

Bill & Diana Quinlan on *Special Delivery*

Crew: Ron and Gayle Horton, Joe Karpinski, Bob Alexander (.... And Tink, the Salty Dog)

Saturday, November 1, 2008

Our crew from Cincinnati, veteran ralliers Ron and Gayle Horton, joined us today. Since our departure had originally been planned for November 2, we all enjoyed our "farewell" dinner of BBQ as well as Pain Killers compliments of Mount Gay Rum. This year each crew member was issued a Mount Gay hat. These red baseball caps decorated with the Mount Gay logo and the Caribbean 1500 logo and year are the most popular souvenirs of the event. They are even sell on e-Bay. Bill and I have a collection of them now.

Sunday, November 3, 2008

With the start delayed, we headed to the Virginia Maritime Museum to see an impressive display of the Monitor of Civil War Monitor/Merrimack fame. The actual turret from the Monitor has been preserved. We explored the life-size models and learned about the famous battle that ended the era of wooden ships.

Tuesday, November 4, 2008

We explored Fort Monroe at Old Point Comfort. It was near this site that the Monitor and Merrimack had their famous skirmish. This fortification had been around since the 1600s, but became an established fort pre-civil war. It is the last existing U.S. fort with a complete moat. We drove through the "sally port" into the fortification to enjoy the museum, walk the embankments and see where Lincoln stayed and Robert E Lee was held. This was the only northern owned fort that remained in southern territory during the war.

Friday, November 7, 2008

The noon start was at the "race" off Thimble Shoals in Hampton Roads in the lower Chesapeake Bay. Watching the fleet of sailors maneuver for the best position at the start gives one a thrill. This is always my time to exit the cockpit and stand on the stern with video camera to catch the near collisions and stay out of the way. For Bill, this is the moment he most enjoys, go figure. It's like watching Porsches in a grocery store parking lot vying for the one best spot. Why would anyone take the chance to damage their boat for the sake of being 2 seconds sooner across the start when we've got over a week to the finish?

By nightfall we were clearly out of the Bay but into lots of incoming boat traffic. The AIS proved invaluable as we settled into our routine watches, each of us with a 2 hr shift at the helm. We had freighters coming within half a mile in fog to add to the night's excitement.

Saturday, November 8, 2008

We had two fishing lines out all day but only "caught" sea grass. I did see a whale blow a 20 foot plume of water in the distance, followed by a slapping fin about 3 minutes later, but that was as close as we got to fish.

The crew is into their routine quickly. Everyone selected their favorite watch times, including me who preferred the 0300-0500 slot since I like the optimism of the sunrise. Knowing the night is almost over and seeing that subtle change of light on the horizon, and the slow extinguishing of the stars gives the promise of daybreak.

The first night we just powered across the Gulfstream and by daybreak were into shorts! It was a nice feeling after the polar fleece and 36 degree mornings in Baltimore.

Saturday night we were in 35kt winds and hitting 10.4 kts SOG (speed over ground) with a double reef in main and a partially furled head sail. Of course we were being tossed about like we were a toy, but at daybreak we sailed into a small squall with a nice rain and emerged cleaner and with a slight wind shift. Right now we're running the rhum line at 9 kts in about 13kts of wind.

"Otto" our autopilot, kept humming along. We had the usual small leaks at the chain plate and under the dodger when we'd get slammed with a wave. But that became ancient history after our first showers on board. Light winds were expected ahead after tropical storm Paloma broke up going over Cuba and the Bahamas. Most of the fleet headed due east toward Bermuda to have an option, but they crossed in the wider part of the stream and lost valuable time.

Sunday, November 9, 2008

What a difference a day makes! This day found us grateful for less wind, a little more stable sea and the opportunity for showers. Everyone seemed to be in a routine of naps prior to scheduled watches and midday community meal with some story-telling, or attempts at fishing.

Monday, November 10, 2008

It's beginning to look like the canned tuna I bought will be the only fish consumed on *Special Delivery* this passage. The guys keep trying but no luck.

We remain in the lead at this point, but are slowing down periodically when we attempt to sail in light air. Our routing program shows more days of light winds, so we'll be attempting to sail where we can to conserve fuel. We ran the watermaker this morning and topped off our tank, so everyone can continue to enjoy showers.

The meals aboard aren't gourmet, but they do seem to keep everyone going. We tend to catch about 4 at breakfast time while the remaining crew help themselves to cereal, granola bars or instant oatmeal when they get up. Lunch is our larger meal of the day and it was Chicken Margherita with penne pasta. The Margherita refers to a tomato based Italian dish, NOT the cocktail popularized by Jimmy Buffet, although everyone was hoping it was the later!

The darkened clouds around us yielded a small shower of fresh water. That's a welcome to the salty towels we've hung on the lifelines.

We've gone through the assortment of travel games like Uno, Scrabble, Boggle and Yahtzee. I have seen a surge in electronics this year. It seems everyone has at least an i-Pod with music or books and even a portable DVD player. That's sort of like bringing coals to New Castle since the boat has two TVs, two DVD players, satellite TV and a library of over 200 movies.

One needs to look at *Special Delivery* as a floating city with it's own municipal water and sewage, power generating station (sail and engine), radio station (Ham and VHF), and of course, city council. Using the city analogy, I'd definitely rank Bill as mayor and me as the chief of the sanitation and health department.

As night fell amidst stormy clouds, there was little wind, yet we managed to eek out enough forward momentum from 6 kts of wind to keep the boat moving without using the engine.

With clouds coming and going, bringing light rains, Tink remained busy announcing each rain with a bark. This bark signals what we lovingly call the "hatch dance." When anchored in the islands we generally have most of the hatches open to catch the breeze. Small rain showers come and go quickly and with Tink's announcements, we run around the top of the boat pushing down the hatches with our feet to quickly close them. Hence, Tink has developed a habit that is sure fire and has us well trained to keep her home dry.

Tuesday, November 11, 2008

One week after the U.S. election and it all seemed like a distant memory while watching the moonset. It burned so brightly that it made the horizon visible in every direction. As it began its descent the last 10 degrees, the moon turned to a misty peach, then orange as it melted into the sea, like a Creamsicle on hot day.

We continue to drift in mostly light air. We slowed down the last 24 hours with the declining wind, but opted to sail at 5-6 kts rather than use the engine which would propel us conservatively at 8 kts.

We had a sudden stop of our engine and the shaft is leaking. A drive shaft coupling bolt and the motor mount bolts are sheared off. We're assuming we must have hit something, but Ron dove on the prop and didn't see anything. Looks like we might need a haul out to know for sure. So far our bilge pumps are handling fine and we hope to sail right to Tortola.

While we were adrift without an engine or headsail, Bill tried to go up our 85 foot mast to rig the halyard for the replacement head sail. He was tossed about like a marionette and was banged against the rigging. Then the guys lashed the damaged head sail to the starboard lifelines. We hoisted the main and the new head sail. Then we waited for the wind to come in. In all we were adrift for about 3 hours between the engine stop, rigging changes and getting back under sail.

By evening, the wind picked up and we are doing roughly 8-9 kts of speed in steady breezes of 15-20 kts. We are still near the front of the pack, meaning there are other boats following us who we might be able to reach us if we need help. Near midnight, we reefed the main. The old head sail we rigged is about a 110, so it's good since it's blowing 22 kts now. We still have the staysail out as well and are making over 9.5 kts.

Wednesday, November 12, 2008

The shaft jury rig is holding without leaking despite some very lumpy seas last night.

About 4am the lashed down damaged sail was partially washed overboard so Bill and Ron donned lifejackets and harnesses and went out on deck with waves rushing across them to secure the sail.

We are 392 miles NW of BVI and if the wind continues, we should make port around midnight on 11/14 in time to take advantage of full moon. The winds are expected to continue at 15-20 through tomorrow and may lighten 10-15 on Friday, that should still be sufficient to get us there assuming it's not right on the nose.

It's a bit stuffy below as the hatches must remain closed with the waves coming over the cabin top and the occasional side slammers that catch us off guard. We are sailing through multiple rain bands.

Thursday, November 13, 2008

SOG averaging 8 kts, winds are variable with the squalls from 18-25 kts. We're still dry in engine room and will hopefully remain that way the rest of journey.

GPS is out again, as was Global Star satellite phone (which is our method of email delivery) We've got some sort of weird electronic mojo on board. Bill had rigged a hand held GPS to power our equipment for navigation. I think there's a little bit of MacGyver in him.

We're beginning to see an increase in sea traffic like tankers and freighters, so that's a good sign we're nearing civilization again.

Saturday, November 15, 2008

Arrived in port safely.