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[Cruising through Haiti: A TRIP BACK IN TIME](#)

April 16, 2015 – 2:34 am | [No Comment](#)

Haiti is the western portion of the island of Hispaniola.

The country is broken up into “two arms”, the northern peninsula and the southern peninsula. The country borders the east side of the Windward Passage.

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## That Magic Moment

Submitted by [Frank Virgintino](#) on April 14, 2013 – 9:21 pm [One Comment](#)



Cruising is an art that must be practiced to really understand and to enjoy. Its value cannot be deduced logically. It is an affair of the heart; something that cannot be rushed. Cruising is something that must be shared in order to reap what it has to offer. All of us that are committed to it make jokes about how difficult it can be as well as how costly; even uncomfortable. Yet most of us, who do it, do it for a lifetime. William F. Buckley, the editor of the American National Review magazine and author of many books including some on his sailing feats, commented as follows just before he died. “So, deciding that the time has come to sell the Patito (his sailboat of many years) and forfeit all that is not lightly done, and it brings to mind the step yet ahead, which is giving up life itself.” He refers to what “is not lightly done.” For most of us, our commitment to cruising is not something that is lightly done; it is something that we work hard to undertake and just as hard to continue.

I remember seeing a documentary 40 or so years ago on television on a Sunday afternoon about a cruise east on Long Island Sound. The author reviewed preparation of the boat, weather and chart review and an overview of the courses that would be taken to route the boat to its final

destination. I was at the edge of my seat with anticipation when finally the boat reached its destination and the skipper ordered “anchor down.” Everyone went swimming followed by a great lunch, sunbathing, reading and genial conversation. That was it for me; I was hooked and have been for my entire life.

I have gone cruising and not just cruising but cruising under sail. I have worked and I have toiled. Bad weather, broken gear and so many times problems that seemed so often and so many that when I heard cruising defined as “the process of moving from one exotic port to another to undertake repairs,” I understood and could easily relate to such cynicism. We seem always to work and repair, repair and work. The “to do” list never seems to grow shorter and just when it does; a new list pops up with new items that need attending to. This adventure called cruising can often seem disheartening and complicated; not to mention costly. Sometimes, when I am really feeling down, I envy someone who simply putters around their garden or goes to a golf course with their putter. Then I reconsider and ask myself. What is cruising and what is it to me?

The famous American Poet Robert Frost writes in his poem **Song of the Wave**, “Thinking naught of woe or grief, Dancing, prancing, like a leaf, Caring not for cliff or reef.” We use those “Songs of the Wave” to transport us to wherever our hearts and minds dispatch us. If we thought of the adversities and complexities of our avocation, Cruising under sail, perhaps few of us would undertake such adventure, for as Frost notes in referring to the waves, they think naught of woe or grief and we seem to follow suit.

As I struggle to answer and justify the investment of time and money, not to mention the often times frustration caused by myriad problems, I come face to face with the question, What is it that reaches deep inside of me? What is it that finally satisfies me? What part of me really wants to sit back and avoid the challenge and discomfort, even danger that comes with cruising? Sometimes we get beyond just discomfort and have to deal with concerns about piracy or really bad weather. That occurred to me recently when I experienced a two week period of really high Trade Winds that averaged 35 knots and higher. I moved 60 miles to the east with a weather forecast that predicted light offshore winds at night only to experience 35 knot winds the entire night. I went into a harbor and anchored figuring that I would wait it out. The following day the wind swung to the southeast and I had to leave the harbor as it is open to the south and the waves coming in continued to grow larger. Overnight to the next anchorage we experienced 35 knots and above again. Reefed main and staysail, frequent tacking and finally some motoring got us under a headland where I managed to find shelter and a good anchorage; a very sheltered very beautiful bay that is totally isolated. We waited for a day and proceeded 16 miles to a cape where we anchored and rested for 2 days before continuing on. As we continued on overnight, we encountered gusts that reached 45 knots with seas that were higher than 10’, although how high they were could not really be determined because the night was pitch black. Out at sea, pitch black night, wind howling and seas very large. Anything can happen in such conditions and surely it is not a ride at Disney World where you can simply get off. I asked myself again, “What am I doing here, I must be crazy?”. I have spent 40 years + of my life doing this in wind, rain, storms, fog etc. Why am I still doing it?

I ask myself that question over and over searching for a suitable answer for every time that I make harbor and decide I have had enough, I recoup, reset and go back to sea. What is this thing called Cruising? What pulls us so hard to it?

Then I thought back to that first stop along the way; the harbor that opened to the south. It was a really great town with great color and interesting people and sights. The second anchorage along the way under the headland is a big bay of white sand where we anchored in 10’ of crystal clear water while the wind howled and blew over the top of our mast. It was incredible and swinging to anchor there and taking a nap was worth everything.

The next anchorage was a small island inhabited by fishermen. The anchorage was secure and outside the reach of any seaway. It was calm and the boat swung gently to her anchor. I went ashore and spoke with the fishermen who were playing dominos because it was too rough to fish. They “sold” (nearly gave) me a few fish which we cooked and ate with white rice washed down with some local beer we had aboard. And finally, the last leg, that last night when the wind surpassed 45 knots at times when peering into the night was like peering into the blackness of the deepest part of the universe, followed by day break and finally landfall. The boat finally back at the marina and washed clean of its salt; so many layers of salt; encrusted salt. Be sure to wash it all off. Wash the roller furling gear carefully; get the salt out of the drum. Do the laundry. Open the hatches and air out the boat. Get the boat shipshape and finally take a nap; a deep relaxing nap. A rest that tired bones and a weary mind could truly enjoy. Waking up and walking up the dock saying hello to all the others who were cleaning their boats or doing maintenance. Nodding the kind of nod that is a nod of acknowledgement; perhaps even encouragement.

Then in a moment, a flash in which I realized what it was that kept pulling me back in, just when I thought I had found a way out of my chosen avocation. It is **THAT MAGIC MOMENT**. A moment of such complete satisfaction and joy that it evades accurate verbal description. It is only hinted out through forms that are whispers and hints as we make our way along the way. A type of higher generality that those of us who go to sea cruising, all hold in common.

I am blessed and truly happy to have had more than 4 decades aboard the boats that I have loved and catered to. The boats that have also catered to me, both my mind and soul. They have given me shelter and have transported me to and through wondrous adventures where the spirit can soar free. Sometimes frustrated with breakdowns, sometimes scared out of my wits, sometimes even convinced that I will stay home and take up golf, but always brought back to my love of **Cruising** for there I know, without a doubt, that if I commit myself to my passion to go to sea; to go cruising, that I will come again to my favorite anchorage; **THAT MAGIC MOMENT**.

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