that eventually evolved was to cut a few papers at a time and roll the smokes when they were wanted. The cigarettes would often fall apart unless plenty of spit was used.

Water also began to worry us. *Tina's* tanks consist of five eighteen-gallon containers on each side of the boat for a total of 180 gallons. The containers in each bank are interconnected and the two banks are joined amidships by a pipe that has a valve in the middle of it so that the two can be isolated from each other by turning a tap. I had not been happy with this setup in Durban, but that was another of those things that would have been too expensive and too time-consuming to change. My objection was that if one of the containers developed a leak, or if the water in one became contaminated, the entire bank would be lost. I would have preferred individual containers that we could have emptied one by one. That way, we would have known exactly how much water we had left and any leak would have cost us only the water in one container.

Another fault in the arrangement was that the pipe going to the galley pump, the only outlet for the water, led from the starboard bank of containers. As we moved across the water toward Antigua we used up the water in the starboard tank and then opened the valve connecting the two banks. The water flowed over to the starboard bank and all was well. We were on the starboard tack for nineteen days, however, and with the boat heeling to port the water reached a level beneath that of the pipe leading to the pump. As a result, we had tanks half full of water but we were pumping air. We had to come about onto the port tack to let the water drain over to where the pump could get it.

The usual water ration recommended in most of the cruising books is half a gallon per person per day. This is said to be enough to cover all drinking, cooking, and washing. We were six and I do not think the children used any less water than the adults. It is likely that they used more, since we consumed much of our liquid in the form of beer. We had filled our tanks at St. Helena and were to fill them again at Antigua. Aside from the 180 gallons in the tanks, we had an additional 18-gallon container lashed to the mast. In all, then, we had 198 gallons of water that lasted us fifty-three days and was never completely used up. We had an estimated 7 gallons left when we arrived at Antigua.

We made no attempt to ration our water or to keep track of how much we had left. It would have been possible, for example, to fill a three- or four-gallon bottle and thus measure what we used, but this idea struck me as unnecessarily fussy. Our system was simply to be very careful of our water. We washed dishes, clothes, and ourselves in seawater and Sally cooked with it when she could, sometimes diluting it with fresh water. If we had used up all the fresh water we would have fallen back onto the emergency five

gallons in the box with the life raft and rationed that, but the idea of strictly controlling water when there was no pressing need to do so struck me as stupid. Imagine going thirsty for three weeks so that you can carry fifty gallons into port when you get where you are going.

When we siphoned the water out of the container on deck and into the tanks, we made some arrangements to catch rainwater. We lashed the dinghy in an upright position and prepared ourselves to use the awning as a catch. But it never rained hard enough even to clean the dinghy. We did collect a few inches in the bottom of the little boat, but it tasted salty, so we used it to bathe in and then soaked some clothes in it. The motion of *Tina* made the dinghy an excellent washing machine, but the rinsing problem drove us back to the old method of tying the clothes to a rope and dragging them behind for a day or two.

As we approached Antigua the winds often gusted during the night, only to settle into the old Weak pattern with the dawn. Because of this we would drop the genoa in the evening and put up the jib to avoid having to shorten sail in the dark. We were getting most of the possible variations of weather for short periods, but few spells of constant rain, sun, or cloud.

The barometer took no notice of these changes. I had set it in Cape Town and had checked it daily while we were there and it seemed to be working well enough, but the pattern of readings that we listed in the log showed a slow but steady rise. It would occasionally drop three or four hundredths of an inch and we would prepare for a blow which would not appear. Either our instrument was an incurable optimist that had no conception of the realities of the weather, or science had made a serious mistake in its conclusions about barometers. It occurred to me that the constant fair weather we enjoyed on the trip might be due to the barometer, which did not record pressure systems but rather caused them. A bit of advice, then, to yachties planning long cruises: get a barometer that only rises. It worked for us.

Our approach to Antigua showed how much we had learned about navigation. At noon on the thirty-eighth day out of Ascension I took the usual shots and made our position fifty miles off of Antigua. We had a good breeze that day, and when I took another shot at four in the afternoon, the position line showed us thirty-seven miles off. Antigua is much lower than either St. Helena or Ascension, which can be seen from a distance of thirty miles. There was no sign of the island when darkness fell. I did not want to arrive there during the night, so we took down the genoa and the main and coasted through the night under mizzen and forestaysail. Walda spotted the glow of the island during the second watch, and the individual lights could be distinguished by the beginning of the third.

At dawn we were a few miles off the southeast corner of Antigua and we turned on the engine and motored along the southern shore looking for English Harbour. We were thirty-nine days and over 3,200 miles from our last sight of land; navigation had been by four people of varying proficiency, and we were just where we wanted to be. The only concern was the day. It was Sunday. Again. It had been Sunday when we arrived in St. Helena and Ascension. There was always the chance, however, that we were worrying for nothing. Perhaps the pub was open on Sunday at Antigua. It was a tourist island. Surely the pub would be open.

To celebrate our discovery of Antigua we were treated to a concert that had been in preparation for some days by the "*Tina* Trio," Sally and the kids. Two recorders and a guitar provided accompaniment to the three voices singing a song – words and music composed for the occasion by Embleton. An attempt had been made to rehearse the effort quietly, but there is no way to mute live music on a forty-five-foot boat, much less the enthusiastic attempts of two ten-year-olds, so we had heard the song long before we arrived but pretended we hadn't. It went something like this:

Antigua, we have sighted you
From way out in the blue.
And now we six are coming through –
To have ice cream with you.

(Recorders play the melody.)

Mommy and Sally will go where the showers are.
Dale and Skipper will head for the bar.
We feel so sorry for the other people there.
Six weeks without a bath might just pollute the air.

(Again the recorders.)

When we're clean, we'll have a hamburger on a fresh, toasted bun,
Chips, tomatoes, lettuce, and ice cream by the ton. A plate full of
fresh vegetables ...
OOOOOOH!

The rendition made it clear that the breakdown in the last stanza was caused by the delights described, not by a creative impasse on the part of the composer.

To enter English Harbour you line up the northwest corner of a garden wall with the end of a spit of land called Freeman Point. We had been regarding this with anticipation because the landmark seemed so quaint. A garden wall? With perhaps a lady watering roses on the northeast corner? Be careful not to line up the point with a fork sticking out of a pile of manure – that's the southeast corner. There were plenty of walls on the shore, and even more points to line up with them, but we continued along until we saw the harbor and recognized it by the hundreds of masts sticking up from behind the protective spits of land. *Tina* entered slowly and we dropped anchor in a small open bit of water right across from the famous Nelson's Dockyard. We had lost most of the red paint from the topsides. The standing rigging was coated with a thin layer of rust, and the domestic arrangements of the past month were visible in the form of laundry hanging on the safety lines.

All around us was a highly concentrated collection of beautifully kept yachts with gleaming brightwork, stainless steel rigging, sails neatly protected by matching covers. On some of them the fenders alone could have paid for a half share in *Tina*. There must have been five million dollars floating around in that little harbor. I later learned that most of the boats were used for only two or three weeks of each year. The owners would fly down for the races, spend some time hopping from island to island, and then get back to the U.S.A. to make some more money. It was always possible to find someone to live on board and look after the boat, and the party rate seemed to be pretty high.

We stood on the deck looking at the magnificence around us and were saved from feeling like a cockroach on a wedding cake only by the knowledge that none of these

paragons had actually gone anywhere. Even the trip to or from Europe seemed like a short hop to us. We could cross the Atlantic standing on our heads, and take longer and sail farther than any of them.

The customs did not come out to us, so I got into the dinghy and rowed to them. My first meeting with an Antiguan citizen occurred as I climbed out of the dinghy. He was one of the many taxi drivers who hang around the harbor, hustling fares. I did not require his services, but he walked with me to show me where the police station was and to make sure that I did not forget him or his name in case I needed him later. The police station was set facing the gate of the harbor and was marked by a large sign saying "Police" in red letters above a large door.

I started to open the door when a young man in uniform lounging against a pillar at the top of some steps running up the side of the building looked at something three or four feet above my head and said, "Upstairs-." I kept trying the door, so he sighed to express a sense "of weariness. "I said upstairs. Upstairs."

When I realized he was talking to me, I understood that his remarks were intended as a communication. I was to go upstairs. When in Antigua, if a man in uniform says "Upstairs" to the space above your head, it means "Would you please step this way, sir. The office is at the top of these stairs and I will be glad to help you if you would have the goodness to climb them."

I climbed them and entered an empty office with a couple of desks and a radio transceiver. The young man continued to lounge against his post for a few minutes and then sauntered into the office.

He handed me some forms, the usual crew lists and declarations, and looked at the passports. It was only then that he knew we were from South Africa. We had been warned in Ascension about the attitude in Antigua. The natives were reportedly "anti-white" and we had wondered what the reaction would be to people from the land of Apartheid. It made no difference at all to my policeman friend. An American skipper came in while I was still there and requested outward clearance. He received the same indifferent treatment that had been accorded me.

When the constable had examined and stamped the passports, a sergeant had to sign them. He came and began to do so as gracelessly as his subordinate. Before he had finished, however, he was chatting to me about the SABC broadcasts he listened to on his shortwave radio and complaining about the amount of work his job entailed. He was on duty twenty-five hours a day, eight days a week, and the pay was not all that good.

This turned out to be the pattern of our relationship with most of the Antiguans. There was always rudeness to begin with, but if there was more than a quick contact, if the situation allowed for a few minutes of conversation, a guarded friendliness was possible. I suppose the resentment is natural on an island that is not rich and depends on tourism for much of its revenue. The rich foreigners come in their fabulous boats, send the local prices soaring, and expect to turn the island into a big party while the locals battle to make ends meet. All tourist centers have this effect. The Parisians, for example, are notoriously happy to take a tourist's money while making it perfectly clear that they wish the tourist had not accompanied it to their city. But Antigua is not Paris, and I fear that the local attitude will drive away more money than the little republic can afford. The resentment may be natural, but nobody wants to do business on those terms.

Officially cleared at last, I made my way back to the boat via The Galley, a snack bar my taxi driver friend had pointed out to me. I performed a quick reconnoiter and hurried to the dinghy and out to *Tina* to announce that there was beer. There was ice cream. There were showers. *Tina* was instantly abandoned and her crew raced to where their priorities led them – the women and children to the showers and Dale and I to The Galley. There was no hot water in the showers, but the beer was nice and cold. In fact, it was frozen solid, which struck me as cold enough.

English Harbour had been Nelson's stamping ground in the late eighteenth century. He had built a dockyard there and some fortifications. The dockyard was taken over in more recent years by the Nicholosons, who have lived there in the old Powder Magazine and have worked hard to earn a living and restore the old buildings. The historical flavor of the place has been very well preserved in spite of the fact that the buildings now house various businesses. These include a post office, a ships' chandler's, sailmakers, a yacht broker and charter office, a supermarket, a museum, and an inn and workshop – in short, everything a yachting needs, including fuel and water, all tastefully contained in the old buildings. The businesses do not intrude.

We met the Nicholosons that evening at their weekly bash up in the Old Magazine. He was a lively elderly gentleman, heavy-handed on the rum bottle, who asked which yacht we were from and, when we told him, said, "Oh, yes. She looks like an oil rig." I put on a suitably outraged expression, but the remark had not been meant to offend. *Tina* did look like an oil rig.

We had a list of jobs to do in Antigua, and not much time in which to do them because we wanted to get to Florida as soon as possible. The hurricane season begins around June, but there had been that one occurrence in May fifty years before and we half expected to find the fifty-to-one chance turn up against us. We still had a distance of about thirteen hundred miles to go and we should be able to cover that in ten days. If we did, it would have been the first time on the trip that we had completed a leg in the time it should have taken us. I estimated that the final push could take us up to three weeks. That would get us where we were going by early May, and the first hurricane of the season would undoubtedly hit the east coast of Florida on May 1 at 7:30 in the morning. *Tina* was foul again, and this time there were no cooperative fish to clean her bottom. The mainsail was busily tearing the cringle out of the clew; the new halyard had been chafing and had to be rearranged; the batteries had to be charged; fuel and water had to be loaded; some battens had to be replaced; and a gas bottle filled.

Sally had had a toothache for two weeks and this had to be fixed up if possible before we left Antigua. She and Dale went into town on Monday to take care of that and to have a look around. I started up the Honda and set it charging and then went over the side with a snorkel and a scraper and began to work on the growth. The entire bottom was covered by a thick layer of animals in various stages of development, some only rubbery tubes and others covered by a thick shell. We had seen them growing on the waterline, but had not expected to find them all over the bottom. They resisted the scraper as much as possible, but the removal was important and I attacked them with persistence. A deep breath, dive under, scrape madly as long as the lungful of air lasted, and then rise up for another gasp, leaving one square foot cleaner and only 718 to go. I did a bit more than half the boat and left the rest for Dale. Between dives or during breaks to warm up (even

that warm water made me chilly after long periods of submersion), I kept an eye on the Honda.

Our problem with the batteries seemed to have been solved, but I wanted them fully charged before we left Antigua. While we were in the harbor plenty of gasoline was available to fuel the Honda, and I used it freely.

The cringle at the clew of the main was another challenge. All our sail repairs had been accomplished so far without a sailmaker's palm. We used the top of a beer bottle to push the needle through the fabric, a system that had much to recommend itself because it was always necessary to empty a bottle in order to get a cap. The rule was to throw away the used cap after each repair job, as long as the beer lasted. After that we had to keep a couple of caps, and sailmaking was never as rewarding as it had been. But the clew of the main was too thick and the needle went through two bottle caps and into my hand a couple of times before I capitulated and bought a palm at the chandler's. With this I was able to effect a crude repair, but the cringle was to give us trouble later.

Tina carries two eighteen-kilogram gas bottles. Both had been filled in Cape Town and one was emptied between St. Helena and Ascension. We were well on our way into the second, and I wanted to fill one before we left. The gas at English Harbour was supplied, however, in bottles different from ours. There was a chance that the gas works near the town would be able to fill my bottles, but the only way to find out would be to take the bottle there. In a taxi. This would have cost around twenty dollars and I was not going to spend that on the off-chance that the bottle could be filled. I decided to solve the problem by hoping that the gas we had would last us until Florida. I instructed the others to hope also and they promised to do so.

We visited a couple of the yachts in the harbor when we were not slaving away on *Tina*. One, owned by another man named Paul, had come across from the Mediterranean and had, as its main feature, a piano fixed in the forecabin. "Who would put to sea without a piano?" said Paul, striking a chord. In another we sat in the big, heavily upholstered chairs one would expect to find in a gentleman's club ashore and sipped some good rum. Below us in the master's cabin was a king-size bed adjoining the cabin, a bathroom with shower, bath, flush toilet, and enough glass to kill half a dozen people sufficiently foolish to use the room in any kind of sea. *Tina's* accommodations seemed very spartan when compared to these luxurious floating flats, yet so much more sensible and safe.

A film crew invaded English Harbour while we were there. Its members were making some kind of TV documentary and enlisted several of the natives to play the parts of – you guessed it – natives. These young men were painted a bit and spent a good part of the day hanging around feeling foolish. The actual acting was done by a lady who had been Miss Something-or-Other and whose theatrical training had been restricted to walking on a platform with a big smile for the judges. In a sequence filmed that evening, she was required to be led by two savages past several dead Redcoats who had been killed, presumably in her defense. In order to achieve the illusion that she had fought like a tigress, one lock of hair was disarranged and half an inch of black was smeared on her cheek. Lights! Camera! Action! And in she walked, flanked by the victorious savages and past the dead defenders, wearing a big smile for the judges.

It took several takes to get the smile off her face, and the intervals in between found the Redcoats in the bar knocking back quickies. By the time the director had

instilled some sense of tragedy into the mind of the leading lady, most of the cast was stoned. One take had to be re-shot because a corpse was spotted lying next to a large glass of rum. In another a dead soldier was trying to balance his sword on his thumb while lying on his back. Still another failed because two corpses were seen chatting over the body of a third, who was snoring. We considered it a hilarious introduction to the art of the cinema and wondered what the final result would be like.

On Tuesday Walda and I went into town, leaving Dale and Sally to get on with the work and the children rowing around the harbor in the dinghy. It was a business trip, not for sightseeing, and our impression of the island beyond the borders of English Harbour is restricted to the area on either side of the road into St. Johns. The landscape was dry and grey and the houses little more than two-room boxes built up on stones more or less at the corners, looking as though they were about to slide out and leave the houses tottering. People spent their time watching the traffic and listening to transistor radios while sitting on small walls in the sparse shade of unhappy trees.

In St. Johns there was more life, but hardly the gaiety one would expect in such a romantic-sounding place. The narrow sidewalks were crowded with people moving about their business listlessly in the hot sun. In the shops we found the usual rudeness, which we would counter by insisting on being friendly until we met some kind of reciprocity, but the effort was tiring. No customer wants to be wrong all the time.

We stopped at the Cable and Wireless Company to call my mother and warn her of our impending arrival. There were some important requirements to arrange. After some lengthy conferences on board, it had been decided that our presence in Florida should be greeted by steaks, salad with Roquefort dressing, ice cream, and, of course, cold beer. I wanted to be sure that Ma had plenty of time to get in the goodies to fill our order. Compared to this, a relatively minor question at the time was where we were going. I wanted to enter the United States at Port Canaveral, a few miles down the Indian and Banana Rivers from Titusville, but I did not know if that was a port of entry. My mother was able to confirm that it was. It struck me at the time as symptomatic of the whole trip that we should have come so far without having a clear idea of where we were going.

Walda and I returned to the boat laden with fresh fruit from the market – some bananas and pawpaws, a few oranges and grapefruit – and some vegetables, none of which was cheap since most had been imported/Dale was sitting on the cabin top and *Tina* was dragging her anchor ever so slowly and had reached the center of the channel on her way to collide with two or three of the yachts moored stern-to at the quay. Sally had gone into town to complete her dental work and Dale wanted to see how close *Tina* could come to the other boats before he moved her. At least that is what he said as I started the engine. It was horrific to consider the damage that squat, solid *Tina* might have inflicted on the delicate fiberglass and wood hulls to leeward of her. She carried no insurance.

The next morning we moved over to the pumps and took on water, diesel, gasoline, and kerosene. In Antigua, you buy water at about three U.S. cents per gallon, which is not outrageous but is novel. It was the first time we had paid directly for this very important commodity. Usually the cost of mooring will include whatever the water requirements are, but here there were no mooring costs unless you tied up to the quay. The water comes to your tank through a meter and you pay for what you use. It is

amazing how this system causes many yachties to forgo the usual pleasure of hosing down their decks, which they will indulge whenever they get hold of a pipe full of free fresh water.

We filled everything in the course of the morning. It took two or three hours more than usual because electricity cut out for a while and we had to wait until it returned to operate the pumps. I did not have to take on all that water, or all that fuel. We were only to take three weeks at the maximum, and there were to be no stops on the way to demand the engine. But I filled up, anyway. If we were becalmed, we would use that fuel sparingly and it was a good idea to have full water tanks whenever you put out to sea, even for an afternoon sail. My only compromise with economy at this point concerned the two eighteen-gallon containers lashed to the mast. These I left empty, thereby saving \$9.36, which made me feel so virtuously thrifty that I was able to spend twice that amount on beer and ice cream that evening without a qualm.

We were ready and anxious to go the following morning. Sally's tooth and all tanks had been filled, the bottom was clean, the sail repaired, and the rum and cigarettes stowed away. All we had to do was clear out with the police. I braced myself for another encounter and got the necessary papers signed.

After a final shower and a cold beer for the road, we motored out of English Harbour for the last leg of the trip. It was only after we were well away from the island that Dale remembered that we had done no welding on this stop. He should have told me sooner. Now it was too late to go back and break something. I was not going to clear into that place again just to keep the record perfect.

The Last Leg

Our route from Antigua was to go due north until we passed the little island of Barbuda and then turn left and straight across, passing to the north of all the islands that make up the West Indies. But we ran into a northerly wind that afternoon and had to beat against it until we could make that left turn. It was an uncomfortable time for all of us, accustomed as we were to the easy sailing we had enjoyed up to this point. The breeze was only about twenty knots or so. The wind speed indicator had broken and we had to guess wind speed, but the seas were high and steep. *Tina* would drive forward into them and be stopped by their force, heeling as they came over the top. Wherever water could come in, it did, and the forecabin was soon too wet to sleep in, so the mattresses were laid out in the salon, where the air became stale because nothing could be opened for ventilation, it was fun on deck, watching the bow plowing through the waves, but the progress was very slow. We looked as though we were moving along at a great pace, but we were covering only inches. We needed to go only a short fifty miles to get around Barbuda, but it took us two days of hard sailing to do so.

To compound the discomfort, the sun remained hidden during this period and we did not know where we were because there was no way to take a sight. I tried using the RDF to get a fix, but the beacons were so faint that I found about a 15-degree area around the minimum, which meant that any triangle I drew could be 30 degrees off. Although I thought we were getting past the island, I was not going to make my turn on such a flimsy fix. We kept pushing to the northeast, building up a reserve of sea room until the sun finally stuck its face through the haze long enough to give me a sight. With a position line and the admittedly inaccurate RDF fix, I was able to work out a position, using the maximum error. This put us well in the clear of Barbuda and v/e made the turn. Once we had Florida on the bow, the wind dropped and we returned to the usual genie sailing.

On the morning of our sixth day out of Antigua, the gas stove gave me one last cup of coffee and expired. Obviously, not everyone had been hoping as hard as the occasion demanded. The only person on board who faced the loss of the stove with equanimity was Sally, who came smiling into the cockpit, sat herself down, and said, "No more cooking!" She had been suffering in the galley for a long time and I could not blame her for anticipating a bit of a vacation. Cooking at sea is not fun, and she had done an excellent job.

Hot food we could do without, but coffee was another consideration. Both Dale and I required three or four cups in the morning as an eye-opener, and that only took care of one eye. We decided to try to make a kerosene stove capable of boiling a kettle full of water. I allowed Dale to undertake the construction.

Dale's first effort consisted of a small tin in a big tin. The small tin had a cap with a hole in the center. Through the hole was inserted the wick, made first of some string, then of rope, and finally of braided cloth. When the tin was filled with kerosene and capped, the wick would burn. By placing the small tin inside the big one, which was punched full of holes, Dale thought it could contain the heat and do the job.

The first experiment was only a partial success, however. The wick tended to lose its flame either because it was not getting enough air through the holes in the big tin, or because it was getting too much and being blown out. When it did burn steadily the snug-fitting kettle, stuck in the top of the stove, deflected the heat downward, vaporized the

kerosene, and caused the entire thing to explode. What was needed was some way to control the draft so that the wick would burn and the heat would go to the kettle without bouncing back toward the fuel.

Dale produced another, larger, tin and made a wire grill to hold the kettle. With this there was enough room around the kettle for the heat to move upward and some holes punched at the bottom edge provided enough oxygen to keep the flame alight. Trial and error then produced the best material for wick-making – one of Sally's shirts. What with the depredations of fish who ate the laundry, wear and tear, and the stove, her wardrobe was thinning rapidly.

Torn into strips and braided, Sally's shirt burned well and we could make the water boil in about half an hour. The stove would still explode occasionally, but we put up with that in the interests of caffeine. Making coffee was a dirty job. The stove and kettle were rapidly covered with a thick layer of soot and there were black footprints all around the aft deck where Dale's contraption lived. But that, too, we could put up with. We kept two thermos flasks in the cockpit and these were constantly refilled with hot water for anybody who wanted to make coffee. It was the job of whoever was on fourth watch to be especially careful that these were full when the rest of the crew emerged from the cabin.

An interesting aspect of cruising is the reproducing habits of problems. There is never one thing that goes wrong-always at least two, and usually five or six. If you are going to replace the shackle on the anchor chain, you would do well to get out your sail repair kit and some new rope for the jibsheet as well as the shackle, because once you start working you will find more jobs than you had thought possible. This happens not because you have procrastinated and let the jobs pile up, but partly because most things on a boat are interrelated and one thing cannot break without breaking something else, which will break something else and so on. Another reason is that everything on a boat is sitting there watching you, waiting in ambush, and as soon as you think you can goof off and loaf, volunteers step forward in a spirit of conspiratorial dedication and break. Of course they must be fixed immediately or there will be serious consequences, so a small job becomes a day's work and a battle for survival.

While Dale was working on the stove, I had another go at the cringle on the mainsail. The repair job I had done at Antigua was not holding, so we pulled down the main and I set to work. This time I folded strips of sailcloth through the cringle and sewed them along the edges of the sail, breaking three needles in my efforts to push them through nine layers of the heavy material. It was the hardest sail repair of the entire trip and I was very glad to have my new sailmakers palm. The final result was crude in appearance, but it was very strong and it held well.

About this time we noticed a strong smell of diesel in the salon. When the main was up again I inspected the fuel tank to see where the smell was coming from. I thought the fuel line we had removed to clear so many times might not have been replaced properly and was leaking. A little diesel goes a long way stinkwise, and I expected to find a slow drip somewhere at one of the connections. The reality, however, was startling. The tank was split in two places and all that expensive fuel was going into the bilges in a thin but steady stream. This was a Class B emergency. We had to save as much as we could, or we would be without power when we entered Port Canaveral.

We did our best to plug the leak with some sticky gunk usually used for sealer and began the long process of draining the tank. The two containers lashed to the mast were requisitioned as well as a third large plastic bottle that had once held water. We drained the tank into a one-gallon bottle and emptied that into containers, renewing the plug at regular intervals. When the bottles were full, we had forty gallons saved, and then we began to fill anything that had a lid or top to hold the fuel.

As the quantity of fuel in the tank diminished, the plugs became more effective, and when we ran out of containers there was no more leakage. A little fuel still remained in the tank, and we burned that for charging as long as it lasted. Then we lashed a five-gallon bottle near the tank, put a piece of plastic tubing on the end of the fuel line, and stuffed that into the bottle. It was the same arrangement I had used coming into Simonstown. All we had to do was to keep an eye on the bottle and fill it to prevent an air lock. The big eighteen-gallon containers were lashed conveniently close by and we could siphon from them into the new tank.

The system worked well. We would have no more pit stops because of a blocked fuel line, but it was an expensive improvement. I estimated that we pumped seventy gallons of diesel out of the bilges and over the side.

Another interesting aspect of cruising is that after a Class B emergency, there is usually a period of calm for a while. When you have fixed what you could and improvised solutions to what you could not, the boat rewards you with a few days of peace and you can read, swim, sunbathe, and play games. Everything goes smoothly until she gets bored again and everything falls apart.

We enjoyed the rest period and slowly pulled toward Florida. We were still feeling the lack of a pole and our course was a series of downwind tacks, but it was warm and bright and we were accustomed to sailing farther than the direct route. We drank coffee, ate the cold offerings Sally brought up from the galley, and created for the benefit of mankind the "*Tina Tot*." This was a coffee cup full to the brim with rum, served neat at precisely five o'clock in the afternoon. No able-bodied seaman on any man-o'-war ever enjoyed his grog more than Dale and I after a hard day's loafing in the sun.

The school days that had continued for so long died a slow death and there were loud hurrahs when the last math lesson, last English lesson, last every lesson were over. Children without a routine are impossible to live with, however, and so our two were put to work, under Sally's supervision, making a courtesy flag for our entry into the U.S.A. I had tried to buy one in Cape Town, but the only type available was a huge wool affair, some six feet long, costing far too much money. I explained to the salesman that we had enough expensive blankets on board and left it with him.

The flag was made from a piece of fabric from my sail repair kit. Sally drew in the stars and stripes and the kids colored it with crayons, each taking a side. The final result looked very professional up at the cross-trees where the minor imperfections could not be seen.

Approaching Cape Canaveral via the outside route, that is, going around the islands rather than through them to hit the southeast coast of Florida around Miami, means that you have to cross the Gulf Stream. Our chats with some of the sailors in Antigua who had come over from the States made us aware of a few problems connected with this course. In the first place, we would be spending most of the time in the Bermuda Triangle, an area in which some mysterious disappearances have occurred in

the last few decades. Ships and airplanes have gone down for no obvious reason and no traces of them have been found. The reputation of this piece of ocean is enhanced by its alternative name, the Devil's Triangle, which indicates a certain supernatural malevolence that constituted a more acceptable explanation for the losses than the numerous scientific theories could ever hope to achieve. Why believe in a tricky current when there is the possibility of a giant hand coming out of the sea and grasping the unlucky craft to pull it underwater and keep it there? I decided to ignore this danger.

In the second place, there was the possibility of a north wind coming up. This force against the northward set of the Gulf Stream could build up some nasty seas, we were told, and the fact was verified by Dale, who had sailed there in such conditions. But *Tina* was strong and had proven herself in just such a situation, so I decided to ignore that danger as well.

Third, there was the Gulf Stream itself. The official pilot gives the strength of the current at four knots in the center. The word was that this could get up to six or seven knots. An added complication was that the center moved, so you could never know when you were in the strongest grip of the current. This I could not ignore, but I looked upon it merely as a test of my navigation, not a serious danger.

We spent about two weeks in the Devil's Triangle and never once saw a giant hand come out of the water to grasp us and pull us under. There was plenty of sargasso weed and the pair of amorous whales I mentioned earlier, but nothing more malign than some very weak breezes when Sally was navigating.

When we reached the Gulf Stream, the northerly wind did not blow and the seas were calm, except for the odd squall when the wind blew like mad and the rain flattened the water by the force of its fall. When these hit us, we would release Hermann and change course so that the sails spilled most of the wind. The squalls lasted only half an hour or so and when they had passed we reset Hermann and settled back on course.

The strategy of the approach was to aim for a point several miles south of Canaveral and then turn north when we had crossed the Stream. This was to avoid having to beat to the south if we overshot the port. All was proceeding as planned when we hit the Gulf Stream. Then the wind dropped and the sun became badly overcast. About 80 percent of our progress was due north with the current, the wind only inching us across to the west, and our position was only a guess. The sky was so overcast that the sun looked like a fuzzy marshmallow and I was changing filters so often trying to get a distinct ball in the sextant that at times I thought I was in a discotheque. It was a case of grabbing the sun whenever it appeared, and it often stayed visible for only a few seconds. Under these conditions the sights were not reliable, and the error can be considerable. Florida is flat and low and cannot be seen clearly on a good day; this did not add to my peace of mind. There was plenty of shipping, too. Many vessels come through Panama and drive up the coast to the Atlantic, right in the fastest part of the current, so they can be on you very quickly.

I sat on the deck most of that day, holding the sextant and waiting for the sun to come out. When I got a shot, I would run below to work it out and often leave the job half-completed when Dale called me up on deck because it looked like the clouds were about to part and I might get a better sight. I was rushing around a great deal, but I felt none of the panic I had experienced earlier. The position lines developed a pattern that I could interpret and although I did not get a fix, I felt that the guess was fairly accurate.

The RDF picked up the beacon at Port Canaveral, but the signal was too weak to set a course by. I could not be sure where the minimum was, so we moved rapidly northward with the current and slowly to the west with the light breeze.

I was on deck every hour or two during the night. Sally called me once to have a look at a strange ship that appeared to be about half a mile long and without the red and green navigation lights so necessary to determine direction. We watched it until it became clear that we were not going to collide. I diagnosed it as something towing something and went back to bed. It turned out to be a lucky guess, as Sally saw the stern lights a few minutes later.

Still later, a flashing white light was spotted by Walda. I timed it but could not discover any pattern and roused Dale out of bed to have a look at it. It turned out to be a ship with a searchlight, probably fishing.

It was a busy night, as it had been a busy day. The wind continued to drop until there was barely enough to fill the sails, and the beacon from Port Canaveral strengthened. It was just to the north of us early in the night, and moved slowly to the west as the current drove us along. The minor course changes I made after each listen with the radio did nothing but point us in the right direction, the wind being too weak to drive us, but we were closing with the shore as evidenced by the growing strength of the beacon.

At about 3:15 in the morning, Sally spotted the flashing red lights of Port Canaveral, off to the southwest. We had drifted past the harbor, but not too far. Daylight found us motoring a few miles offshore, past the launching platforms of the Kennedy Space Center. We had missed the port by eight miles, which was not bad, considering that we had not been able to get a fix the previous day and that the lack of wind had left us with only the current for power.

There is some very shallow water around the Cape so we took no shortcuts and motored right around the markers to the entrance. It was a distance of about twenty-five miles from our starting point and took us the best part of the day because the engine decided that it did not want to make the last little bit easy and sheared off one of the mounting bolts holding the gearbox. I kept the revolutions low to hold down the vibration and we putt-putted along, hoping that nothing else would go wrong. I should have replaced the bolt, but I did not want to stop and let the current have another chance at us.

At 4:30 that afternoon, *Tina* arrived. We made an incredibly sloppy landing. I had forgotten how to dock her after so long without practice and tied up next to some fuel pumps. I called my mother in Titusville to announce our presence in Canaveral, and then staggered across the street to buy some really cold beer. A Mr. Walz of customs came to *Tina* and cleared us efficiently with a friendliness in sharp contrast to his Antiguan counterpart.

At my mother's house that evening there were steaks on the barbecue and fresh lettuce with Roquefort cheese dressing and plenty of beer. There was ice cream for the children – all six of us – and hot showers. Karin and Philip found bicycles waiting for them, and a quiet circle in which to ride. We ate too much, drank too much, and talked too much, and then went back to *Tina* to sleep. We had a date with immigration people there the next morning.

Formalities over with, we bolted down the engine and loaded on some beer. A reporter from the local newspaper, *Today*, came along to interview us while we made the final twenty-mile run up the Indian River to Titusville. He was a young man with no boating experience whose work for the paper was part of the journalism course he was taking at an out-of-state university. It turned out to be quite an assignment for him. The six hours of sun and beer left his delicate redhead's complexion nicely flushed, but he did manage to get an article together without too many inaccuracies.

Port Canaveral leads into the Inland Waterway via a lock that I anticipated with some trepidation. It turned out to be very gentle – none of your gushing in of water to raise the boat or knock it about. The gates closed behind us; there was a pause; and the gates opened in front of us. I would guess that we rose about an inch. Then it was out into the Banana River, through a long canal, and into the Indian River, the Inland Waterway proper that can be followed right up to the Chesapeake Bay and beyond – some thousand miles of liquid highway, clearly demarked by channel markers that are numbered so you know exactly where you are.

The drawbridges over the river were especially interesting to us. Old, battle-scarred *Tina*, her topsides a trichromatic combination of red, white, and rust, had only to hoot her horn and traffic was stopped by bells and booms and flashing lights while the bridge was opened and we putt-putted through, regally, sedately, in spite of our tattered appearance. It was only the last of these that put us in our place. We arrived at the last bridge five minutes after the hour of 5 p.m. and had to anchor and wait for fifty-five minutes while cars zoomed by. It made the final lap slightly longer than it should have been, but the wait was a fitting end to a voyage that had taken slightly longer than it should have.

It had been a good voyage, we all agreed. It had not accomplished anything important to the world or even to the sport of sailing. Other people had already gone farther and been at sea longer and undergone greater hardship, which is not significant since we did not undergo any real hardship at all, unless seasickness is so classified.

We had proven nothing and done nothing that could not have been accomplished by anyone else in the world, and yet we were proud of ourselves and old *Tina*. She had been a good pal to us, putting up with our amateurish bungling and often stepping in to take charge when the situation demanded it. Had she not brought us through The Storm on her own? What if she had let us raise the mainsail instead of jamming it when we were leaving Simonstown? That could have brought down the mast and put us in real trouble. There was no reason for the power failure when we arrived at St. Helena. *Tina's* batteries had been fine up to the time I planned to enter a crowded bay in the dark, and her refusal of the engine had saved us a lot of money for broken boats at least, and possibly a major catastrophe.

Even when she had seemed to be hindering, she was really only teaching us, and she chose good times to do so. The masthead fitting went near enough to land to be fixed without a serious break in the trip, and it was not her fault that I hadn't bought charts of the western coast of Africa and therefore had to fool around looking for a port. What if the fuel tank had split at the beginning of the trip? Or just after Ascension? If that had happened, it might have taken us weeks just to get through the doldrums and we would have been without lights for the arrival in Antigua.

What if she had caught the barge at Ascension at a different angle and punched a hole in her side, instead of only ripping off a spar that probably would have broken off somewhere else, miles away from a willing welder like Jackie?

So we were proud of the old girl and of ourselves. Perhaps because we had found the life at sea so good. That, if anything, was the major achievement of the trip.

A state of mind, though, is too ephemeral to constitute recognition of an achievement. We decided that we would award ourselves a suitable title that would mystify and confound the rest of the world by its exclusiveness and elegance. At a short but moving ceremony on the aft deck I conferred upon all the crew of *Tina* the right to place after their names the letters ROSD (Atlantic) for "Real Old Salty Dog." This automatically gave them the right to confer the same title on anyone else they met in their travels, provided they were convinced that the following qualifications had been fulfilled: That the applicant had traveled on the same yacht on a planned ocean voyage of seven thousand or more miles. There is no time limit and stops may be made wherever and as often as desired. A round trip is perfectly valid, as long as it is undertaken as a complete voyage. Our researches into titles had taught us that their value lies in the number of people who are excluded; hence the requirement for a "planned voyage." Many people will sail three or four thousand miles twice, say across the Atlantic and back, but how many regard both legs as part of the same trip?

After the official rush hour, the last drawbridge swung open and we motored through and into the lagoon at Titusville, where we tied up at the marina. There *Tina* would undergo a facelift. She would be pulled from the water, sandblasted, and painted with some very expensive epoxy coverings. Her fittings would be renewed, a new fuel tank installed, new rigging set up, and her instruments restored to working order. This would require time and money, but it would get done somehow, and she would be ready for her next trip. Her maiden voyage was over.