

THE JOURNAL, THE NEWS
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JORDAN, WENDELL, DREW, LINDA, et. al —

We're anchored this morning at Elbow Cay on the edge of the Sea of Abaco and with the exception of the gin-clear 74-degree water with the sun coming up behind candy-striped Hope Town lighthouse and a basket overflowing with local fruit on the table and a fresh-baked key lime pie on top of the fridge and the wind blowing southeast about 10 knots with plans to go snorkeling in a couple hours, you're not missing much.

And guess what's anchored 75 yards on our bow. Another Garcia. Called *Acalephe*. (ah-kah-LEF). The first one we've seen. Couple feet shorter LOA than EXIT with a three-foot draft. Natural aluminum hull with a narrow painted horizontal stripe. Sailed by a French couple; the wife originally American who grew up in ...Bellevue. Amazing. They've been out seven years. Sold a ski shop in the Alps, commissioned the boat from Garcia and went sailing. Like EXIT, their boat also designed by Phillipe Harlé, and they have nothing but good things to say about him (now deceased) and the Garcia brothers. They also say that further south you see ~~a very number~~ of Garcias sailed by Europeans, especially French, who are huge fans of these boats. All very comforting news.

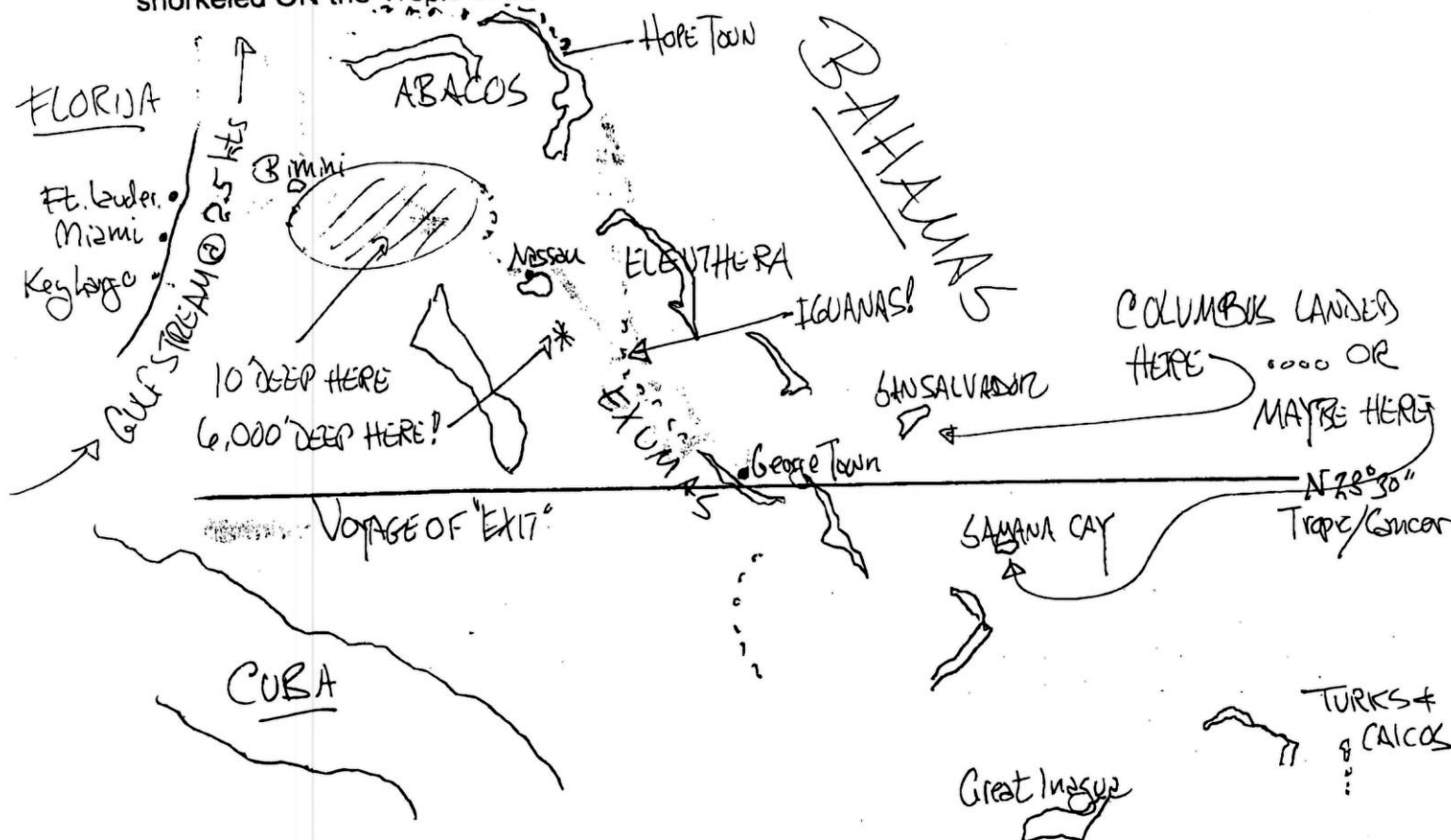
Tots

Last night we had dinner with the *Acalephe* couple aboard *Bonnie*, another boat anchored close by. Nearly a polar opposite. A 30-or-so-year-old fiberglass Sparkman & Stephens design, deep draft (almost seven feet) with a sky blue hull. The owner built her in his backyard near Worcester, Mass. No furling jib. No self-tailing winches! Spotlessly clean and maintained. They also live aboard about half the year. They've been sailing the Bahamas for years — proving you don't need shallow draft to make it here. (But it sure helps.) So when the clouds piled up around sunset and got VERY DARK in the southeast with big dark slashes of rain, he gave a short tutorial on Abaco squalls this time of year, and we went below to eat. Not to worry.

We're on the home stretch of EXIT's 1999 Magical Mystery Tour of the Bahamas. (Reads like a rock band tee-shirt, doesn't it.) About a week more of this agony and we'll cross the Gulf Stream and head for home. We're still planning on a return to the Chesapeake. Several reasons, among them the uncertainty of leaving EXIT buttoned up in a very hot, humid climate for eight or nine months. (*Acalephe*'s owners, however, said they found a good yard in Stuart, Fla. that allowed them to keep a dehumidifier plugged in and the boat was fine. But since it was hurricane season, the yard required them to pull the mast.) We're still coming north. At least as of today.

The Bahamas are interesting. Initially a little odd because many of the cays where you anchor are so small, flat and dry. Dried coral covered with scrub mangrove, even some cactus. Janie and David undoubtedly told you about the iguanas on the beach at Allan's Cay. It looked like pictures of the Galapagos. The water is sometimes very shallow, and sometimes very deep. The two extremes sit side by side so often you can decide in the morning in which environment you want to sail. The weather is lovely most of the time, but also complex and can bite you on occasion. And the currents in many areas are strong. So the lazy cruising life is offset by some navigational challenge.

We got as far south as George Town on Great Exuma and actually went a bit further one morning allowing us to say, with navigational precision, that we have snorkeled ON the Tropic of Cancer.



The trip has been extensive enough to reveal the diversity of this country. Poorer in the Exumas, more prosperous in the Abacos, where Loyalists seeking refuge from those pesky American revolutionaries settled. Hope Town reminds me of a funky Nantucket, a tiny town with tiny houses and tiny, no-car streets. Many rentals; a great place for a getaway.

I would say the food ashore has been mildly disappointing. Quite expensive for what you got. In fact, the Bahamas are more expensive than we thought, especially since this is largely a low-income country. They don't manufacture much and most of what you buy, including food, has to be shipped in. Nonetheless, we've eaten well, thanks to Mimi's planning and inventiveness. "We have to get back to civilization," she said the other day. "We're almost out of cumin." Don't you hate it when that happens?

We also lucked out in finding the Rabels at their winter home north of George Town. Heidi, who I think ran Nordstrom's restaurant division for several years and wrote a very good cookbook, gave us a couple of meals to die for. Grilled wahoo with Dijon glaze. Ummm, good.

EXIT has performed nobly. Couple of glitches, to be expected. The engine-driven fridge compressor has given out and now the generator is acting squirrely, raising the possibility of loss of refrigeration. I've done the usual troubleshooting -- "Hmmm. Looks like plenty of oil on the dip stick." -- Hopefully, it's good for another three weeks. We're going to address this in Ft. Lauderdale. Obviously my laptop is operational, though we've been unable to get the navigation software linked to the GPS. The software can't find the COM port. It's not just me; we had an alleged computer monkey from a neighboring yacht in Nassau fuss with it for an hour with no luck. On the other hand, the little Canon BJC-50 printer has worked great.

I've got to sign off here. I'm sending this as a group letter because: 1) There's a guy on another boat flying to the U.S. this morning and if I get the letter to him in time he can drop it in a mailbox at the Miami airport -- this will be faster than the Bahamian mailboat by a factor of about two months; and 2) We have one U.S. stamp left.

It's been a great cruise - wish you could have joined us but there will be other cruises - miss you all - hope Jordan can do a bit of sailing with us - I understand Drew is still underwater workwise. Wendy thanks for your answering, random messages. I really hope to see you before we head for Seattle.
Love to you all

P.S.

Could you fax this to David + Janie if you have time?